

Objective 1: Improve personal fluency in Spanish language and knowledge of the history and culture of Mexico, and Mexico-U.S. relations. (40%)

How This Objective Was Achieved: My family and I lived in Oaxaca, Mexico all of last year (July 20, 2010 – July 1, 2011), during which time I:

A) visited sites of historical and cultural interest throughout the state and neighboring states (Puebla and Chiapas).

B) taught a course in fall 2010 on “the Modern American Short Story” to advanced English students at *la Universidad Regional Sur Este* (URSE), the oldest private university in Oaxaca. In Spring 2011, I returned to teach a different section, “Latin American Short Stories in Translation” for two weeks, substituting for an instructor who had to leave town unexpectedly. The instructor, an American who has lived and taught in Oaxaca for 20 years, and I had many conversations about teaching the class, Oaxacan students, and academic culture in Mexico.

C) took a course titled “Latin American Woman Poets” in Fall 2010 through the *Universidad Autonoma Benito Juarez de Oaxaca (UABJO)*, the only public university in the state of Oaxaca.

D) taught Basic English to Middle School Students at *el Instituto Coubertin* in San Sebastian, Etna, Oaxaca for two months in Fall 2010 (the first bimester).

E) took personal growth courses: an exercise class, a beginning Guitar class offered through the *Casa de la Cultura*, and a two week workshop titled “Introduction to Digital Photography” offered through the *Centro Fotográfico Manuel Álvarez Bravo*.

F) experienced daily life in a small village on the outskirts of Oaxaca de Juarez, Mexico, throughout the seasons, through the joys and traumas.

Documentation:

- 1) Details and extensive reflections on teaching at URSE (journal-style), sample teaching materials
- 2) Reflections on teaching middle school at the Instituto Coubertin in San Sebastian Etna, Oaxaca and sample teaching materials.
- 3) Reflections and Materials from the poetry class I took at UABJO.
- 4) Reflections on other classes taken (dance/photography/guitar)
- 5) Materials and notes from photography and guitar classes
- 6) Photos I took while in the photography class
- 7) Journal-style reflections on my life in Mexico
- 8) My blog: <http://www.fromOakland2Oaxaca.com> (contains hundreds of photos)
- 9) Receipts, maps, programs, memorabilia

Objective 2: Increase my breadth of knowledge of U.S. Latino literature, and produce materials to assist in the future teaching of English 22. (10%)

How This Objective Was Achieved: I read 10 full-length books written by Mexican, Mexican-American, and U.S. Latino authors, with an eye to teaching the course again, and assisting other faculty who teach the course.

Documentation:

- 1) Annotated Bibliography

Objective 3: Come to an understanding of how Children's Literature courses are currently being taught at other colleges and universities. (10%)

How Objective Was Achieved: I reviewed online syllabi and available course materials for existing courses as they are taught across the country in English, Education, Comparative Literature, and Early Childhood Departments, with an eye to differences and similarities.

Documentation:

1) research notes attached (current practices in teaching Children's Literature in the college and university setting; lists of commonly taught texts, assignments, assessment strategies, and expected outcomes.)

Objective 4: Increase my knowledge in the field of Children's Literature, to prepare a course proposal and to prepare myself to teach this class for the first time. (25%)

How This Objective Was Achieved: I read extensively in this area, covering 40+ primary works, both classic and contemporary. (Critical works on youth literature in English were not available to me in Mexico, aside from online articles and excerpts.) I also interviewed and had phone/email conversations with experts in this field, including faculty at Chabot and other colleges, as well as children's librarians and independent bookstore owners, to uncover new, recommended authors and literary works.

Documentation:

- 1) Annotated bibliography
- 2) Interview notes

Objective 5: Submit a course outline and other required support materials to the Curriculum Committee in Fall 2011, and carry the course forward through approval. (15%)

How Objective Was Achieved: I worked with my Division Dean, our Administrative Assistant, members of the Curriculum Committee, and our Articulation Officer so that the proposal would be acceptable. I modeled the class after our other current elective literature courses where appropriate, and consulted with my colleagues to secure their approval as well.

Documentation:

- 1) Course proposal (approved by the Chabot College Curriculum Committee on 10/11/11)

Objective 1 Documentation, Part 1

Reflections on teaching at Mexico's South Eastern Regional University (URSE)

The basic info:

20 students in fall/ 25 in spring

8 hours/week in the classroom

Instruction focused on literary analysis, but also language and composition instruction

Class allowed me to gain first-hand knowledge of academic (university) culture in Mexico

Saw students reading American stories from a unique point of view – that of Mexican nationals who have never been to the States – as well as stories by Garcia Marquez, one of the greats of Latin American Literature

Had many discussions with the class on topics related to the stories, including racism, immigration, politics, American history, American geography, American culture, gender, family relations, media, & social class.

Learned to tackle vocabulary issues in a new way

Brought in media: film, clips from YouTube, telenovelas, PowerPoint, Moodle forums, Voice Threads, and “hot potato” quizzes on Moodle (online platform)

Incorporated creative writing techniques: “Rewrite this story from the point of view of a minor character”/ “Imagine this story set in Oaxaca in 2010”

Reflections on teaching at URSE:

I feel I was only somewhat successful in teaching this 8 hour/ week class on the American short story. For one thing, I had forgotten how much less access you have to the students and a college as a whole when you are an adjunct. I didn't have a private office in which to meet students, and I didn't have an office hour, since I only taught from 8-10am and the students were in class before and after my class every day until 1pm. (It didn't make sense for me to come back to the college at 1pm for an office hour.) Without meeting individually with students, I didn't feel that I was as able to help them with their writing as I would have liked. I also wasn't fully aware of when guest speakers were coming or special programs were happening on campus, I didn't fully understand their academic calendar (for example, the exam schedule) until quite late, and I didn't have many opportunities to interact with my colleagues and learn what they were doing in their classrooms and why.

