



**Los Angeles Unified School District
Course Guideline**

Course Title: Chicana/o Literature		
Semester Course: Grades 11-12	Prerequisite: None	Course Number: 230424
Course Designation: English Elective “B”	Text: Teacher/school site selected resources	
LAUSD Definition of Ethnic Studies		
<p>Ethnic Studies is an interdisciplinary and comparative study of the social, cultural, artistic, political, historical, and economic expression and experience of race and ethnicity that primarily centers the studies of American Indians/Native Americans, Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders, Black/African Americans, and Chicana/o and Latina/o/x.</p> <p>Ethnic Studies centers holistic humanization and critical consciousness, providing every student the opportunity to enter the content from their own space, positionality, and perspective. Ethnic Studies affirms the student identity, experience, and the building of empathy for others. This includes the self-determination of those who have ancestral roots and knowledge who have resisted and survived settler colonialism, racism, white supremacy, cultural erasure, as well as other patterns, structures, and systems of marginalization and oppression.</p> <p>The discipline uses culturally and community - responsive pedagogical practices to empower students to become anti - racist leaders. Ethnic studies reconstructs and transforms the traditional narrative and curriculum by highlighting the contributions people of color have made in shaping US culture and society.</p>		
Chicana/o Literature		
<p>This course explores the diverse and rich voices of Chicana/o and Latina/o/x authors, focusing on themes of identity, cultural heritage, social justice, and self-expression. A Chicana/o Literature course provides a transformative experience by using literature and writing as tools for students to critically examine systems of power and oppression while also fostering personal and collective empowerment. Through the study of novels, poetry, and non-fiction, students will engage in critical discussions and analyses that foster an understanding of the Chicana/o and Latina/o/x experience in the United States.</p> <p>A Chicana/o Literature course reconstructs and transforms the traditional narrative by shifting the focus from Eurocentric perspectives to the historical and cultural contributions of Chicana/os and other marginalized communities, demonstrating their role in shaping U.S. culture and society. Aligned with the California Common Core State Standards and LAUSD guidelines, this course emphasizes literacy skills, critical thinking, and argumentative writing, preparing students for success in college and beyond. The Chicana/o Literature course embodies the principles of Ethnic Studies by going beyond content delivery and pedagogy to actively empower students to take a critical stance on issues affecting their communities. It achieves this through an engaged, student-centered approach that fosters critical consciousness, activism, and self-determination. Beyond academic skills, the course helps students develop a sense of agency by encouraging self-empowerment through cultural pride and historical understanding. This is especially</p>		

important for students from marginalized backgrounds, who may have never seen their histories and experiences reflected in their curriculum.

This course utilizes primary texts alongside supplemental poetry, essays, and short stories by notable Chicana/o and Latina/o/x writers. Students will examine themes such as identity, immigration, systemic inequality, and the intersections of language, family, and culture. The Chicana/o Literature course utilizes culturally and community-responsive pedagogical practices to empower students as anti-racist leaders by validating their lived experiences, fostering critical consciousness, and promoting action-oriented learning. Through literature, dialogue, and activism, students develop the tools to confront racism, advocate for justice, and uplift their communities.

The course centers on communities and individuals in the United States whose ancestral roots trace back to the Indigenous peoples of the U.S. Southwest, Caribbean, Central, and South America, communities that have endured and resisted the legacies of Spanish colonization and U.S. imperialism. These populations share a collective history shaped by colonial mestizaje, racialization, marginalization, and cultural erasure, although these dynamics manifest differently across regions. Despite this diversity, their shared historical and cultural experiences form the foundation of a distinct and evolving Chicana/o identity.

Course topics examine how Spanish colonization and the imposition of geopolitical borders by European and U.S. powers produced cultural hybridity, historical trauma, and continued resistance. These processes have often positioned Chicana/o communities as a singular ethnic group based on language and perceived cultural traits, while simultaneously erasing the rich racial, national, and Indigenous distinctions within them. The result is a complex identity shaped by colonization, resistance, and survival in a white supremacist U.S. context.

Chicana/o identity is not monolithic, it is dynamic, intersectional, and transborder in nature. These communities are not merely migrants from Latin America but represent a broad spectrum of experiences rooted in Indigenous ancestry and shaped by generations of displacement, resistance, and activism. Since the annexation of Mexican territories by the United States, Chicana/o communities have navigated a persistent sense of unbelonging, caught between multiple cultures and nations. This tension is poignantly captured in the expression "ni de aquí, ni de allá," "neither from here nor there," which underscores the central questions of identity, belonging, and cultural survival explored throughout the course.

