ENGLISH 130
AMERICAN STORIES:
MULTICULTURAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

SLO Assessment
American Stories: Multicultural Autobiography & Memoir

BACKGROUND

• Fulfills literature elective
• Meets Ohlone College’s Cultural Diversity requirement
• Meets UC Berkeley’s American Cultures requirement
• First offered Fall 2004
• Offered every year
• Taught by one teacher
• Taught fully online
Course Texts

- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, by Frederick Douglass
- *His Own Story: Geronimo*, by Geronimo
- *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, by Jade Snow Wong
- *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, by Anne Moody
- *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*, by Richard Rodriguez
- *The Story of My Life: An Afghan Girl on the Other Side of the Sky*, by Farah Ahmedi
- *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, by Barack Obama
Student Learning Outcomes

1. Analyze selected examples of autobiographies and memoirs written by Native American, African American, Asian American, and Latino writers.
2. Examine the similarities and differences of the authors’ experiences within their own culture and in relation to other cultures in the United States.
3. Recognize the literary forms of autobiography and memoir, and identify how these are influenced by other literary traditions.
4. Analyze how each ethnic group Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos has influenced and contributed to the culture of the United States.
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2. Examine the similarities and differences of the authors’ experiences within their own culture and in relation to other cultures in the United States.

- Assess students’ midterm & final exam essays
  To what degree does the student examine the authors’ life experiences in relation to culture?
  5- Consistently addresses throughout essay
  4- Addresses in many parts of the essay
  3- Addresses in at least one major section of the essay
  2- Addresses in passing
  1- Does not address
## Assessment Grid

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Assessment: Example

1- Does not address

Thesis from a 1 essay:
Although Jade Snow Wong and Frederick Douglass came from entirely different worlds, education was the key factor in the empowerment of their futures.
Assessment: Example

3- Addresses in at least one major section of the essay

Thesis from a 3 essay:
In particular, family is an important social factor that affects both Geronimo and Jade Snow Wong, and it gave them the strength to overcome their struggles to assimilate into the American culture.
Assessment: Example

5- Consistently addresses throughout essay

Thesis from a 5 essay:
Frederick Douglass in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Geronimo in *Geronimo His Own Story*, and Jade Snow Wong in *Fifth Chinese Daughter* all struggle with their identity as they describe their initial alienation from a foreign culture, the rejection they face by the discriminatory attitudes of some people they come across, and how they eventually come to terms with their place in the society by trying to assimilate into the melting pot of American culture.
Assessment: Results

• midterm: 65% addressed culture substantially

• final: 63% addressed culture substantially

• midterm OR final: 90% addressed culture substantially

• only 2 students (out of 20) did not write substantially about culture on midterm or final

Conclusion: Students understand cultural impacts
Assessment: Outcomes

What is culture? How to define culture?

- Easier with slavery, American Indians, immigrant Chinese, harder with black Americans, American born, mixed race

- What is peculiar to culture and what is peculiar to individuals or to families?

- What is race or ethnicity vs. culture?
Assessment: Outcomes

Focus on what connects us as human beings?

- Themes: family, education, religion, etc.

- “I can’t wait for a time when people are judged just as people and there will be no need for empowering race-oriented awards, or ambitious gender-focused groups, because maybe we’ll get to a place where all of those things matter so much less and just being judged on your character as a person will mean so much more.”
  - Student
Assessment: Outcomes

What makes for a good essay?
- How students write about the literature—textual evidence

How do we discuss autobiography & memoirs?
- Author’s purpose
- Author’s thesis
- Selection and arrangement of details
- Rhetorical strategies—how much related to culture and how much related to purpose
Student Learning Outcomes: Revised

The student will:

1. Analyze, as well as compare and contrast, selected examples of autobiographies and memoirs written by Native American, African American, Asian American, and Latino Hispanic writers.

2. Examine the similarities and differences of the authors’ experiences within their own culture and in relation to other cultures or other people’s experiences in the United States.

3. Recognize the literary forms of autobiography and memoir, and identify how these are influenced by other literary traditions. Be able to distinguish an author’s thesis and purpose, and how the author selects and arranges the details of his or her life to fulfill that purpose.

4. Analyze how each ethnic group Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos has influenced and contributed to the culture of the United States. Demonstrate the ability to analyze the literature by using textual evidence to support an interpretation.
Revisions to Course

• video lectures to explain each author’s thesis, purpose, and how the author’s writing style supports his or her purpose

• more explicit weekly writing tips and instructions for online discussion posts about textual evidence and support
SLO ASSESSMENT: CONCLUSIONS

Understand students’ work in a new way
Examine what I’m teaching and why
Plan to improve the course