The class was also very different from my typical Chabot classes in many ways. For one, the students were all the same age, having started, as a class, at URSE the year after they graduated high school. They were all 5th semester students, so they were all about 21 years old. They were all Mexican, most of them born and raised in or near Oaxaca de Juarez, although a couple of them were from other parts of the state. They were all in the program to become language teachers, with an emphasis on English, but also a background in French, German, or Italian. The idea is that each student in the program will complete their four years of language study at the university, become “licenciados” (“licensed” as opposed to holders of a “Bachelor of Arts”) and get jobs teaching English in a primary or secondary school in Oaxaca. The students therefore do not see college as a place to get a “liberal arts education.” They do not take science, art, history, or math. They study *only* their “carrera” or career. That is, they only take classes that will directly prepare them for that career, and studying literature is, at best, for most of them, only a strategy

for improving their overall understanding of the English language.

At Chabot, in contrast, I find that our students often are very excited about the idea of being in college, in general, and are pleased by the variety of classes available to them. Many are at least considering transferring on to earn a BA or BS degree at a larger institution after graduating from Chabot. Although they have widely differing interests, skill-levels, backgrounds, and professional goals, they tend to consider English as an important class that will help them read and write essays for other classes, and help them become better readers and writers in general. Sometimes they like the class readings and sometimes they don't, but readings in English class are at least as interesting as their history/political science/psychology/ anthropology readings, etc, and they do expect to read a lot. Also, many students tell me they like English classes because they tend to be discussion-based (as opposed to lecture based) and because the classes are smaller so they get to know each other well.

At URSE, in part because of their young age, their homogeneity, and the fact that they had all, give or take 2 students, been together for *all* of their college classes since they started together in Fall 2008, the class had a vibe that reminded me a lot of high school. For example, the students would try to sit on each other's laps in class, applied makeup in class frequently, and would sometimes try to do homework for their other classes while in my class – very frustrating. Not getting the “we're all curious, intelligent adults in college seeking to learn” vibe that I wanted, I responded with extra quizzes and strictness: a no-getting-up-from-your-seat-to-use-the-bathroom policy, for example. This didn't make me happy, but seemed necessary. In retrospect, I wonder if there was a better way.

The class also met every day for two hours instead of MW or TTH for 75 minutes, the way classes are scheduled at Chabot. This was an adjustment for me as well. In the end of semester evaluations, three different students stated that the class was “boring” at times, and this stung, but later resonated as true. Some students, being young and not “literature lovers” grew bored of reading and talking about stories every day in class. I used multi-media, had students do presentations, and had students work in partners, individually, and in small groups, but I clearly wasn't creative enough to keep them all stimulated all the time ... particularly since the class met at 8am. Only too late did I realize this need in them for more variation, more creative exercises, and at times, more discreet learning exercises (like vocabulary lessons) so that they felt like they were progressing in English, not just “talking” about something like the symbolism of the brandy in Hemingway's story “A Clean Well-lighted Place.”

Previous to my class, the students' English classes (semesters 1-4) had also all focused expressly on learning the English language – conversations, videos, and very short readings on different topics, presentation of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Level 5, my class, was a switch to learning through literature, with a focus on short stories and writing essays. I taught it almost like an English 4 class at Chabot (second semester freshman composition with a focus on literature). I taught formal literary analysis (plot/characters/setting/symbols/irony/language) and academic essay writing, and I think many of them saw this as irrelevant to their future jobs as English language teachers. They seemed to enjoy learning about American culture through the stories, and a few of them really got into the stories and the art of interpreting literature ... but some of them just found it a chore. They lacked vocabulary and fluency and the stories were hard to get through, even at the comprehension level.

I have noticed that Mexican academic culture is very focused on two things: presentation and correctness. There is an emphasis on “clean notebooks” and neat handwriting, for example. Students date their notes carefully each day, and perhaps it connects to the tradition of *artesanía*, but students can put together beautiful models and hand-crafted glossaries with lovely pictures and artistic touches. They expect their grades, however, to come from exams in which there is a correct answer to each question. They are well-prepared to memorize vocabulary and verb conjugations. Analyzing the significance of quotes is a different story, however, and discussion, itself, the “Socratic method” of accessing new ideas and questioning one’s own ... a process of opening the mind ... is more French than Mexican, I suppose.

On the positive side, I did enjoy reading the stories from their perspectives, and some of them really bloomed in terms of their abilities to read, analyze, and pull meaning out of a text. I also (re-)learned from them how difficult it is to understand certain stories without context ... about the American South and race relations, for example, or American suburban ennui. We had some fabulous conversations about media, in the U.S. and Mexico, false assumptions and judgments between Mexicans and Americans, and the influence of soap operas, and immigration, and the American dream, and a real highlight was when one of my students rewrote a story by Junot Diaz from a Oaxacan woman’s point of view. I encouraged her to send it to Diaz, and I hope she does. I think he would really enjoy reading it.

The last lesson learned, and a hard one for me to admit here in writing, is that my pride suffered teaching here in Mexico, and my teaching suffered as a direct result. At Chabot, I am an experienced, tenured professor with a good reputation, making a good salary. I feel respected by my colleagues and by my dean. I have a lovely office with a view and my name on the door. Here, I was just a part-time teacher with no experience in Mexico, hired for just one class. I had to bring my own laptop if I wanted use of a computer inside the classroom, and since my computer didn’t connect directly to the projector in the classroom, I had to pay for my own cable (about \$20). I was paid about \$8 an hour and received no benefits. Each day, I “clocked” into a computer with fingerprint verification: “7:20am: arrival registered.” “10:05am: departure registered.” I paid for my own copies since I was too ashamed to ask my students to pay me for them. Many times, even though I left my house about 6:45am, I arrived too late to even get a parking space in the University parking lot. I had to commute about 40 minutes each way for my two-hour class, and during the rainy season, when roads closed down, this grew into an hour-long commute. I got three flat tires in one semester, and once, when the road was blockaded during a protest, I went off onto a rural side road and my car got stuck in the mud.