Note on Terminology: Chicana/o, Chicanx, and Latina/o

The suggestion to use "x" or "Latina/o" in the title of this course invites a reflection on the historical and cultural significance of the terms Chicana and Chicano. These identifiers emerged during the Chicano Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and were adopted by activists as expressions of cultural pride and political resistance. Their etymological connection to the Indigenous Mexica people underscores their alignment with Mesoamerican heritage and decolonial identity.

The use of the "-a" and "-o" suffixes, and later the hybrid term "Latina/o," reflects the gendered structure of the Spanish language, a structure rooted in European colonialism and its racial hierarchies. Consequently, many have critiqued the term "Latino" for reinforcing Eurocentric conceptions of identity that obscure or deny Indigenous histories and epistemologies.

Although Chicana/o was originally associated with the Mexican American community, the term has been embraced by some individuals of other Latin American backgrounds, particularly those who resonate with its activist roots and its emphasis on resistance, indigeneity, and cultural affirmation. While Mexican

Americans constitute the majority of this demographic in the U.S., many Latinx communities share historical experiences related to colonization, migration, marginalization, and struggles for educational and political equity. Chicana/o, therefore, can offer a meaningful framework that connects these shared struggles with a deeper Indigenous past.

It is essential to acknowledge, however, that not all who identify as Latino/a embrace the term Chicana/o. Some prefer to be identified by their national origins (e.g., Puerto Rican, Cuban), while others adopt broader pan-ethnic terms. The course thus seeks to inform and contextualize these varied forms of self-identification, emphasizing that such choices are deeply personal and should be understood within a broader conversation about power, erasure, and resistance.

The more recent term “Chicanx” has emerged as an effort to be inclusive of non-binary and gender-expansive identities. While increasingly adopted in some academic and activist circles, its use is not yet widespread or universally accepted within Chicana/o Studies. Some scholars argue that the term Chicana/o already signals a political and inclusive orientation, grounded in social justice, Indigenous reclamation, and challenges to dominant hegemonic narratives. For many, its historical legacy remains central to affirming both cultural identity and academic legitimacy in the face of institutional marginalization.

Ultimately, the decision regarding terminology in the course title is not only semantic, but also political, pedagogical, and personal. A Chicana/o Literature or Chicana/o Studies course can, and should, engage critically with questions of gender identity and inclusivity, while also honoring the historical significance and continued relevance of the term Chicana/o in shaping a counter-narrative to Eurocentric curricula and social systems.

Course Description

This course provides students with a rigorous and interdisciplinary exploration of Chicana/o literature within the broader framework of Ethnic Studies. Students will engage deeply with the historical, cultural, artistic, political, and social dimensions that shape the Chicana/o and Latina/o/x experience in the United States, with a particular focus on the U.S. Southwest. Through the study of novels, poetry, essays, memoirs, and testimonios, students will analyze how literature serves as both cultural expression and political resistance.

The course centers core Ethnic Studies principles, emphasizing critical consciousness, counter-narratives, holistic humanization, and self-determination. Students will examine how systems of power, such as white supremacy, settler colonialism, patriarchy, and systemic racism, have shaped and continue to impact Chicana/o communities. At the same time, students will explore how literature affirms identity, fosters resilience, and inspires collective action.

Through close reading, reflective writing, and creative expression, students will connect course texts to their own lived experiences, while building empathy and solidarity with others. The course encourages students to see themselves as scholars, storytellers, and change agents capable of contributing to cultural memory and social transformation. By the end of the course, students will have developed the analytical, expressive, and critical thinking skills necessary for college-level work, while gaining a deeper understanding of the power of literature to reflect and reshape the world.

Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze and evaluate literary texts by Chicana/o and Latina/o/x authors to determine central themes and examine how these themes reflect cultural, historical, and social contexts, especially those related to systemic oppression and resistance.
- Critically interpret authors' use of literary devices, such as symbolism, magical realism, imagery, and tone, to understand how meaning is constructed and how literature functions as a form of cultural expression, counter narrative, and activism.
- Write argumentative, narrative, and expository essays that demonstrate logical reasoning, personal voice, and clear textual evidence, while revising work through individual reflection and collaborative feedback.
- Conduct short and sustained research projects to explore themes, historical contexts, and the contributions of key Chicana/o figures, examining their impact on social movements, counter-narratives, and community empowerment.
- Engage in inquiry-based, evidence-supported discussions that build on others' ideas, challenge dominant narratives, and promote critical consciousness around issues affecting marginalized communities.
- Cultivate empathy, active listening, and open-minded dialogue to foster inclusivity, mutual respect, and the holistic well-being of all participants.
- Celebrate and elevate stories and counter-narratives from Chicana/o and broader Latina/o communities to deepen understanding of identity, intersectionality, and social justice.
- Promote individual and collective empowerment by developing students' voices as agents of change, enabling them to articulate the experiences and struggles of their communities with confidence and purpose.

