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Email

Course of Study

Module

Examiner: Jun.-Prof. Dr. Judith Rauscher

Course

Date of Exam, Semester

Topic 1: Renegotiating Citizenship in Arab-American Literature

- Arab-Americans have a long and complicated history of immigration to the United States that affects their identity to this day.
- Arab-Americans were considered white in 1909 and 1910, non-white in 1913 and 1914, white in 1915, non-white in 1942, and again white in 1944 until the events of 9/11, which brought religion into focus. What this did was to take away their minority status, while leaving them with none of the privileges commonly associated with "whiteness".
- Arab-American narratives produced from the 1980s onwards differ from previous works. Instead of attempting to assimilate, the younger Arabs who were born and raised in the post-colonial societies represented in these texts as being in conflict or at least competition with the US must reconcile America's involvement in their uprootedness.
- In the sources I have chosen, Arab-American authors renegotiate their citizenship as Arab-Americans by resisting assimilation to American culture. They use the umbrella term of 'Arab' or 'Arab-American'--which has been used for an eclectic and at the same time diverse group of people--in order to reclaim their hyphenated identities.
- Arab-American authors utilize references to food, nature, and folklore to negotiate their place within American society, a place where they are hybrid creatures, not fully American like their peers, and not fully Arab like their parents/ grandparents. Issues of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender are addressed through these references as well.
- By depicting family and community life in both public and private spaces, the texts suggest that their Arab-American protagonists and/or narrators must find their place within a majority society that views and judges them based on racial and cultural stereotypes that have changed over time.

Topic 2: Feminist Alliances in the Writings of American Women of Color

- The issue that arises within a nation of immigrants like the United States, my chosen primary works suggest, is that it becomes more and more difficult for individuals to be considered part of, or feel like they belong to one specific group or another. Many of the texts thus depict multiple, sometimes conflicting affiliations.
- Many of the texts I have listed ask the question who can speak for whom in debates about identity and belonging. How does one engage responsibly in speaking for others? How can one distinguish speaking ‘about’ others and speaking ‘for’ others?
- I argue that my primary sources depict “rituals of speaking” that must be analyzed by considering (1) the words spoken, (2) the event, i.e. the wider context as well as the concrete situation, and (3) who is saying the words, i.e. questions of positionality.
- The creation of academic departments and programs of African-American Studies, Women’s Studies or Asian-American Studies was born of the belief that both the study of and the advocacy for oppressed groups must involve and emphasize the voices of oppressed groups themselves. This belief is also expressed in the chosen texts.
- The texts I analyze here mix literary and scholarly discourses. They challenge racial, class, and gendered demarcations of identity and bring together seemingly disparate groups of people (female authors of color) under the umbrella of the shared feminist project of achieving more justice for many different kinds of women.
- The writers of color analyzed here do not attempt to speak for or about other women's experiences. They speak with others about shared experiences and those experiences that are not shared by all. They speak their own truth and resist division by creating solidarities which do not deny different experiences of other women. They try to bridge gaps of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation by unifying under a common project in which the question of who is speaking is of the utmost concern.
- The authors in question reach out to women outside of their respective ethnic or racial groups. They do this through literary or intertextual references, collective or collaborative literary projects, and through avoiding speaking on behalf of other groups or issues that do not concern them directly.

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Thesis Statements

Topic 1: The Representation of Refugee Children in American Culture

1. Representations of refugee children in American culture depict significant changes within internal family dynamics. Often, they depict intergenerational conflicts.
2. The topic of belonging and people's struggle for belonging plays a crucial role in American representations of refugee children.
3. An attempt to individualize refugee children is reflected in American cultural representations of refugee children, who are given a voice rarely heard in political debates.
4. The novel [*Novel Title*] (Year) by [Author's Name] and the movie [*Movie Title*] (Year) depict different perspectives on the traumatic experience of being a 'Lost Boy' from Sudan.
5. The photographs and artworks listed point to and critically examine the different ways that refugee children are looked at, but often not seen by American society.
6. The importance of language for refugee children plays a significant role in the poetry as well as in the memoir of Vietnamese American writer [Authors Name].
7. The short stories by [author's name] and [author's name] use references to food and popular culture to address problems of identity experienced by refugee children.

Topic 2: The Representation of Native Americans in 21st Century American Culture

1. Activism plays an important role in 21st Century American representations of Native Americans, whether by Native peoples or non-Native peoples.
2. The depiction of community relations beyond the nuclear family--both broken and intact--is a significant part of representations of Native Americans in 21st Century American culture.
3. Representations of Native Americans in 21st Century American culture reflect a strong correlation between social struggles and the celebration of Native cultures.
4. Human-land and human-nature relations continue to play an important role in 21st Century American representations of Native Americans, often challenging older tropes.
5. In contrast to the other primary materials, the SF novel [*Novel title*] (year) by [author's name] shows a shift in power hierarchies between Native and non-Native peoples.
6. The in/visibility of Native Americans in American culture is an important theme in the movies [*Movie Title*] (year) and [*Movie Title*] (Year).
7. Evocations of historical events are used in several of the primary works to highlight the ongoing problem of settler-colonialism in the United States.