All of this took an emotional toll on me, and there were days when I just couldn’t stomach the drive. “For \$8 an hour?” I said to myself. “On my sabbatical?” “To teach students who don’t really like literature, sit on each other’s laps, and apply make-up?” I missed a total of 4 classes, I believe, over the semester, which is more than I have ever missed from any one class at Chabot, even when I had small babies. All of this allows me to see that if you bring a full-time teacher down to adjunct status, with the subsequent drop in pay, status, and connection to the college, you get what you pay for. I thought I was a good teacher, and I think I am at Chabot – at least from my peer evaluations, student evaluations and other feedback – but I was less of a teacher here, and that shames me. I feel especially guilty towards the Director who hired me at URSE and dealt with the immigration paper work, went out and bought the computer cable I needed, and otherwise showed me great graciousness and hospitality. Without asking, he signed me up for classes for this spring. I told him that I didn’t want the classes, and he looked surprised, perhaps hurt, but perhaps

relieved as well? There is so much about teaching English to Mexican future-English-teachers that I still don't understand.

The final trick, now, is to learn from all of this. What can I bring back to my teaching at Chabot? One, I want to show more respect and consideration for my adjunct colleagues, and plan to increase my efforts to bring them into the (very wonderful and collegial) atmosphere of Language Arts. I need to consider that part of my responsibility as a full-time faculty member. Two, I think I'll look at my students who have lived and studied outside of the United States differently. My URSE students may have little in common with my students in the U.S. who studied in Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, etc., but what they *will* have in common is that they *didn't* go to U.S. schools, they don't know American popular culture or socio-historic references, they don't read or write or speak English as their native tongue, and they likely have very different expectations of me than I can even anticipate. I need to show kindness and consideration, and when possible, offer more opportunities for them to show their skills – including artistic skills and rote memorization skills -- whether or not I personally relate those to the study of literature. For example, I may offer students the opportunity to create a model of Hemingway's café, or Arnold Friend's car in "Where are you going, where have you been?" I'll continue to privilege good writing and critical thinking ... but there must be more room in my gradebook for other demonstrations of learning. *En Fin*

SAMPLE TEACHING MATERIALS FROM URSE

Objective 1 Documentation, Part 2

Reflections on teaching middle school at Instituto Coubertin in San Sebastian, Etna, Oaxaca

For two months in Fall 2010, I taught Basic English to Middle School Students at *el Instituto Coubertin* in San Sebastian, Etna, Oaxaca. For me as a teacher, this meant being:

- re-exposed to the middle school atmosphere (hormones, candy wrappers, bells ringing, parent questions, assemblies)
- re-exposed to the enormous difficulty of learning the English language, even when the students' mother tongue shares a common alphabet and roots.
- re-exposed to teaching basic English grammar: simple past, present perfect, modals, tag questions, etc. Recognized the cognates and funny false cognates.

Looking back, it was a humorous and humbling experience. One day, out of the blue, I got a call from my kids' school, asking me to come in right away. I was worried it had to do with my kids, but no, it turned out that the school's English teacher for the basic-level middle school kids had just quit and they were hoping I would substitute, at least until the end of the bimester. I came in and looked at the textbook (terrible for the age and level), talked to them a bit about the hours and expectations ... and was in the classroom with the kids an hour later – no paperwork, no background check, nothing.

The class was terrible. There were 25 kids ranging from 7th to 9th grade, and they were all there because despite mandatory English classes in Mexico from first grade on, they basically spoke and understood no English. Soon I saw why. The class was supposed to be an hour, but they had a ten minute “passing period” at the beginning, which meant it was really 50 minutes. Students also routinely came in late, and half of the class didn't have books because the government-run Textbook Supply store for Oaxaca had run out. I was also expected to check the students' homework each day *in class*, because in the Mexican system, all work for a class is done in a notebook designated for that class and to ask students to turn in sheets apart from that notebook was just not acceptable. (The notebook serves as a record of all a student has done for a particular class and must be kept neat and together.) My job was to check the HW of 25 hormonal, hyperactive students and teach them ... in 50 minute periods at the very end of their school day, three days a week.

The students were unmotivated, the textbook was designed for students in an American college class, and I had no computer, no wi-fi, no creative teaching tools, unless I wanted to make or buy them myself (which I did). I brought in Lady Gaga songs, made them act out little skits and play games, and gave them quizzes (another unheard of practice in Mexico) which the students largely failed. When the bimester came to a close, I felt that we'd made a bit of progress, but could only, in good faith, give passing grades to about 12 of the students. This brought the Primary School Director to come talk to me – it was a private school and he was very concerned about the parents complaining. I explained my point of view and he listened, but it was mutually decided that I wouldn't teach after Christmas. I was relieved, but when I told the students, they seemed honestly disappointed. “You're the third teacher who's quit on us,” one girl told me, “and you're the one we actually like.” Others nodded. Still, I didn't think it was good for me to go on. (The pay, by the way, was \$8/ hour for the teaching hours, and no pay for the mandatory staff meetings every Friday that were basically irrelevant for me as a very part-time teacher at

the school.)We said our goodbyes, and I wished them well.

SAMPLE TEACHING MATERIALS FROM INSTITUTO COUBERTIN

Objective 1 Documentation, Part 3 and 4

Reflections on “Latin American Woman Poets” and other classes taken in Oaxaca (personal enrichment)

In November and December 2010, I took a course on “Latin American Woman Poets” through the *Universidad Autonoma de Benito Juarez de Oaxaca (UABJO)*, the only public university in the state of Oaxaca.

Basics:

Class met 2 hours per week (total of 20 hours of class over the semester)

Class included both reading and writing poetry (exercises often modeling the style or themes of the poets)

Experienced being a second language learner in a college class for the first time. Used my dictionary constantly – often spending over an hour on one poem.

Enjoyed the community and fellowship of others interested in poetry

Exposed to poets I had never heard of previously; wonderful connections and contrasts to the American poets I do know (Dickinson, Williams, Pound, Frost, Elliot, Plath, etc.)

This class was a real highlight for me. There were only 3 of us in the class, and we were all foreigners – 2 Americans and one German. This was probably due to the fact that the class cost \$500 pesos (about \$50 USD) and did not directly give credit toward any existing degree at the UABJO. It was more along the lines of “UC extension” in the States. However, the teacher was great, and all of us spoke quite decent Spanish, the other two having lived in Oaxaca for several years. I used my dictionary constantly, but felt like I “got” the poetry and had fun composing my own, in Spanish, for the first time.

The only other classes I took in Oaxaca were an exercise class, a beginning Guitar class offered through the *Casa de la Cultura*, and a two week workshop titled “Introduction to Digital Photography” offered through the *Centro Fotográfico Manuel Álvarez Bravo*.