Recommended Focus Standards	
Historical Analysis	Chronological and Spatial Thinking: 1,2,3,4 and 5 Research, Evidence and Point of View: 1, 2, 3 Historical Interpretation: 1, 2, 3 and 4
Common Core State Standards>English Language Arts > History/Social Science	CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RH.9 - 10.1; CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RH.9 - 10.2; CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RH.9 - 10.3; CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RH.9 - 10.4; CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RH.9 - 10.5; CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RH.9 - 10.6; CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RH.9 - 10.7; CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RH.9 - 10.8 ; CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RH.9 - 10.9; CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RH.9 10.10; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4
Common Core	RH 1-10
Common Core Writing	WHST 1-10

Student Learning Outcomes

1. **Critical Literary Analysis**-Students will analyze and interpret literary works by Chicana/o and Latina/o/x authors, identifying central themes such as identity, resilience, migration, gender, and resistance, and evaluating how these texts challenge dominant narratives and reflect the lived experiences of marginalized communities.
2. **Historical and Cultural Understanding**-Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical, political, and cultural contexts that shape Chicana/o identity and literature, including

colonization, racialization, migration, and the Chicano Movement, and explain how these forces influence literary expression.

3. **Intersectional Awareness**-Students will examine the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, language, and citizenship in Chicana/o literature, developing an awareness of how these factors shape both personal and collective identities within a white supremacist and settler colonial society.
4. **Student Voice and Creative Expression**-Students will produce original writing, such as poetry, personal narrative, or multimedia projects, that engages with themes of self-identity, cultural heritage, and community, using literature as a model for expressing their own experiences and visions for justice.
5. **Community Connection and Empathy**-Students will engage with testimonios, oral histories, and storytelling practices to foster empathy, validate lived experiences, and understand literature as a tool for healing, solidarity, and transformative education.
6. **Civic Engagement and Critical Consciousness**-Students will apply course content to real-world issues by developing a critical stance on systems of power and oppression, and proposing or participating in action-oriented projects that affirm cultural identity, advocate for equity, and uplift their communities.

Student Skill Development (Practice)

1. **Critical Thinking and Analytical Reasoning**-Students will examine complex social, historical, and literary issues using investigative thinking skills. They will assess arguments for logic, validity, and bias, and recognize patterns of oppression and resistance within Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x narratives.
2. **Advanced Reading and Writing**-Students will engage with diverse texts, novels, poetry, essays, and nonfiction, to construct counter-narratives. Through research essays, literary analyses, and personal narratives, students will develop evidence-based arguments and practice academic and creative writing.
3. **Historical and Literary Research**-Students will apply principles of historical inquiry by distinguishing between primary and secondary sources, analyzing author's intent, and using multiple perspectives to interpret events and literary works through an Ethnic Studies lens.
4. **Community Engagement and Social Justice**-Students will complete a community-responsive project that connects classroom learning to real-world action. Through this work, they will engage with cultural and ancestral knowledge, explore local issues, and advocate for equity and justice.
5. **Self-Reflection and Identity Development**-Students will explore their own identities and lived experiences in relation to the course content. Through reflective writing, discussions, and presentations, they will deepen their understanding of self, community, and the role of literature in shaping social consciousness

Course Syllabus

Unit 1: Foundations of Chicana/o Literature: Identity, History, and Power (4 Weeks)

This foundational unit introduces students to Chicana/o literature as a space for cultural affirmation, historical recovery, and resistance. Students explore literature as both an artistic and political response to colonization, marginalization, and racialization. Through poetry, short stories, essays, and memoir excerpts, students examine the social construction of identity and analyze how Chicana/o writers assert voice, agency, and connection to community and land. This unit sets the stage for critical analysis throughout the course by establishing the historical, cultural, and ideological frameworks of Ethnic Studies and the Chicana/o literary tradition.

Topics Include:

- Ethnic Studies and Chicana/o Literature
- The formation of Chicana/o identity through literature.
- Cultural duality, or the negotiation between Indigenous, Chicana/o, and American traditions
- The use of Spanglish as a tool for self-expression and resistance

Enduring Understandings:

- Mesoamerican civilizations laid a deep foundation for the cultural practices and traditions that continue to shape Chicana/o literature and identity today.
- Learning about pre-Columbian history is crucial for a nuanced understanding of the complexities of the Chicana/o experience and identity in the United States.
- The concept of mestizaje, as reflected in literature, while offering a framework for understanding Chicana/o heritage, also presents complexities and challenges.
- Chicana/o literature challenges dominant narratives and reclaims histories.
- Identity is intersectional, fluid, and shaped by socio political forces.
- Literature serves as a tool for resistance, affirmation, and self-determination.
- The historical and cultural experiences of Chicana/o people inform their literary expression.
- Critical consciousness and empathy emerge through the exploration of lived experiences.

