

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Honors English 102
Spring 2004
Dr. Renee H. Shea

BORDERLANDS

The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in the outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the “real” world unless it first happens in the images of our heads.

(“La Conciencia De La Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness” by Gloria Anzaldua)

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Office Hours:

Monday and Friday by appointment

Tuesday and Thursday 2 – 5, 7:30 – 8

Wednesday 3 – 5

Course Description

Honors English 102 builds on the skills developed in English 101, focusing on analysis, synthesis and evaluation, logical thinking, the techniques of argument, writing about literature, and preparation of the documented essay. Students will write a series of analytical and argumentative essays that center on literary works but involve both primary and secondary research. They will conduct online discussions with one another, and they will attend literary readings, visit museums, and view films. Collaborative learning projects, including peer critiques, are essential to the course.

This Honors English class will explore the theme of “borderlands” – of marginalized groups or individuals, their response to and the results of their forced or chosen situation – in essays, poetry, a memoir, a novel, and a play. Each work will be analyzed as a discrete work of art and considered in terms of its cultural context. In the final project, students will consider themselves in some type of “borderland” and explore that idea in terms of the works and writers studied in class.

Required Texts:

The New Century Handbook, 2nd Edition

The Unwanted by Kien Nguyen

Sula by Toni Morrison

Othello by William Shakespeare

Othello: New Essays by Black Writers (edited by Mythili Kaul)
AI (film: rented – purchase optional)
Selected texts and xeroxed texts as assigned

Student Outcomes

Upon completion of English 102, students will be able to:

1. Conduct research in the library and on the Internet
2. Carry out basic primary research, such as questionnaires and interviews
3. Evaluate and use sources in the development of an argumentative essay
4. Demonstrate improvement in critical reading skills by identifying, defining, and locating the formal elements of argument
5. Analyze and interpret assigned literary works and film in terms of formal elements as well as historical and cultural contexts
6. Show an awareness of writing process by taking essays through phases of planning, drafting, and revising
7. Demonstrate proficiency in organizing, controlling, and developing the formal essay with an emphasis on documentation
8. Document according to MLA Style, through both in-text citation and in a Works Cited page
9. Edit and proofread paragraphs and essays to correct common errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage
10. Demonstrate an appreciation of the diverse cultures that make up American society

Course Requirements

The final course grade will be computed as follows:

Essay #1 (comparison/contrast of several shorter works)	10%
Essay #2 (annotated bibliography and argument on <i>The Unwanted</i>)	15%
Essay #3 (Documented argument on <i>Sula</i>)	15%
Essay #4 (Argument on play and film of <i>Othello</i>)	25%
Essay #5 (Personal essay on “borderlands”)	20%
Class attendance and participation	10%
Attendance at two outside events	5%

All essays will be argumentative in nature and require several sources. All but the final essay will include several components of process, such as an annotated bibliography, a draft for peer review, a reading journal, or presentation.

Following are brief descriptions of each essay assignment; students will receive detailed explanations prior to each reading and essay or project.

In Essay #1, students will compare and contrast experiences of borderlands as expressed in two works studied in class, including the essay by Gloria Anzaldua, the newspaper article by Karen Arensen, the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” by WEB DuBois, and the film *AI* by Stephen Spielberg. Students will submit journal responses to the readings as assigned; this component will count as 20% of the essay grade.

Essay #2 is intended to hone students' research skills. Although it will focus on the memoir, *The Unwanted*, it will include an annotated bibliography on a topic related to the Vietnam Conflict.

Essay #3 is the most "literary" of the writing done for this class. Students will consider the character of Sula in Morrison's novel of that name as a "new black woman." As part of their analysis, they will synthesize several articles of literary criticism on the novel or the author.

In Essay #4, students will explore Shakespeare's play *Othello* and several film versions (e.g., Orson Welles, Laurence Fishburne, *O*, recent BBC version) by focusing on the question, "Is *Othello* racist?" and responding in terms of the play and one film. Group presentations will comprise 30% of the grade for this essay, which will also require synthesis of and response to several essays in the required casebook on *Othello*.

In the final essay, #5, which will be submitted on disk or CD-Rom, students will explore their own journey through some type of borderland by taking into account at least three different sources (a minimum of one from class). Part of the evaluation of this essay will be its use of technology in the presentation, possibly through hyperlinks, graphics, photos, audio effects, etc. Those who want to do something other than a traditional essay – while fulfilling the goals of the assignment – may want to consider a videotape, a series of photographs (with narrative), an electronic "text" ----- Feel free to branch out as long as you talk with me first.

Essay #5 will take the place of the final exam.

A Word About Class Participation --

Faithful attendance and thoughtful participation are simply the expected norm in an honors class, which will be conducted along the lines of a seminar where everyone holds responsibility for developing a community of learners. Respectful behavior – including the cell-phones-off rule! – is assumed. More than two unexplained absences from class will be reported to Dr. Monika Gross, Director of the Honors Program.

A community of learners in conversation is exactly how I view these honors classes, so if there is any kind of problem or concern about such matters as the direction of the class, the way it is conducted, response to student work – please feel free to come by my office or email me to make your concern part of our ongoing conversation.

General Schedule

... though dates may change by a day or two...

Shorter works exploring "borderlands"	27 January – 17 February
<i>The Unwanted</i>	19 February – 4 March
<i>Sula</i>	9 – 30 March
Spring Break	Week of 24 March
<i>Othello</i>	6 April – 4 May
Final Project	6 – 11 May
Final Project Due	Monday 17 May by 5:00