The exercise class was fun, helped me make Mexican friends and got me out of the house and into a Spanish-speaking environment if only to learn words like “stretch,” “hips,” “knees,” etc. I also became more of a fan of Shakira and Juan Luis Guerra, among other artists.

I didn't get very far with the guitar, as the style of teaching was very hands-off and didn't work well for me. On the first day, the teacher would give out a music sheet to each student, come around to each chair once to show the fingering of the chords, and then step outside to chat on his cell phone or play guitar by himself. Whenever a student felt that he/she had mastered a set of chords, he/she would step outside for the *maestro* to check. If the student “passed” that step, another sheet of music was given (for us to take

across the street to pay for a copy). I was told that it would be months before I'd get an actual song to play. I finished my two month class of lonely Tuesday and Thursday hours, but I did not go on.

The photography class, on the other hand, was fantastic. It met for a total of 20 hours over two weeks, and the instructor was very professional, used PowerPoint and examples, and carefully took us through the basics of adjusting white balance, composition and color theory, shooting on Aperture and Speed modes, using flash, understanding lighting, etc. He also met with each of us individually to go through the settings on our particular cameras, and took us out for multiple "photo shoots" on the streets of Oaxaca. The class ended with each of us presenting a collection of photos to the instructor individually, and the instructor then helping us select the top 3 images to hang in a mini-exhibition of student work. The class was good for my Spanish and photography skills, and I enjoyed the sense of community with fellow students. This time, out of 18, I was the only foreigner in the class.

Materials from Photography and Guitar Classes

Objective 1 Documentation, Parts 5 and 6

**Materials from the class “Latin American Woman Poets” which I took through
Oaxaca’s Benito Juarez Autonomous University.**

Objective 1 Documentation, Part 7 and 8

Reflections on my travels, cultural experiences, and growth in understanding Mexican culture

I have to write this one loosely, as the points all collage together, but during this year, I :

Assisted my children (7 and 9 years old respectively) with their daily homework and school projects, translating Spanish to English. Met with their teachers, learned the schedule and expectations of a primary school in Oaxaca, Mexico, worked on school events. Learned a lot about the US v. Mexico in terms of curriculum (like “*valores*”), pedagogy (lots of models or *maquetas*), academic environment, and expectations. I saw my children’s frustrations, loneliness, but also achievements, joys, and acculturation. (They’re putting *chile* and lime on everything now and speak in terms of earning 9s and 10s instead of As and Bs. My daughter also speaks pretty decent Spanish and my son is ... coming along.)

Experienced daily life in a foreign country: learned to shop, pay parking tickets, buy car insurance, change title on a car, find a plumber, pay a phone bill, get a haircut, locate a doctor, de-parasite. Realized how much Spanish I *don’t* know.

Listened to talk radio from Mexico City every day on my morning commute, while reading (mostly government-sponsored) billboards. Now that’s a cultural education!

Learned a LOT of Mexican-specific slang and vocabulary, i.e. *chamaco*, *chamarra*, *guajalote*, *tlacuache*, *jefa*, *chingón*, *híjole*, *chaparrito*, *jítomate*, *míltomate*, *nieve*, *sale*, *ándale*, *guerita*, *órale*, *guácala*, *quesillo*, *atole*, *chiripa*, *cachonda* ...

Learned a LOT about Mexican traditions and values, i.e. *calendas*, *comparsas*, *posadas*, *piñatas*, *XV años*, *homenaje*, *gastronomía*, *patrimonio*, *levantando la cruz*, *tamales*, *cuentos*, *dichos* ...

Learned a LOT about Mexican struggles: economic, pragmatic, educational, political, etc. Came to better understand the Mexican hopes and fears around the United States. Got a better sense of the local pay scale, costs of healthcare, school, and food, came to understand the class structure. Got a better understanding of what it means to have a “weak government” for better and for worse. Saw positive community responses to poverty like *tequios*. Felt the frustration of blockaded roads, teacher strikes, and petty corruption on a local level, and heard of deeper fears of *narcos* and *secuestros*.

Watched Mexican films in Mexico, including the stand-out *El Infierno*. ... Quite a dark, comic, violent take on Mexico’s problems today, and *Presunto Culpable*, a documentary of a young man in prison for a crime he did not commit, battling the Mexican judicial system with help from Chicano law students at UC Berkeley.

Attended and experienced religious and cultural events: a ballet, *posadas*, *muertos* processions and celebrations at cemeteries, road blockades, marches, author readings (including Junot Diaz!!), the annual *Feria del Libro*, art exhibits, a *Noche Mexicana*, a *quince años* mass and party, *Semana Santa* parades, *Día del Niño*, *Día de la madre*, *La Samaritana*...

Visited local historical, cultural, and archaeological sites in the states of Oaxaca, Puebla, and Chiapas: Monte Alban, Mitla, San Jose el Mogote, Santa Maria Atzompa, San Martin Tilcajete, the Mercado de Tlacolula, the Plaza de ETLA, Oaxaca’s ethnobotanical garden, the anthropological museum at Santo Domingo, the Textile Museum, the Biblioteca Infantil, the Biblioteca Palafoxiana, the Mayan villages of Chamula and Zinacatan, the Amber museum of San Cristobal de las Casas., Oaxaca’s Instituto de Artes Graficas, Casa de Artes San Agustin, Museo de Artes Contemporaneos...

Began to eat like a Mexican: caldo, tamales, chocolate, chiles, tortillas, fruits, too many sweets, too much soda, aguas de sabor, memelas, tlayudas, queso en salsa, 6 kinds of mole, barbacoa, orange-

carrot-beet juice, epazote, yerba santa, gelatinas ...

Saw the incredible natural beauty and biodiversity of Southern Mexico: the Sierra Norte and Sur, the waterfalls and cañon del sumidero in Chiapas, the tropical beaches of Huatulco, San Agustín, Zipolite and Mazunte, huge butterflies, scorpions, cockroaches, tarantulas, orchids, bromeliads, giant cactus, pochote trees, cicadas, the biggest beetles I've ever seen.