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to be Chicana/o?
- How does cultural heritage shape identity in Chicana/o literature?
- What shapes our individual and collective identities?
- How does Chicana/o literature reflect, challenge, or reconstruct traditional narratives of identity and belonging?
- What does it mean to live “in-between” cultures or borders?
- How can literature foster critical consciousness and social change?

Sample Assignments:

- **Analytical essay**-Students examine how cultural heritage shapes identity in the selected texts, using textual evidence to support their arguments. By the end of the unit, students will gain a foundational understanding of Chicana/o literary traditions and their role in shaping broader cultural narratives.
- **Multimodal Project**-Students will create a multimodal project (e.g., spoken word performance, digital collage, documentary-style video, or bilingual short story) that explores their own or another individual’s cultural hybridity, inspired by Anzaldúa’s and Mora’s works.
- **Community Poem (Group Project)**-In small groups, students co-create a 40-line poem representing their collective identities and community experiences. Students will present and explain their creative choices, encouraging collaboration and affirmation of community perspectives.

Sample Activities:

- **Identity Circle Protocol**-Students share personal artifacts (photo, object, word, or quote) that represent their identity. This cultivates a space of vulnerability and empathy, setting the tone for trust-based dialogue.
- **Literary Devices Scavenger Hunt**-Students identify literary devices across assigned readings and annotate how they reveal themes of cultural hybridity, marginalization, or empowerment.
- **Critical Language Mapping**-Students create a personal “language map” showing the languages, dialects, and speech communities they belong to. They reflect on how language influences identity and belonging.
- **Borderlands Map Exercise**-Using art or digital tools, students visually represent their own “borderlands,” the cultural, familial, linguistic, or emotional spaces where they feel in-between.

Unit 2: Historicizing Chicana/o Identity, Power, Resistance, and Voice (3 weeks)

This unit engages students in analyzing how Chicana/o identity and voice have been shaped through historical, political, and cultural experiences, particularly in response to colonization, U.S. imperialism, and systemic marginalization. Students will read texts such as Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* and other selected works such as Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* to examine the emergence of Chicana/o literature as a distinct literary and social movement. The unit emphasizes the development of Chicana/o literary voice within the broader context of resistance, spirituality, land, language, and mestizaje. Students will analyze the historical foundations that have influenced Chicana/o consciousness and use literature as a lens to understand decolonization, identity, and self-determination.

Topics:

- Gender roles and societal expectations within Chicana/o communities
- The role of community in shaping identity and belonging
- Self-expression through storytelling and vignettes
- The legacy of colonization and cultural survival
- Chicana/o literature as historical counter-narrative
- Spirituality, Indigenous knowledge, and mestizaje
- Coming of age in a colonized landscape
- Resistance, cultural duality, and reclaiming voice

Enduring Understandings

- Chicana/o literature functions as a historical record and resistance to systemic erasure.
- Cultural identity is deeply influenced by historical oppression, resilience, and the recovery of Indigenous knowledge.
- Literature can be used to heal, reclaim voice, and empower communities.
- Themes of land, language, and family reflect broader struggles for justice and self-definition in Chicana/o communities.

Essential Questions:

- How have historical and colonial legacies shaped Chicana/o identity and voice?
- In what ways does Chicana/o literature reflect and challenge dominant cultural narratives?
- How can Chicana/o literature help us understand the complexities of being “ni de aquí, ni de allá”?
- What role does storytelling play in reclaiming history and affirming cultural heritage?

Sample Assignments:

- **Oral History Project**-Interview a family member or community elder who lived through an experience that addresses themes similar to the topics discussed in class and document their experiences via a biographical essay or presentation.
- **Narrative Essay**-Students will reflect on their own identity and family history, drawing inspiration from Sandra Cisneros's storytelling techniques.
- **Thematic Literary Scrapbook** (Group or Individual Project)-Students select a major theme from *Bless Me, Ultima*, such as spirituality, coming of age, or land and belonging, and create a scrapbook that includes symbolic representations, quotes, visuals, and personal reflections. A 2–3 minute oral presentation explains their theme and its connection to Chicana/o history and self-determination.
- **Historical Timeline Project**-Students research and create a visual timeline with a written explanation that aligns major moments in Chicana/o history (Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Chicano Movement, educational walkouts, etc.) with themes and events from *Bless Me, Ultima*. Includes an artist's statement or annotation explaining how these events connect to the text and lived experiences.

