

English 495/595– Spring 2010 –The Literary Landscape of Mexico

Class requires three (3) pre-trip meetings (*Saturdays Jan. 23, Feb. 6 & Feb. 20, 9am-1pm*), as well as Spring Break Study Abroad Program (*March 5-14, 2010*), including visits to Guadalajara, Chapala, Tequila, Tlaquepaque, Zapopan, and Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

Instructor & Trip Leader: Renée Olander, Director, Virginia Beach Higher Education Center Rm 101, rolander@odu.edu, 368-4102. [Note partner course GEOG 496/596-The Cultural Geography of Mexico, Instr. Dr. Don Zeigler, VBHEC 203/368-4100, dzeigler@odu.edu, will co-lead the study abroad program, on which his class will partner with ours; we will hold some pre-travel meeting time together].

Goals: To become acquainted with (or better understand) the literary and cultural expressions of Mexico, our southern neighbor, and to gain greater appreciation of the border and relationships we share. To read short fiction, non-fiction, and poetry (in translation) by important Mexican writers, to view literary adaptation films, and to listen to lectures by scholars in Mexican culture and US/Mexico relations, in order to prepare for a cultural immersion experience *and to generate a substantial body of responsive, observational, and reflective writing that documents, synthesizes, and makes meaning out of the course readings, discussions, and travel experiences.* To participate in a 10-day visit to Mexico's second city, Guadalajara, Jalisco, and surrounding locales, as well as to the resort city of Puerto Vallarta, and to observe the landscape across the Sierra Madre Occidental mountain range. To relate and apply the knowledge and experience gained through the course in a comprehensive final paper and brief post-travel presentation that specifically answers the questions: *So What? How will what I have gained in this course affect my future as a citizen of the USA, and as a professional and informed person on this planet?*

Required Texts for ENGL 495 & 595:

- **MEXICO: A TRAVELER'S LITERARY COMPANION**, edited by C.M.Mayo. Berkeley, CA: Whereabouts Press, 2006. [See assignment sheet posted to Blackboard for the 10 short stories from this anthology required for reading and Discussion Board Reading responses.]
- **SUNSTONE/PIEDRA DE SOL**, by Octavio Paz, translated by Eliot Weinberger. NY: New Directions Books, 1991. [*Please bring this text to class on Feb6, & on the trip!*]
- **TEAR THIS HEART OUT [ARRÁNCAME LA VIDA]** by Ángeles Mastretta. NY: Riverside Books, 1997. [Reading of this novel should be completed March 15, 2009]
- **GoogleEarth.com (available on ODU computer lab computers)**
- **Handouts** to be distributed via Blackboard, at class meetings and/or on the trip * .
- **A Spanish-English dictionary** (while this course is taught in English, you need a pocket dictionary with you on the trip, and it will be helpful for pre-trip readings; if you are not Spanish-proficient, **The Lonely Planet** phrasebooks are very good.)
- A **TRAVEL JOURNAL** that you like, preferably hard-bound, on which you can record observations and daily 15-minute writings during the trip; ideal Travel Journals include pockets for receipts and other artifacts. You will submit this hardcopy Travel Journal along with your post-trip typed revision.
- **English (or other) Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools required for Teacher Prep. students only** (Commonwealth of Virginia SOLs are available on the VDOE website: www.vdoe.gov)

ADDITIONAL TEXTS required for ENGL 595:

- **MEXICANS & AMERICANS – CRACKING THE CULTURAL CODE**, by Ned Crouch. London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing, 2004.
- **THE DIARY OF FRIDA KAHLO – AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT/introduction by Carlos Fuentes; essay and commentaries by Sarah M. Lowe.** NY: H.N. Abrams, 1995.

* Please see the course Blackboard site for assignment details and other useful information.