Other Random Benefits of Being on Sabbatical in Mexico

Experienced the joy of seeing my kids learn to read in both Spanish and English.

Bought fresh produce from the growers, milk straight from the cows (had to boil it first and skim off the cream) and eggs straight from the chickens. Had *tamales* delivered to my door.

Learned what flowers, fruits, and vegetables are in season in Oaxaca from month to month. (*tunas* and *mangos* came and went, so did *maracuya*, *mandarinas*, *jicamas*...)

Learned to give directions to a house with no # on a street with no signpost, in a land where Google maps and Google Earth are useless.

Learned when to pick up a stone when street dogs are dangerous, and when to ignore them.

Learned that roosters crow all day and night.

Got used to living without a 3G network, paying for my cell phone usage with re-ups of \$20 or \$30 every few weeks, and texting in Spanish. ("q" for "que" and "xq" for "porque")

Never really learned to understand the "Pepito" jokes

Learned that *canela* (cinnamon) tea is good for a runny nose, *yerba buena* (spearmint) tea is good for stomach troubles, and a tea of mint leaf, guava leaf, pomegranate leaf, and loquat leaf is good for stomach troubles – and just good.

Read instructions for my daughter to bring "a dead fish, a popsicle stick, a worm, and doctor's gloves" to school on Tuesday: a dissection project, no formaldehyde needed.

Learned that toilet seats are considered optional throughout most of Oaxaca – much less important than having *salsa picante* or fresh *tortillas*.

Learned that the Italians clearly never made it to Oaxaca: ate some of the worst pasta and pizza ever, and in multiple locations.

Learned to say hello and goodbye with a kiss on the cheek.

Started to forget about seat-belt laws, helmet laws, no-cellphone-while-driving laws, and most laws related to driving a car, other than "watch out for speedbumps and potholes."

Learned how to type with Spanish accent marks – still haven't really mastered when they're necessary.

PLEASE

FOR PHOTOS AND MORE

SEE MY BLOG AT

[HTTP://WWW.FROMOAKLAND2OAXACA.COM](http://www.fromOakland2Oaxaca.com) !!!!!

(Throughout my year, I maintained a weekly blog: <http://www.fromOakland2Oaxaca.com>. I included photos, musings, adventures, and misfortunes. I ended up with 27 loyal "followers" and over 9,000 page-views (averaging over 500/month) from July 2010 through July of 2011. Writing a weekly blog was fun, therapeutic, and helped me document my year. I'm very glad I did it, and miss it now it's done.)

Objective 1 Documentation, Part 9

RECEIPTS, MAPS, PROGRAMS, MEMORABILIA

(I have to say I did better with taking photographs than keeping brochures, ticket stubs, etc. However, here are a few things I managed not to lose, documenting some of my visits to museums, galleries, libraries, and other sites of interest.)

Objective 2 Documentation

Annotated Bibliography of Literature by Latin American and US Latino/Chicano Writers

**** Note: I wrote this for my own teaching purposes, and to share with colleagues, so it is quite detailed.****

Alvarez, Julia. *Yo!* Plume Press, 1997.

I was disappointed that I didn't enjoy this book more. Alvarez is a very popular and accessible writer, but I found this book much more "pop" than literary. She over-explains and leans to common characters (the wise old woman, the pot-smoking hippie, the flirtatious Island girl...). I much prefer her book for children *When We Were Free* and will look into her more recent books, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* and *In the Time of the Butterflies*.

Anaya, Rudolfo. *The Legend of La Llorona: a Short Novel*. Tonatiuh-Quinto Sol International. 1984

The book focuses on that traveling Mexicana archetype, La Llorona – known by all for wearing white, hanging out at night by creeks, and crying for her sons. The common understanding is that she either stabbed or drowned her children, and that she did it out of grief for a man who left her. One version is that she drowned her sons in order to take off with her lover. Some say the man was rich but cheated on her ... many variants. Although none of my students in Mexico associated La Llorona with that other famous Mexicana, Malitzin a.k.a Malinche, Anaya presents her as one and the same, and lifts her to dignity. In his book, she is a beautiful and well-respected daughter of a tribal chieftain from the coast of Mexico. She falls in love with Cortes, but also makes a decision to help him defeat the Aztecs, who were taxing her people and had power over them. She learned Spanish and became his translator. She stood by his side, recognizing his power, but also his brutality. As he made his way from the coast to Mexico City, he got other native groups to join him against the Aztecs ... or he destroyed their town, slaughtering thousands. She bore Cortes twin sons, but when Cortes forbid her to teach them their native religion and customs, she secretly defied him and brought her sons to the (literally) underground priests. Finally, in the ultimate betrayal, Cortes decides to go back to Spain and take his sons with him. He is persuaded by a beautiful daughter of the King of Spain, who comes all the way to Mexico for this purpose. (the King is worried that Cortes wants the land/kingdom for himself.) Desperate, Malinche takes her sons and tries to leave the city (Nochitlan). She is forbidden passage, so takes her sons to the lake and kills them. She then screams in agony, but it was the only power she had left, and the only way to keep her sons in her land.

Castillo, Ana. *So Far From God* WW Norton and Co, 2005.

This book has been called a *telenovela* on paper, and I agree, but it's just so much fun. There's magical realism, New Mexico diction, whimsy and gumption. The characters are either "Indian" or Mexican, some of them third or fourth generation Mexicans living in "Nuevo Mejico," working their land or assimilating to the larger gringo society. There's great commentary on the ones who go off to Vietnam

and come back *different*. There's pozole and chile verde and great passages on traditional *curanderas* who cure the body, mind and spirit with their *limpizas* and herbs and practices. I was struck by all that connected directly to what I saw in a small Mayan village in Chiapas, and by phrases like "*Contra todo mal, mezcal. Contra todo bien, tambien*" that I've heard here in the pueblo of San Sebastian, Etna, Oaxaca. I'm definitely planning on using it in my U.S. Latino Lit class in the fall.