Sample Activities:

- **Historical Fiction Writing**-Write a short story from the perspective of a Chicana/o experiencing the events of this period, such as the Mexican-American War or forced repatriation.
- **Film Analysis**-Watch and analyze a film like "Walkout" or "Zoot Suit" that explores themes of social justice and Chicana/o identity in the context of war and assimilation.
- **Community History Project**-Research local Chicana/o history and create a presentation or exhibit for the school or community center. This could involve historical sites, community figures, or cultural traditions.
- **Character as Community Analysis**-Students will select a character from one of the course novels (e.g., Ultima) and analyze how the character symbolizes key aspects of the Chicana/o community. Using a visual or written format, students will examine the character's connection to land, spirituality, cultural identity, and resistance. The analysis will explore how the character embodies collective struggles, resilience, and transformation. Students will conclude by reflecting on how this character illustrates broader themes in Chicana/o literature, such as decolonization, mestizaje, and communal empowerment.
- **"Voice and Silence" Dialectical Journal**-Students keep a running dialectical journal exploring instances where characters struggle with or reclaim their voice. On one side, they cite the text; on the other, they reflect on how that struggle connects to larger issues of assimilation, cultural erasure, and empowerment.
- **Group Poetry Remix**-Using lines from a selected text and original student writing, small groups construct a spoken word piece or found poem that reclaims ancestral memory or critiques historical silencing. These are performed in class and followed by a reflection circle.

Unit 3: Coming of Age Through Poetry and Storytelling (3 Weeks)

In this unit, students will examine the intersection of identity, adolescence, and self-expression through the lens of poetry. They will explore how Chicana/o and Latina/o/x poets use poetry as a powerful form of cultural affirmation, resistance, and coming-of-age storytelling. By engaging with poems, corridos, and folktales, students will analyze how language, magical realism, imagery, and metaphor are used to express personal identity, cultural memory, intergenerational trauma, and political awareness. Through close reading, discussion, and creative writing, students will discover poetry as a vehicle for self-discovery, healing, and empowerment. Ultimately, they will craft and share their own poems as a means of claiming voice, honoring community, and shaping their own narratives.

Topics:

- Intersectional Identity: Exploration of identity through the lenses of race, gender, culture, language, and religion
- Adolescence and Internal Struggles: Navigating family expectations, body image, cultural pressure, and the desire for personal freedom
- The Power of Voice: Understanding the transformative role of poetry, spoken word, and storytelling as tools for healing, resistance, and self-expression
- Chicana/o and Latina/o/x Poetic Traditions: Examining the historical and cultural significance of poetic forms, including corridos and oral storytelling
- Coming of Age in Verse: Analyzing how poets capture the complexities of growing up within marginalized communities
- Language and Liberation: Investigating code-switching, reclaiming voice, and affirming bilingual/bicultural identities
- Poetry as Resistance: Using metaphor, imagery, and narrative to challenge oppression and preserve cultural memory
- Art as Activism: Exploring how poetry functions as a form of social justice, community empowerment,

and self-determination

Enduring Understandings:

- Poetry serves as a powerful tool for resistance, healing, and identity formation within Chicana/o and Latina/o/x communities.
- Coming-of-age experiences are shaped by intersecting sociocultural, political, and historical forces.
- Poets reclaim language, memory, and cultural history as acts of self-determination and empowerment.
- The poetic form provides space for both individual expression and collective storytelling, offering a platform to affirm identity and build solidarity.
- Students will understand and appreciate poetry as a means of personal empowerment, creative expression, and cultural affirmation.
- Chicana/o communities have a long tradition of using poetry to highlight collective action that continues to inspire contemporary struggles for justice and equity.
- Memorializing the legacy of the Chicano Movement through poetry helps us continue to inform and shape Chicana/o identity, literature, and activism in the 21st century.

Essential Questions:

- How do Chicana/o and Latina/o/x poets use language, imagery, and form to express identity, memory, and resistance?
- In what ways does poetry support individuals and communities in navigating coming-of-age experiences within marginalized contexts?
- Why is poetry an effective medium for confronting systems of power and amplifying lived experiences?
- How do oral traditions, such as corridos and storytelling, preserve, transmit, and affirm cultural knowledge and history?
- What role did poetry play in the Chicano Movement's efforts to define social justice and support the strategies activists used to pursue systemic change?
- In what ways has poetry empowered young people to shape the history, identity, and activism of Chicana/o communities in the United States?

