INTRODUCTION  SELF AND OTHER

Inhabiting Other Lives will expose you to issues of human commonality and diversity, and invite you to investigate and understand the interconnectedness of various cultures, times and life experiences. The issues of identity are complex and encompass how we view ourselves and how others view us. Identity markers include, but are not limited to personality, appearance, gender, race, culture, profession, IQ, astrological signs etc. The purpose of this course is to explore as many identity markers as possible. This will be done through the assigned readings, creative writing and image making, outside activities and the ensuing discussions.

READINGS

The following readings are assigned and are available for purchase in the FIU bookstore and from other booksellers:


Additional readings will be assigned on-line and through the library course reserves.

ASSIGNMENTS

Keep a journal

The journal is intended to help you develop a regular practice of critical inquiry. While the journal must include the required course activities, it may also include any other writing and imagery that you feel helps to develop your understanding of the materials covered in class and their relationship to your world at large.

- Keep a journal in which you write brief responses to the readings assigned.
- Collect images. Draw, collect photographs, xerox images from magazines and books. Ask yourself how pictures (as opposed to words) describe how you know yourself and the world around you and write these ideas in your journal.
- When you attend outside activities such as poetry readings, art exhibits and lectures, or visit a sacred place, write a brief response relating the experience to your reading and discussions in class.
- Write a brief on cultural rights and wrongs as related to global human rights.

Write poetry

I have chosen simple--but not simplistic—poems: a selection of short, clear, engaging, thoughtful, immediately pleasurable poems that you can basically get on first hearing. They are vibrant, reader-friendly, comic, melancholic, reflective, irreverent, politically incorrect, unusual, unexpected, and thrilling. I want you to get your own creative juices flowing by creating original poems that express your life experiences. You will write original poetry, or poetry in the manner of a famous poet. You will also translate poetry from a language with which you are unfamiliar. You will also listen as guest poets share their own works with you. We will read poetry of other times and other places, but for the most part we’ll be experiencing the sounds, rhythms, and attitudes of poetry written more recently. You’ll find the old and the new, the foreign and the familiar, interchangeable. You will be inhabiting other lives—the landscape and chronology of the human heart—through poetry—climbing inside other people’s skins, studying other people’s lives to make sense of your own, finding a “momentary stay against confusion,” and learning how best to celebrate your time in this place. I would not be displeased if you developed an intense and deep appreciation of poetry.

- Collectively, we will take Pablo Neruda's Cuerpo de Mujer and write the male equivalent in English and Spanish.
- Write an original poem or a poem in the manner of another poet (further explanation in class).
- At the completion of each poetry theme, e.g., parents/children, write a brief essay in your journal summarizing what you have learned from other lives through their poetry. For example, after the parents/children section, what is the collective wisdom received from the reading? Compare/contrast it with your knowledge and experience of life.
- Translate a poem from a language you don’t know (further explanation in class).
  You will use dictionaries, online translating devices, and native speakers to help you with phrasing.
- Attend a poetry reading (details to be announced)
Art and visual imagery
Human beings are profoundly visual creatures and we’re living at a time when visual imagery and information is increasingly accessible around the globe. Consider how visual imagery creates meaning in your own life. What is beautiful? What is well-made? What is shocking? What is sacred? All these questions can be explored through images and to answer them we must question our own deeply ingrained attitudes. When you look at a work of art, a movie or new fashion, you probably know immediately whether you like it or not—but why do we like what we like, and why is our preference less important than understanding how the visual operates to create meaning in culture?

- You will each collect images for the journal (see above)
- Attend an art exhibition (details to be announced)
- Interview a practicing artist. You will come up with a list of 10 questions that you will ask of a practicing artist to gain understanding of how that individual uses visual imagery to explore her/his relationship with the world. (Suggestions of potential interviewees and contact information will be available to you.)

Human Rights, Religion, and Healing
Looking at the world in an epoch fashion: Take off your blinders!

- In depth discussion groups: 1) Human rights (those particularly involving women, the child, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons) and religion, and related acts of evil against humanity and the earth. 2) Healing: the body, mind and spirit- modern western medicine and science v. alternative methods [metaphysical concepts], and healing the earth. 3) What is sacred space?
- Write a document for a global ethic regarding treatment of the earth and its inhabitants that includes a view of sacred space
- Collectively write a formal apology to indigenous people (of the world or within the US), women for gender oppression, or the child that could be adopted by a governing body, e.g. the US Congress.

Final projects
Students will have a choice of three final projects, each of which will include some form of public presentation.

- Poetry: Collectively, we will compose (possibly illustrate) and publish a book of poetry. Your poems can be original or written in the manner of an established poet, i.e., take an existing poem you admire and substitute words here and there to fashion it to your own life, time, and place.
- Video/animation: In small groups we will create short video animations using drawings, photographs and other materials and found images in narrative sequence to express your ideas about identity, place and culture. Completed animations will be screened publically.
- Write (in a legal manner) documents that can be presented to a governing body (i.e. Congress) that deal with abuse of the earth or humanity. Then, transfer from legal jargon into either prose, or poetry, or a video narrative like a power point presentation.

PARTICIPATION
Your professors expect your attendance and full participation at every class meeting. We recognize that things happen in your life, and will assume that three (3) absences should cover all eventualities. We require neither notification nor documentation in connection with those three absences. However, every absence thereafter will result in the reduction of your final grade by one full letter grade (eg. an A- will become a B-).

COURSE EVALUATION
20% Class Participation (attendance, preparedness, discussion, presentation)
20% Journal
20% Quizzes
20% Outside Activities (poetry readings, art exhibits, public lectures)
20% Final Project

PLAGIARISM POLICY AND DEFINITION
(Adapted from http://www.fiu.edu/~comptalk/project2/plagiarism.htm)
Plagiarism means to present, as one’s own, the work, writing, words, or computer information of someone else. For correct attributions and references, consult The Chicago Manual of Style, or ask your professor for their preferred reference style. In the case of plagiarism, the instructor may fail the student in the course. And, in consultation with administrators, the instructor may recommend other action in accordance with university policies, including such severe disciplinary action as suspension from the university.