***Contemporary Latin American Short Stories*, ed. by Pat McNees in 1974, with a new introduction added in 1996** (so not so "contemporary" any more) has a number of Standout Stories:

"Midnight Mass" by Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis of Brasil, 1839-1908. Interesting! A story of a naïve young man who's staying with a married couple in Rio while he's studying for his college exams. It becomes clear that the marriage is an unhappy one and the husband has a fairly open affair with another married woman in town. On Christmas Eve, the young man decides to stay awake to attend midnight mass. Everyone else in the household (the mother-in-law and two slaves) have long since gone to bed, but the wife suddenly appears and in a way that is clear to the reader, but not the young man, tries to seduce him. There are intent stares, strands of conversation, movements around the library, tremendous energy ... but nothing "happens." The young man (speaker of the story) continues to see the older, married woman (maybe 30?) as a "saint" and not a sexually-frustrated, emotionally-pained and lonely woman. Very strong, and interesting for its time period and male author.

"Big Precipice" by Jorge Icaza, born 1906, Ecuador. A terribly sad but wonderful story of an indigenous couple, their poverty, and their faith in a God who punishes them for living in sin. Quite powerful and evocative.

"Two Dollars Worth of Water" by Juan Bosch, Dominican Republic, born 1909. My favorite story in the book, this one centers on a *campesina* and her faith. Her son has died and she now cares for, and cherishes her only grandchild, a boy of about 7. She works extremely hard, tends her crops and saves, dreaming of the day this boy will be a man and perhaps ride a horse or, dream of dreams, be able to sit behind the counter of his own store. She puts aside her copper pennies and silver coins, and all goes well until the drought comes. The rivers dry up, the animals start dying, and all over her town people are packing up and leaving. She refuses to consider leaving, herself, instead placing her faith in the Souls in Purgatory to whom she lights candles. As each member of her town leaves, she gives them, too, money to light candles to the souls in purgatory so that they will make it rain. She herself gives more and more money. Suddenly: "Cut film" to the actual Souls in Purgatory who, though they themselves burn in fire, somehow have the power to grant rain to the pueblos of Latin America until God "in his infinite mercy" calls them to his side. One soul passes the news to the others: Dona Remigia in Paso Hondo has given \$2 (maybe \$2,000 today?) for rain! The call goes out ... "\$2 worth of rain for Paso Hondo!" And so the rains begin, and they don't let up. The last of the villagers leave, fearing the impending floods. Dona Remigia is serene, thinking of the crops that will grow once the rains stop. Only they don't. And the rivers overflow and the land floods. She wakes in the middle of the night and the waters are up to her knees. She grabs her grandson and forces the door open and wades out into the night. The water carries off cabins and trees, and the souls in Purgatory shriek on: "Not enough yet, not enough. Two dollars worth of water, two dollars two dollars."

"The Blue Bouquet" by Octavio Paz, Mexico. A man goes out at night on the street of an unfamiliar town. He is a stranger, and yet the humid air, the tiles, the walls are all familiar. A knife is pulled on him by a man who wants to make a bouquet of blue eyes for his girlfriend. The speaker of the

story has work to convince him that his eyes are indeed brown, not blue ... but is eventually released. Strange, tactile, terrifying, and with interesting messages about strangeness and foreignness in Latin America.

“Letter to a Young Lady in Paris” by Julio Cortazar. Great magical realism. A man starts coughing up small furry animals and doesn’t know how to handle it!

“Just Lather, That’s All” by Hernando Tellez, Colombia, 1908-1966. The tension and *potential* violence in this one is terrific. A general comes into a barbershop for a shave. He is known for his cruelty and ruthlessness, especially when it comes to punishing rebels. The barber himself is a secret spy for the rebels – but also a very professional and proud barber. The general puts down his weapons and relaxes into the barber chair. The barber slowly sharpens his knife. It would be so easy to kill the general, he who has killed so many and so mercilessly – he who has tortured survivors and paraded schoolchildren by the heads of his victims. The general begins to speak of his afternoon plans: “Firing squad? Something like that, but a little slower.” The barber sweats and deliberates. To kill or not to kill? If he kills, would he be a hero? A coward? Slowly, he shaves the man’s face. On the last page, he thinks to himself, “But I don’t want to be a murderer. You came to me for a shave. And I perform my work honorably... I don’t want blood on my hands. Just later, that’s all.” After the shave, the general slowly gets up, puts on his belt with pistol, pays the barber and heads for the door. Then, in the doorway, he pauses and says, “They told me that you’d kill me. I came to find out. But killing isn’t easy. You can take my word for it.” And he turns and walks away. End of story – it would be a wonderful one to turn into a drama (in class or video).

“Balthazar’s Marvelous Afternoon” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. A humble man builds a beautiful cage and the whole town admires it. A doctor thinks to buy it, but it has been promised to the son of the wealthiest man in town. Balthazar goes to the man’s house to deliver his cage and thinks of the sum he will charge for it – his wife has pressed him to ask for a large sum. The wealthy man refuses to buy it, though his son wants it badly. Balthazar leaves the cage for the boy, earning nothing, but the whole town thinks he’s rich. He buys drinks for all, while his wife waits at home over the dinner she’s made. Balthazar ends up passed out on the sidewalk, and someone steals even his shoes. The ladies going to church in the morning take him for dead. The symbol of the cage and the class issues are fantastic to explore.

***Cuentos Chicanos: a Short Story Anthology.* Ed. Rudolfo Anaya and Antonio Marquez. U. of New Mexico Press, 1984.**

This is an uneven collection, but it has some standouts. I loved “El Tonto del Barrio” by Jose Armas. The story revolves around a young man who is “touched” but cared for by a community until a shopkeeper's son, a college kid, decides to formalize the relationship with a paycheck. Suddenly the young man feels slighted, wants more, doesn't do his job well ... but when the shopkeeper's son returns to college, the original symbiotic relationship between the young man and the town is restored. I also loved “The Circuit” by Francisco Jimenez, a tender story of a young boy growing up in migrant camps, never knowing when his family will be moving on next, and “Small Arms Fire” by Robert L. Perea, about a young Chicano's experience in Vietnam, where a Major leaves hundreds of S. Vietnamese soldiers to die so he can run his own “mission,” impress the General, and collect a medal. All very good reads.

Garcia, Christina. *Dreaming in Cuban.* Ballantine Books, 1993.

