

Seminar II: The Road Trip in American Literature

ENGL 02394-2

Mondays and Wednesdays

11:00 a.m. -12:15 p.m.

Bunce 332



The story of the road's allure and its promise of inexhaustible freedom and possibility has been told by countless American novelists—from James Fenimore Cooper in the nineteenth century to Sandra Cisneros in the twenty-first, such artists have used the figure of the road and, more broadly, of the mythic American frontier, to celebrate and interrogate American ideologies of individualism and exceptionalism, democracy and progress. In this course we will begin our study of road tripping in American literature by establishing where travel fits in the narrative of westward expansion in the United States in the nineteenth century. Then, we will study a watershed moment for the road narrative in American literature, the “Long Fifties,” in order to discern the ways in which gendered, raced, and classed parameters for travel set in America in the nineteenth century are upheld in road literature of this period. Last, we will turn our attention to the ways mobility, or immobility, shapes Latina/o subjectivity from the liberation movements of the late 1960s through the present. We will examine how landscapes, cities, neighborhoods, even vehicles serve as sites for the formation and transformation of gendered, sexed, raced, and classed identity in individuals and in larger constructions like the “nation.” Course objectives include learning to use history effectively as a context to understand and talk about both representations of American identity in US literature and contemporary social relations; to understand the ways US travel narratives have been central to constructing the parameters for American cultural citizenship; and to address the broad question, why and how does culture become a site of dissent?

Three semester hours.

Four primary texts will be drawn from the following list:

Oscar Zeta Acosta, *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*

Ana Castillo, *The Mixquiahuala Letters*

Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo*

Genero González, *The Quixote Cult*

Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*

Erika Lopez, *Flaming Iguanas: An Illustrated, All-Girl, Road Novel Thing*

John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*

For more information contact Dr. Marci Carrasquillo: carrasquillo@rowan.edu