ENGL 495 & 595 Course Requirements:

1. **Attendance & Participation** during pre-trip (Jan23, Feb6, Feb20) & post-trip meeting (TBA, fiesta format) as well as the study abroad experience. [20% of final grade] ***Pre-trip meetings will feature discussions of Mexican literature and assigned readings; cultural differences, similarities, and relationships; Mexican geography; weather in Jalisco in March, travel details and packing recommendations; and we will also view at least one literary adaptation film during pre-trip meetings, and participate in small group collaboration focused on contemporary US/Mexico issues.***
2. **Reading responses** as assigned on Blackboard. [20% of final grade]. Reading responses should make specific references (*with page citations!*) to the assigned texts, reflecting your engagement with the voices, characters, settings, details, actions/conflicts, themes/ideas and images you encounter. ***Written responses may range in length from one thoughtful, developed paragraph to two pages of typed, double-spaced writing.*** Note that while responses to fiction & poetry may be subjective, every claim you make must be supported by ***support through textual references with a parenthetical page citation (p#)!*** Please read all assigned texts slowly, and closely. Ask about reading responses in class if you have questions; everyone in the class will read everyone else's reading responses, and we may discuss them in pre-trip meetings.
3. **Travel Journal** - reflecting *a minimum* of 15-minutes of writing daily while on the Study Abroad Program – both observational and reflective writing. Note that you must submit both your original/handwritten travel journal writing and your typed, double-spaced revision of it—both due Monday, March 22, 2010 [**25% of final grade**].¹ *We will discuss this pre-trip and we may share readings from our journals during our journey.* [“Journey” – “from Middle English *journei*, day, day's travel, journey, from Old French *journee*, from Vulgar Latin **diurnāta*, from Late Latin *diurnum*, day, from neuter of Latin *diurnus*, of a day, from *diēs*, day. See DIARY” (THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, 3rd Edition, p973).
4. **Five-minute mini-lesson** to be presented to the class while abroad [10% of final grade; a list of possible topics and grading rubric are below, and we will discuss this assignment in class; **NOTE:** *ENGL 595 Students will do a different presentation assignment as noted below*].
5. **A final paper** that synthesizes and relates your readings, class lectures, and study abroad experiences to your own professional aspirations/goals [25% of final grade]. This paper assignment will be distributed with a grading rubric at the first class gathering. ***Students who are not pursuing a teacher preparation degree must confer with the instructor to determine the focus of the final paper. Due by Friday, April 2, 2010.***

¹ Samples of excellent travel journals will be made available to the class. Basically, a good travel journal includes observation as well as reflection, and a balance of detail and analysis, so that the writer not only keeps a meaningful record of the journey, but also develops meaning as s/he records and reflects on the travel experience. As E.M. Forster wrote in ASPECTS OF THE NOVEL, “How do I know what I think till I see what I say?” Your travel journal should serve as a means of gaining perspective and understanding, and you are therefore welcome to revise/embellish the version you type upon return to the US as you review what you wrote during the trip. ***It is critical that BOTH the journal kept during the trip and your revised edition be submitted for this assignment.***

ADDITIONAL ENGL 595 requirements:

- Reading responses to additional assigned texts identified above
- A annotated literature survey focused on the Mexican writer or artist of your choice, selected in consultation with the instructor
- A 7-10minute presentation based on your annotated literature review and geared to future teachers – *given during the travel excursion in Mexico*

Itinerary: March 5-14, 2010. Daily itinerary TBA, but to include Guadalajara Historical District, Government Palace, Cathedral, and Hospicio Cabanas; the nearby towns of Chapala, Zapopan, Tequila, and Tlaquepaque, and a journey over the Sierra Madre mountain range to the resort of Puerto Vallarta. *All students must visit GOOGLEEARTH prior to trip departure particularly to identify the locations of our travel, and for views of the Sierra Madre mountain range we will traverse from Guadalajara to Puerto (we may do this together in the VBHEC computer lab).* Note that we will gather regularly during the trip for brief meetings to review and reflect on our experiences, share travel journal writing, and hear our classmates' mini-lessons. You will also have free time most days and are encouraged to take advantage of it to explore or to participate on optional excursions with your trip leaders – **note that it is prohibited for students to take any solitary excursions while on-site in Mexico; all student travelers must use the buddy-system and have at least one class/travel-mate with him/her when venturing forth.**

A Few Thoughts on Packing: YOU ARE AN AMBASSADOR, NOT A TOURIST!! THIS IS A UNIVERSITY COURSE, NOT A VACATION!