This is another so-so read. It's Garcia's first novel and, like her others, essentially about Cuba and the lingering effects of the Revolution. It focuses on three generations of women (One in Cuba and two in the U.S.) who still aren't at peace in their lives ... a combination of historical and personal pain and betrayals. The book has elements of magical realism, but is nowhere near as fun or provocative as *So Far From God*. In terms of style, the book is a creative mix of forms, however: love letters, third person narrative, first-person confessions.

Guillermoprieto, Alma. *Dancing with Cuba: A Memoir of the Revolution*. Vintage, 2005.

This novel/memoir by a current Mexican writer/journalist is a fascinating account of a dance teacher's experience living in Cuba in the late 1960's. She speaks movingly of the hope and faith in the revolution, every Cuban's toiling in the cane fields to try to reach a harvest of 10 million tons of cane (to free Cuba from Soviet influence), the confusion felt by artists and homosexuals – believing so strongly in the Revolution but feeling shat on by leadership – and more. Lines to get an ice cream, tears and devotion at Fidel's 3 hour-speeches, food rations, but high quality medical care for all... a good read, although I've heard others complain that the book is more about her, her loves, and her ultimate nervous breakdown than about Cuba. Point taken.

Kuper, Peter. *Diario de Oaxaca. A Sketchbook Journal of Two Years in Mexico* PM Press; Bilingual edition (September 1, 2009)

This is one to keep on your coffee table. Kuper is an artist/ cartoonist/journalist who came to Oaxaca in 2006 with his wife and daughter for a little rest and escape from a hectic life in the States during the dismal days of George W and Iraq. Unfortunately or fortunately, he arrived at one of the most political/violent/chaotic moments in Oaxacan history. His book chronicles events from the teacher's strike getting attacked by the Governor's troops, to the arrival of Federal troops, through the end. He explains the conflict as a movement of teachers and unions and "the people" vs. a very corrupt and brutal government with police thugs. His photos and drawings are beautiful. He discusses the sharp difference between what he witnessed and what the international police reported. He describes protesters of all ages armed with only signs (or sometimes rocks) and bottles of flat coke to use against tear gas. He talks about Federal Soldiers with tanks and automatic weapons. In between, he catalogs insects, meals, walks in the Zocalo, migrations of monarch butterflies. It's a lovingly-crafted book/ work of art.

Mora, Horacio Castellanos *Senselessness*. New Directions Press, 2008.

This one has a style to knock you sideways. It's short and a fast read, but compelling. A vain, paranoid, hard-drinking, sex-obsessed man takes a job for the Catholic Church (which he hates) editing descriptions of massacres and brutalities enacted by the military of an unnamed Central American country against its indigenous communities. He's stunned by the atrocities and the poetry of the language, and unravels quickly, and you don't really know how justified his paranoia is. His language is coarse, raw, but often hilarious. (Early on, he talks metaphorically about his job being the equivalent of "giving a manicure to the hand of the Catholic Church just before it grabs military balls.")

Villareal, Jose Antonio. *Pocho*. Anchor Books, 1970.

I found this one somewhat dated, but quite an interesting book. I hadn't heard the term before, but it's used commonly in Oaxaca. It describes a Mexican raised in the States. The book starts with a proud womanizing Mexican soldier, high in the ranks, and a devoted follower of Pancho Villa. He hates Obregon and what has come of the revolution, and is resolved to kill him. Instead, however, he ends up killing a Spaniard, a *gachupin* over a girl. When the murder becomes a problem, he gets assistance to go to "the other side" for a little while until things cool down. Eventually, his wife and children catch up to him and follow him across the border. The family always talks about the day they will return to Mexico, but they never do. The story later switches over to the only (and much beloved) son's perspective. You see the conflicts between the crop growers and pickers in Northern and Central California. You see the arrival of the "Okies" and the competition over wages. Later, you see the conflicts between the boy and his very traditional, Mexican parents. Religion comes up, racism of course, interactions at school, the entrance of the Zoot-suiters ... It's a real California story.

Objective 3 Documentation

Research Notes on Children's Literature

Objective 4 Documentation, Parts 1 and 2

Annotated Bibliography and Interview Notes

(Brief notes on books for children and young adults which I read or re-read)

Alexie, Sherman. <i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> . Little, Brown and Co. Reprint 2009.	A semi-autobiographical story of an Indian boy growing up in Spokane, Washington. He transfers from the “Rez” school to a rich white school: issues of “tribe” and class are big. Great pencil-drawing illustrations; humorous.
Alvarez, Julia. <i>Before We Were Free</i> . Laurel Leaf, 2004.	Dramatic, engaging, also semi-autobiographical story of a girl and her family living in, then leaving the Dom. Republic under highly dangerous political circumstances. My guess as to target age: 11-14 (My daughter was too young)
Baum, L. Frank. <i>The Wonderful Wizard of Oz</i> . 1900	Another classic. Magic/dark magic, a journey far away and a homecoming, very different from the movie!
Blume, Judy <i>Are you there God? It's me, Margaret</i> . Delacorte, 2010. (original date?)	Emerging sexuality, teenage fears and troubles, crisis of faith, love and family.
Burnett, Francis Hodgson <i>The Secret Garden</i> . Puffin Classics, 2008.	British, a spoiled girl raised in India and orphaned, a sick boy on the moors, the power of friendship and nature to redeem
Carroll, Lewis <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> . Dover, 1993. (original 1870)	Absurd, scary and fantastic, language plays, a wondrous journey.
Choi, Sook Nyul. <i>Halmoni and the Picnic</i> .	A Korean grandmother comes to chaperone a class field trip ... and brings traditional cuisine along.
Cleary, Beverly <i>Ramona the Pest</i>	Who will not weep (and cheer!) for Ramona? Age 8, a family struggling, pounding rocks, annoying her sister, getting in trouble, sometimes victorious!
Dahl, Roald. <i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i> . Puffin, 2007. (original 1964)	Also a classic. Oompa Loompas, dark ends for spoiled children and their parents, memorable characters, a zany, magic chocolate man, and a young protagonist. Plot, characters, theme...all so well done.
Erdrich, Louise <i>Harriet the Spy</i>	A young female protagonist, a heroine for us all.
Garden, Nancy <i>Annie on my Mind</i> Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.	Young, in love, and lesbian. A trifle “too sweet” and innocent, but a key book on this theme.
Graham, Kenneth <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> . Puffin Classics, 2008 reprint.	I love, love, this book. The tug between home and away, the thrill of the road and the pull of the river ... the comfort of a mole hole. I wouldn't be the same person without this book.

