Trans-Nations and Trans-Lations in American Literature

Profs: Ana Mª Manzanas & M. Rosario Martín Ruano
University of Salamanca
Email: amanzana@usal.es; mrmr@usal.es
Credits: 6

Course aims and objectives:
At a time when the US is brimming with nations and languages inside its borders, this course intends to address precisely the multiplicity of codes that fashion those national and verbal images. As the title illustrates, the course dovetails literature and translation, and the different nations and languages that come into play in a variety of texts. The course aims at providing a critical understanding of the variety of cultural, linguistic and literary traditions of the United States. It seeks to offer a wide canvass of mutual interactions before it focuses on the paradigm of the border as an example of inter-cultural relations and on the concept of translation as a useful explanatory tool for a critical understanding of the often hybrid and transcultural literary and cultural products of our day and age and, in more general terms, of the world in which we live. When students have successfully completed this course, they will be able to:

-- make use of critical terms such as hybridization, creolization, transculturation, acculturation, translation, intercultural mediation, conflict, negotiation
-- be familiar with the notions of mestizaje and cultural hyphenation (from mono to multiple hyphenation)
-- understand the traditional way societies conceptualize and respond to the outside world
-- explore and illustrate the complexity of the border or frontier as a double mechanism
-- trace the concept of the border in a variety of literary works and cultural artifacts
-- apply abstract terms and concepts to their everyday reality
-- identify a “border situation” both in a variety of literary reflections and in everyday life
-- generate ideas for analyzing contemporary society
-- internalize the concepts of mediation or separation
-- approach and critically analyze culture(s) in translational terms
-- understand the role of translation in the construction of culture(s) and in the formation of identities
-- identify the potentialities and limitations of translation as a mechanism and/or paradigm of intercultural mediation
-- engage in current debates on ethics in relation to cultural contact and (inter)cultural dynamics

Course contents:
1. The border paradigm from FJ Turner to contemporary expressions
2. The role of mediation between and among cultures
3. The “clash” of cultures
4. Dealing with the other: an old problem
5. Cross-cultural identities and transcultural writing
6. Translation and ethics
Readings and program:

Prof. Ana Mª Manzanas

1- General introduction to the Border. From Turner to Anzaldúa. Metaphors for cultural encounters. Border as paradigm of trans-cultures

Readings:
From Zamora Linmark’s *Rolling the R’S*
from Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*; Gómez Peña “The Border Is”; (Rubén Martínez’s *Crossing Over*)
Crostwaite, L. Humberto: “Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera”

*Robert Frost* “Mending Wall”
F. Kafka “The Great Wall of China”

Secondary sources:
Excerpts from *The Line between Us*
“Contested Passages”
“Repeating border Narratives”

2- The Border in US literature:

Readings:
Corridos
Helena Viramontes’s “Neighbors” “The Cariboo Café,”
Daniel Alarcón, “The Visitor”
Excerpts from Carlos Fuentes’s *La frontera de cristal*
Thomas King, “Borders”
Junot Díaz, “Aguantando”
E. Dunticat, “Children of the Sea” and “Caroline’s Wedding”
Excerpts from TC Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain* (3-29)
Morales, *The Rag Doll Plagues*

Selection of movies:
*Garden of Eden*
*The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*
*The Gate Keeper*
*Born in East L.A.*
*The Terminal*
*The Visitor*

4- Further revisions of the Border
The Strait of Gibraltar and the Río Grande.
The European Border
1. **General introduction to translation and/as cultural contact. Translation as transcultural writing. Translated identities.**

Readings:


Excerpts from Sandra Cisneros’, *Caramelo*
Excerpts from Esmeralda Santiago’s *When I Was PuertoRican*
Excerpts from Julia Álvarez’s *When the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*
Excerpts from Rosario Ferré’s *The House on the Lagoon*
Excerpts from Salman Rushdie’s, *Shame*
Excerpts from Vikram Chandra, *Love and Longing in Bombay*


Readings:

Excerpts from Vikram Chandra, *Sacred Games / Juegos sagrados* (Trans. Dora Sales)
Excerpts from Cherrie Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back / Esta Puente, mi espalda* (Trans. Norma Alarcón, Ana Castillo)
Excerpts from Susanne J. Levine, *The Subversive Scribe*

Selection of movies:

*Crash*
*Babel*
*Spanglish*
*Real Women Have Curves*

3. **Translation and Ethics. We are all translators: translation as a way of being and living in the world.**

Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*
Suzi Kim, *The Interpreter*

**Methodology:**
Class meetings will consist of lectures, group discussions, and oral presentations. The course will place a strong emphasis not only in oral discussions, but also on exercises designed to stimulate the students’ writing skills. Students will keep a writing journal, where they will write their responses to the material. There will be opportunities for participants to share their ideas and experiences about crossing borders.

**Assessment:**

Students are required to read each assigned text before class and come prepared to discuss it. In addition, each student will have to prepare an oral presentation and write a short essay (10 pp long) about an aspect of the readings/movies explored in class.

The students will be evaluated on a combination of their participation in class, an oral presentation and written assignments. There will be a final paper or project.

- Participation and oral presentation: 30%
- Written Assignments: 30%
- Final project 40%

**Recommended Readings and resources**

Students are encouraged to attend the seminars and talks given by visiting speakers and invited guests.

**Bibliography**


Websites

1- “Border links” offers the most comprehensive list of online resources about the border
http://americas.irc-online.org/borderlines/links_body.html
2- “United States-Mexico Borderlands/Frontera” offers information on different aspects of the border such as its regions, its peoples and its history
http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/migrations/bord/intro.html