Sample Assignments:

- Through poetry analysis, spoken word, or group performances, students will develop their understanding of poetic form and personal storytelling. Students may write and perform a spoken word poem that addresses an issue from the course that impacts the Chicana/o community, allowing them to harness their own voices as modeled by selected authors.
- **Research Project**-Choose a specific movement or figure and research its history, goals, successes, and challenges. Create a multimedia presentation or exhibit showcasing your findings using poetry that highlights important aspects and details of the project.
- **Creative Expression Project**- Through art, poetry, spoken word, or music, students will express their understanding of a specific aspect of Chicana/o resistance. Consider the challenges faced and the triumphs achieved.
- **Coming-of-Age Spoken Word Piece**-Students will write and perform a spoken word poem centered on a personal coming-of-age moment. This piece should incorporate cultural references, code-switching, imagery, and one rhetorical device. Students will also write a reflection connecting their poem to themes from the unit.
- **Found Poem Collage**-Students will create a visual found poem using lines from poems in the unit and phrases from interviews, family stories, or cultural artifacts. The poem should express a central theme (e.g., identity, loss, pride, resistance) and be accompanied by a one-page artist's statement.

Sample Activities:

- **Poetry Roundtable**-In groups, students analyze and annotate different poems, focusing on speaker, tone, form, and cultural references. Each group presents their findings, highlighting how the poem addresses coming-of-age or identity. Class discussion follows.
- **Poetry as Protest Gallery Walk**-Students analyze a curated set of political poems and song lyrics, then post annotations and reflections on large posters. A gallery walk allows students to view each other's interpretations and discuss the broader social issues reflected in the texts.
- **"I Am From..." Poem**-Students write a free-verse poem integrating cultural markers, memories, foods, sayings, and geographic references from their communities and families.

Unit 4: Gender, Feminism, and the Chicana Experience (3 Weeks)

This unit explores the intersection of gender, identity, and resistance through the lens of Chicana literature, poetry, and feminist thought. Students will examine how Chicana writers challenge patriarchy, colonialism, and white supremacy by asserting their cultural, spiritual, political, and gendered identities. Through close readings of fiction, poetry, and essays, students will explore themes of motherhood, sexuality, body politics, generational trauma, and self-determination. This unit centers Chicana feminist voices that have been historically marginalized, even within the broader Chicano Movement, and introduces students to the role of literature in redefining feminism through a culturally rooted, anti-racist, and intersectional framework. Students will reflect on their own experiences and identities while drawing connections between literary expression and contemporary gender justice movements.

Topics:

- Chicana feminism and intersectionality
- Gender roles in Chicana/o communities and literature
- The politics of the body, motherhood, and sexuality
- Erasure and voice within the Chicano Movement
- Feminist resistance through storytelling, poetry, and testimony
- Generational knowledge and matriarchal legacy
- Reclaiming language, naming, and identity

Enduring Understandings

- Chicana feminism emerged as a response to the intersections of racism, patriarchy, and colonialism, and continues to shape gender justice movements today.
- Literature provides a powerful platform for Chicana voices to challenge silencing and assert self-determination.
- Gender identity and expression are shaped by culture, criticality, history, politics, and personal experience.
- Storytelling and poetry serve as tools for healing, resistance, and reclaiming power within Chicana/o communities.
- The struggles and contributions of Chicanas have often been erased, but their narratives are central to understanding Chicana/o literature and history.

Essential Questions:

- How do Chicana writers redefine feminism through cultural and political resistance?
- In what ways have Chicanas been marginalized within both dominant society and the Chicano Movement?
- How do Chicana poets and authors use literature to confront gender roles, colonial legacies, and systems of oppression?
- What roles do language, naming, and storytelling play in reclaiming identity and power?

- How can literature help us examine and challenge societal expectations around gender, sexuality, and the body?
- What can we learn from Chicana feminist thought to inform today's struggles for gender justice and equity?

Sample Assignments:

- **Intersectional Identity Reflection Essay-** Students write a personal essay exploring how gender intersects with other aspects of their identity (race, culture, language, sexuality, etc.). Students will connect their lived experience to themes in the texts and apply Ethnic Studies frameworks.
- **Literary Analysis: Feminist Voice and Resistance-** Students analyze a selected poem or passage from a Chicana feminist writer, examining how literary devices (tone, symbolism, imagery, code-switching) are used to convey resistance, identity, and cultural pride.
- **Found Poem: Reclaiming Voice-** Using lines from readings and their own writing, students create a found poem that expresses self-definition, body autonomy, or cultural resilience. Students share and reflect on the connections between literature and lived experience.