Eager, Edward <i>Half Magic</i> . Harcourt Brace, 1999.	My kids loved this one. Kids get their wishes granted with a magic token ... only in halves. A family journey for all.
Hinton, S.E. <i>The Outsiders</i> Puffin, 2006. (Original 1967)	I still love this book! The class struggle, the three brothers growing up together, the rebellious “soc” girl who says she’ll fall in love with the toughest greaser if she gets any closer, the stabbing, the haircutting, the rumble, the 2 boys holed up in a church smoking cigarettes, eating bologna and reading <i>Gone With the Wind</i> ... Stay Gold, Pony Boy...
Juster, Norton <i>The Phantom Tollbooth</i>	My seven- and nine-year old both loved this one. The word-play is wonderful, the characters sympathetic, the journey exciting, the wisdom remarkable. Sigh: When will we bring back the princesses Rhyme and Reason to <i>our</i> world?
Konigsburg, E.L. <i>The View from Sunday</i> and <i>From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler</i>	One of my all-time favorite authors. View From Sunday has more grit and compassion than most books I’ve read. The ultimate “Breakfast Club” of High School loners with a light that needs to shine ... meets “Slumdog Millionaire.”
L’Engle, Madeline <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i>	Science Fiction/Fantasy the way it should be. Children looking for a missing father, a mind-controlling IT, standardization over freedom, time travel, kind motherly “Mrs. What’sit” So great!
Lewis, C.S. <i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i>	So much better than the recent films! Each character is incredibly well-developed, flawed, and so believable. The tension is high; not your standard good v. evil book, and yet it is. The White Queen still scares me when she offers the Turkish Delight and Edward just can’t help himself.
Myers, Walter Dean <i>Monster</i> or <i>Lockdown</i>	A young African-American boy and the criminal justice system... unusual “play” style. Great narration and reflections on socio-economics in our time.
Paterson, Katherine <i>Bridge to Terabithia</i>	Still makes me cry. Death, money, 60's generation gaps and economic gaps, small town living, schoolyard threats, a magnificent story of friendship
Rushdie, Salman <i>Haroun and the Sea of Stories</i>	“Why tell a story if it’s not true?” And so disappears the storyteller, and so starts the story. So rich!!
Stevenson, Robert Louis. <i>Treasure Island</i> . Book Essentials, 1994. (original 1800s?)	I read this aloud to my kids, and they loved it, but had me stop every few minutes to explain. I didn’t realize how difficult it is! The nautical terms, the British diction... yet it’s the reason pirates will never go out of style. Long John Silver, ye old Sea Dog, may you toss

	and turn in Davey's Locker still!
White, E.B. <i>Charlotte's Web</i>	Still beautiful. "It is not often that one meets someone who is a good friend and a good writer." "Some pig" Friendship and love and death and new life. It's got it all.

Plus the picture books...

Gerstein, Mordicai <i>The Man Who Walked Between the Towers</i>	Narrative non-fiction for kids! The twin towers are gone, but once, a man from Paris walked on a wire between them and lay down on his back with no net below. Great pictures, tone, theme.
Kraus, Robert <i>Leo the Late Bloomer</i>	One of my all-time favorites. Leo can't do anything the others can do: can't write, eat neatly, dress himself ... until he can! Leo blooms and it's a victory for every frustrated child in the world. WONDEFUL illustrations.
Leaf, Munro. <i>The Story of Ferdinand</i> . Puffin, 1936. Drawings by Robert Lawson.	Another classic: Ferdinand and his understanding mother (even though she is a cow) stand up to the blood-thirsty of the world ... or rather sit down, and smell the flowers.
Lobel, Arnold <i>Frog and Toad are Friends</i> . Perfection Learning, 1979.	One of the best books on friendship; so sweet, so wise. Philosophy for children ... and they'll get it.
Maruki, Toshi. <i>Hiroshima No Pika</i> Harper Collins, 1982.	A picture book about the bomb? Yes, it is. Just check it out...
Polacco, Patricia <i>Pink and Say, Chicken Sunday</i> . Putnam and Grosset, 1992.	<i>Pink and Say</i> is a picture book for the 10 and up crowd ... two men with the backdrop of the Civil War. One dies; one survives. Powerful and memorable. <i>Chicken Sunday</i> has the strength and hushed beauty of a gospel song and the warmth of hot soup in winter. Brings tears to my eyes when I read it: "a voice like slow thunder and sweet rain."
Raschka, Chris <i>Charlie Parker Played Be-Bop</i> . Scholastic, 1997.	Indispensable! Rhythm, jazz, the pictures, the feel, so cool, so hot... "Never Leave Your Cat alone."
Shannon, David. <i>No, David!</i> Scholastic, 1998.	The same two words on every page ... until the last: "Yes, David, I love you." Bare bum, mud on carpet, overflowing green bathwater... some of the best illustrations ever. An absolute classic.
Wiesner, David <i>Tuesday</i> . Clarion Books, 1991.	No words, but AMAZING pictures and a complete narrative that will leave you marveling, laughing, and wondering about the world. On any given Tuesday... who knows what could happen?

<p>Willems, Mo. <i>Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus</i>. Hyperion, 2003 or <i>Today I will fly! An Elephant and Piggie book</i> Hyperion, 2007.</p>	<p>One of the best children's author/illustrators EVER. I love all of his books. Silliness, warmth, tenderness, compassion, real kids and real joy. I can't recommend his work highly enough.</p>
<p>Williams, Vera B. <i>More, More, More Said the Baby</i>. <i>3 Love Stories</i>. Harper, 1990.</p>	<p>So beautiful, so perfect. 3 Adults and the love they have for their babies. Multicultural, sweet, silly, timeless, with repetition but nuance. My daughter used to request this, night after night.</p>

Objective 4 Documentation continued

Interview Notes

Objective 5 Documentation

English 28 Course Proposal