

LIT 2000-700, 701, 702
INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE
Dr. Elizabeth Hirsh ~ Spring 2021 ~ online course

*Fabulous Florida:
the Literature & Cultures of the Sunshine State*



Florida's beautiful beaches and sunny skies are fabulous, but in this course "fabulous" Florida doesn't refer to the way Florida actually *is* so much as the way poets and storytellers have *imagined* Florida. Often the Sunshine State is seen as a land of extremes—extreme weather, marginal subcultures, creepy-crawly swamp creatures, and equally outlandish human characters. Sometimes Florida's complex history and unique ethnic mix provide the focus or inspiration for creative invention and social criticism. And of course Florida's tourist culture sometimes becomes a symbol of all things kitschy or tacky, from pink flamingos and synchronized water skiing to strip malls, strip clubs, and the shrinking of the entire planet into a "Magic Kingdom" (@ \$124 per child/per day).

In this section we will learn about the basics of literature by exploring the way Florida has been portrayed imaginatively in selected works of fiction, poetry, drama, non-fiction prose, and cinema. In order to understand these works in context we will also learn something about the real-life history and cultures of Florida, including moments of special note such as the founding of Eatonville in 1887, the anti-gay persecution carried out by the Johns Committee between 1956 and 1965, the international crisis surrounding 5-year old Elian Gonzales in 1999 or, with particular resonance in our present moment, the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012. Whether created by Florida natives, transplants, or outsiders, these works by diverse authors both contribute to and challenge stereotypes of Florida. They may make you aware of your surroundings in a new way.

Required texts include: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston; short fiction by Lauren Groff, Ana Menendez and Jennine Capó Crucet; creative non-fiction by Jacquira Díaz and Harry Crews; poems by Richard Blanco, Walt Whitman and others; drama by Nilo Cruz. Required films include: *Sunshine State* (2002); *Adaptation* (2002); and *The Florida Project* (2017).