Sample Activities:

- **Testimonio Circle-** In small, confidential circles, students share short written testimonios related to gender roles, body image, or expectations in their families/communities. Students reflect on how personal stories build empathy and disrupt silence.
- **"Name Yourself" Creative Writing Activity-** Students write a short prose piece or poem reclaiming their name or identity, inspired by Anzaldúa's writing about naming and language. Students can choose to share these as a class "naming ritual."
- **Visual Analysis: Chicana in Art-** Students examine selected visual art aligned with the goals of the class and analyze how artists reframe traditional gender roles and cultural icons.

Unit 5: Borders, Migration, Displacement, and Borderlands Identities (4 weeks)

This unit explores the historical, political, and emotional landscapes of migration and displacement through Chicana/o and Latina/o/x literature. Students will critically examine how both physical and metaphorical borders shape identity, belonging, and cultural memory. Through the study of poetry, memoir, short stories, and oral testimonios, students will investigate the enduring impact of U.S. imperialism, colonial border-making, and systemic injustice, including issues such as family separation, xenophobia, and immigration policy. Special attention will be given to the contradictions and tensions embodied in the phrase "ni de aquí, ni de allá" ("neither from here nor there"), as students analyze how these liminal experiences are expressed in literature. Personal narratives and literary testimonios will serve as powerful tools for understanding the human consequences of displacement while affirming the resilience, dignity, and complexity of borderland and migrant communities. This unit challenges dominant narratives by centering stories of struggle, survival, and cultural endurance.

Topics:

- U.S.-Mexico border history and the legacy of conquest
- Migration and displacement as literary themes
- The psychological impact of being "in-between" cultures and nations
- Testimonio and personal narrative as resistance
- Transfronterizo identity and cultural hybridity
- Immigration policy, criminalization, and human rights
- Community resilience and survival across generations
- The realities of immigration and the challenges faced by undocumented families.
- Systemic injustice, including detention, deportation, and legal barriers

- Resilience and advocacy in the face of adversity

Enduring Understandings:

- Borders are not just physical spaces but social, psychological, and cultural constructs that impact identity and belonging.
- Migration and displacement are shaped by historical legacies of colonization, imperialism, and systemic inequity.
- Chicana/o and Latina/o/x literature provides a powerful counter-narrative to dominant portrayals of migrants and borderlands communities.
- Cultural hybridity, language, and family memory are central to navigating life in the borderlands.
- Testimonio, poetry, and storytelling are tools of resistance, survival, and affirmation for communities affected by migration and marginalization.

Essential Questions:

- How do borders-both literal and symbolic-shape identity, belonging, and power?
- In what ways do migration and displacement experiences inform Chicana/o and Latina/o/x literature?
- How does literature from the borderlands challenge dominant narratives about immigration and national identity?
- What does it mean to live "ni de aquí, ni de allá," and how is that reflected in literary expression?
- How can personal narrative and collective memory serve as forms of resistance against dehumanizing systems?
- What role does storytelling play in humanizing immigrant and borderlands experiences?

Sample Assignments:

- **Borderlands Literary Analysis Essay-** Students will select a passage or poem from *Borderlands/La Frontera* or another key text and write a literary analysis that explores how the author uses language, metaphor, and structure to convey the experience of borderland identity.
- **Migration Narrative (Creative Testimonio)-** Students will conduct an interview with a family or community member who has experienced migration or displacement. They will write a first-person narrative or poem based on the interview, emphasizing the human impact of borders and movement.
- **“Ni de Aquí, Ni de Allá” Personal Reflection-** Students will write a reflective essay or visual representation (zine, collage, or digital story) that explores their own feelings or experiences of cultural in-betweenness, belonging, or marginalization.

Sample Activities:

- **Visual Border Mapping-** Students create personal or collective maps of the "borders" in their lives, geographical, cultural, linguistic, familial, and annotate them with key events, emotions, or questions. These serve as springboards for writing and discussion.
- **Socratic Seminar: Who Belongs?-** Using selected texts and current events, students engage in a seminar on the politics of belonging, asking: Who defines the border? Who benefits from it? Who is excluded? How do writers push back?
- **Poem Pairing and Performance-** Students choose two poems on migration/border identity and analyze their similarities and differences in tone, imagery, and purpose. In small groups, students create and perform a group spoken word piece in response.
- **Oral Histories Listening Session-** Students listen to audio-recorded oral histories from immigrants or borderlands residents (e.g., from StoryCorps or other local archives) and respond with reflective writing or art.