In general, Mexicans dress more formally than US/Americans, and in Guadalajara, Jalisco, a beautiful world-class city in a prosperous state, people tend to dress *nicely* when they go out. Though you will have one totally free vacation day in Puerto Vallarta, please ***DO NOT BRING SHORT-SHORTS/HOT-PANTS or CUT-OFF SHORTS, SLEEVELESS TOPS, MIDRIFF TOPS, TUBE TOPS, T-SHIRTS WITH LOGOS, or other casual/vacation wear for this trip unless you plan to wear it only while in Puerto Vallarta!*** Bring a light jacket or sweater for after sunset in Guadalajara, which is known as “mile-high city” for its altitude. It could be very hot or a bit chilly each day; rain is a slim chance. Please bring at least one professional outfit. Bring & plan to wear **sunscreen regardless of your skin-tone:** Guadalajara is at the same latitude as Hawai'i and the sunlight is direct! Bring **COMFORTABLE SHOES;** you'll be on your feet at high altitude! I also recommend shower shoes/flip-flops for the showers and a light robe since you'll have housemates.

Additional resources: Copies of the texts and other supplemental resources (including A CONCISE HISTORY OF MEXICO, MEXICOLOR, THE COLLECTED POEMS OF OCTAVIO PAZ, THE MEXICANS – AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT, studies on the Toltecs and Mayans+) are on reserve in the VBHEC IRC room 146, where you may read/view them.

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5-Minute Mini-Lesson/report to be presented to the class during the trip: You are required to present a *five-minute mini-lesson* to the class, the purpose of which is that we all learn something about the topic that contributes meaningfully to our experience and knowledge of Mexico. You will give this presentation during our trip when we are gathered at the Casa Internacional. **YOU MUST CONDUCT SECONDARY RESEARCH IN A MINIMUM OF 3 SCHOLARLY RESOURCES FOR THIS**

PRESENTATION and you must submit (via Blackboard) a one-page outline for your report by 2/20/2010.

Select a topic below [each topic may be selected by only 1 student; we will review topic selections during the first and second class periods] and approve it with Ms. Olander:

1. Carlos Fuentes
2. Malinche
3. Tenochtitlán
4. Teotihuacán
5. Hernan Cortes
6. Virgin de Guadalupe
7. Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz* [we may have a guest lecture on this writer, and if so she will not be available for selection]
8. Frida Kahlo
9. Pancho Villa
10. Dia de los Muertos
11. Diego Rivera
12. Benito Juárez
13. Fire Opals & Obsidian
14. Chichen Itza
15. Tequila, Mescal & Pulque
16. PEMEX *or* TELMEX
17. NAFTA
18. Rio Grande River
19. Porfirio Diaz
20. Felipe Calderón

Your presentation will be graded on a 4-point scale [in which 0=no credit; 1=unsatisfactory; 2=satisfactory; 3=good; 4=excellent] by these criteria:

- a. **Substance:** your presentation includes *compelling, specific, accurate, and documented* information regarding the topic;
- b. **Organization:** your presentation proceeds in an *orderly and logical* manner, so that we can connect new material with what we already know;
- c. **Style:** you *project* so that your audience can hear you, you *pace* slowly enough that we can process what you present, and you keep to your time;
- d. **Follow-Up:** you make a valiant effort to *answer questions* at the conclusion of your presentation.