Unit 6: Literature as Legacy: Reflection, Action, and Student Voice (3 weeks)

This culminating unit invites students to reflect on the legacy of Chicana/o and Latina/o/x literature and its lasting influence on identity, activism, and cultural empowerment. Students will revisit key texts and themes explored throughout the course, such as resilience, identity, migration, family, and resistance, and critically examine how these works have shaped their understanding of self, community, and justice. Emphasizing student voice and creative agency, the unit challenges students to transform reflection into action. Through collaborative projects, multimedia presentations, and student-led discussions, learners will synthesize ideas across texts and contexts, drawing connections between literary expression and broader social issues. Literature becomes more than a subject of study; it becomes a living legacy, one that students inherit, expand, and carry forward. Rooted in the belief that youth voices are powerful and necessary, this unit empowers students to use storytelling and cultural memory as tools for advocacy, healing, and transformation.

Topics:

- Literature as a form of resistance, healing, and legacy
- Reflection as a practice of critical consciousness
- Art and storytelling as activism
- Student voice, agency, and cultural responsibility
- Reclaiming narrative through multimedia and multimodal expression
- Community engagement and legacy-building

Enduring Understandings

- Literature carries generational memory and serves as a bridge between past struggles and future change.
- Reflecting on stories of resistance and resilience fosters self-awareness, empathy, and critical action.
- Every student has a voice that can challenge injustice, uplift communities, and contribute to a legacy of liberation.
- Chicana/o and Latina/o/x literature is not static, it evolves through the creativity, storytelling, and advocacy of new generations.
- By examining and producing literature rooted in identity, culture, and justice, students become active participants in shaping their own narratives and communities.

Essential Questions:

- What is the legacy of Chicana/o and Latina/o/x literature, and how do we maintain and contribute to it?
- How has literature transformed the way I understand myself, my community, and the world?
- In what ways can storytelling be used to address current issues and inspire social change?
- How does reflection deepen critical consciousness and personal empowerment?
- What actions can I take, through writing, speaking, and creating, that honor my voice and the voices of those who came before me?

Sample Assignments:

- **Community Action Proposal-** Students research a current issue impacting their community and develop a proposal that outlines a small action project or public awareness campaign using storytelling, literature, or media as the foundation for advocacy.
- **Class Anthology: *Voces del Futuro***- Students contribute an original poem, narrative, or essay to a class-published anthology celebrating student voice, cultural pride, and resistance. Each submission includes a brief reflection on how it connects to the course's themes.
- **Final Reflection Project-** In this culminating piece, students will reflect on their personal and intellectual growth over the course. Drawing on specific texts, class discussions, and written

work, students will examine how their perspectives on identity, culture, resistance, and voice have evolved. This reflection will emphasize critical consciousness, self-discovery, and the lasting impact of engaging with Chicana/o and Latina/o/x literature. The project serves as both a summative assessment and a personal narrative of the student's journey through the course and can be in the form of a speech, multimedia presentation, essay, or student-made documentary style video.

Sample Activities:

- **Legacy Timeline-** Students work in groups to create a visual timeline connecting major literary and historical moments covered in the course to present-day social issues. Timelines will include Chicana/o and Latina/o/x authors, events, and student insights.
- **Gallery Walk: Final Project Showcase-** Students display or present their creative projects in a classroom gallery format. Peers leave written comments and affirmations, engaging in a celebration of collective learning and expression.
- **Reflection Circles-** Students participate in structured circle dialogues to share their takeaways from the course, their evolving identities, and their hopes for the future. This promotes peer learning, empathy, and closure.
- **Letter to a Future Student-** Students write a letter to next year's Chicana/o Literature class, offering advice, reflections, and encouragement, framing themselves as legacy-bearers of the course.

Text and Materials

- Textbooks must be selected by teachers, funded by the school site, and aligned with the District-approved Ethnic Studies curriculum and, where applicable, the California Department of Education content standards.
- Possible course texts:
 - Bless me, ultima by Rudolfo Anaya
 - Borderlands/La Frontera by Gloria Anzaldúa
 - Chronicle of a Death Foretold by Gabriel García Márquez
 - I Am Joaquín by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales
 - In the Country We Love by Diane Guerrero
 - One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez
 - Open Veins of Latin America by Eduardo Galeano
 - Rethinking Ethnic Studies (Rethinking Schools, 2019)
 - The House of the Spirits: A Novel by Isabel Allende
 - The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros
 - The Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo
- Possible supplemental texts (selected by teachers, funded by the school site, and aligned with the District-approved Ethnic Studies curriculum and, where applicable, the California Department of Education content standards): Include poetry, short stories, and articles from authors such as:
 - Julia Alvarez
 - Alurista
 - Gloria Anzaldúa
 - Ana Castillo
 - Pat Mora
 - Luis J. Rodriguez