

Native American Literature

LITT 3208-001

Spring 2014

Tuesdays / Thursdays 10:30-12:20; Room Boo8

Professor Deborah Gussman

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Blackboard: Native American Indian LITT 3208

Office Hours: TR 1:15-2:15; and by appointment.

Course Description

This course will examine some common themes in contemporary Native North American Indian literature, including the nature of identity, revision of stereotypes, resistance to colonization, traditional connection with the land, and sovereignty. In addition to careful consideration of the form, language, and imagery of the texts, we will be exploring their cultural contexts and discussing the importance of context in the study of literature.

Prerequisites: Literary interpretation course, LITT 2123

This is a W2 Course, a 20th century course, and may be used to fulfill the Literature program's US Ethnic/Postcolonial or American Literature requirements.

Required Texts

Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene), *Reservation Blues* (Grove Press 2005)

ISBN 978-0802141903

Charles Eastman (Sioux), *Indian Boyhood* (Dover 1971) ISBN 0486220370

Louise Erdrich (Ojibwa/Anishanabee), *Love Medicine* (Harper Perennial; Revised edition, May 5, 2009)

ISBN 978-0061787423

D'Arcy McNickle (Cree/Salish), *The Surrounded* (U of New Mexico P 1978) ISBN

0826304699

N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (U of New Mexico P 2001)

ISBN 0826304699

Simon Ortiz (Acoma), *from Sand Creek* (U of Arizona P 2000) ISBN 0816519935

Zitkala-Sa [Gertrude Bonnin](Sioux) *American Indian Stories and Legends* (Penguin 2003) ISBN 0142437093

Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna), *Ceremony* (Penguin Books; Anniversary edition, 2006)

ISBN 978-0143104919

Luci Tapahonso (Navajo), *Blue Horses Rush In* (U of Arizona P 1997) ISBN 0816517282

Please make every effort to purchase the editions of the texts listed here. Most of them

can be found used in the bookstore or online. There are other publishers and knock-offs of these texts, but they will not have the same materials, page numbers, notes, etc. Additional assigned texts will be available on Blackboard.

Course Requirements

1. **Class participation and preparation.** You are expected to do the assigned reading, to attend class, and to make informed contributions to class discussions and group activities. Absences will be limited to 4. Each absence beyond the 4th will result in the lowering of your grade by 1/2. Please use your absences wisely.

2. **Critical response essays:** You will be writing 8 critical response essays (2-3 pages each, due dates are below). You may “opt out” of writing a response on **one** of the 9 books we are reading. You may earn extra credit for writing all nine responses.

Questions to consider:

- What are the main points/purposes of the author?
- How does this text compare or contrast with other contemporary American or Native American writing in form, content, style, genre?
- What kinds of literary and/or personal tradition(s) is the author drawing upon and what examples of this do you see in the work?
- What was new, particularly meaningful, surprising, difficult or intriguing about the work?
- Is there a particular passage you would like to examine more closely, and why?
- What questions/issues does the work raise for you?

Response essays will be graded as follows:

A= shows stretching of the mind, compares and contrasts texts, uses quotes from the texts to illustrate/support points, demonstrates hard thinking about text and/or sophisticated understanding of the text.

B= shows basic understanding of the text, makes good effort to analyze text or respond to some of the questions above.

C= shows lack of basic understanding of text, off topic, too short, too personal, unsatisfactory.

D= incomplete, way off topic, or demonstrates lack of understanding, very unsatisfactory.

F=incoherent, or plagiarized.

3. **Group teaching presentation:** The goal of this project is for you to supplement our more “literary” investigations by examining the biographical, tribal, and cultural context of the books we are reading. The idea is to give the rest of the class an overview/history of the nation with which each writer is affiliated, as well as an understanding of an individual writer’s personal history in relation to his or her tribal affiliation. The presentations will be about thirty minutes per group: each group of students should create a one-page outline and annotated bibliography for the class (these can be posted on Blackboard, or copied and distributed in class). Annotation is a

critical paragraph describing the source and its usefulness for your research. Feel free to be creative, to incorporate other media (photography, video, music, etc.), and to find interesting ways to engage the rest of the class in the information you are presenting. (Yes, this is the class in which you can get the rest of us to dance, sing, listen to a story, play a tribal game, eat a new food, build something, as long as you are doing so in a way that is informed and respectful of native cultures and traditions.) Check the "Native American Resources" link on my homepage for some useful secondary sources: blogs.stockton.edu/gussman/native-american-links/
A more detailed description of the project is at the end of the syllabus.

4. Assessment of group teaching presentation (2 pages). Each member of the group will write an individual review of the teaching presentation. Your review should: a) summarize the group's goals and objectives for the presentation and discuss how well they were met; b) describe the role each member of the group played in preparing and giving the presentation; c) explain any challenges or obstacles the group faced and how the group handled them; d) discuss what you might have done differently (hindsight is 20/20!); e) explain what you think was most valuable about the presentation, for you, for the group and/or for members of the class.

Note: These assessments should be turned in on the class following your presentation. I will not grade the presentations until I receive everyone's assessment. Late assessments will be graded down.

5. Longer essay (7-8 pp). This paper may focus on any of the books presented in class. It will be a close reading and analysis of the text that focuses on a literary theme of your choice and that incorporates outside reference materials (including at least two literary/critical essays that come from academic journals or books rather than internet sites). Sample topics: analyze the ending of "The Surrounded," compare and contrast the representations of childhood in Eastman and Zit-Kala-Sa, consider the issue of mixed blood or full blood identity in Erdrich's or Silko's fiction, etc. You may use one of your response essays as the starting point for this essay, with the expectation that it will be extensively revised and secondary source materials will be included.

6. Other grading policies:

All assignments must be completed in order to pass this course. Papers should be turned in **before class on Blackboard** on the day they are due, unless I indicate otherwise. (One purpose of these papers is to elicit class discussion; turning them in late defeats that purpose). You may request a one-time one-class extension for your response essays--no questions asked. After that, they will be graded down accordingly. If you need extra help, ask for it. E-mail is an excellent way to contact me.

The final paper may not be turned in late. Do not procrastinate. You will need some time to gather sources and absorb the information you need to write the paper. You can't always anticipate computer or printer problems, writer's block, power outages, or dogs eating paper. Give yourself enough time to deal with problems should they occur.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Critical Response essays and group project assessment: 60%

Group Teaching presentation: 20%

Longer essay: 20%

All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for the course.

In accordance with the College's policy, I do not give incomplete grades unless there are extremely serious circumstances, and then, only by prior arrangement.

Grading Scale:

100-93: A	82.9-80: B-	69.9-67: D+
92.9-90: A-	79.9-77: C+	66.9-63: D
89.9-87: B+	76.9-73: C	62.9-60: D-
86.9-83: B	72.9-70: C-	59.9 & below: F

Academic Honesty

The Literature program expects all the work you turn in to be your own. If you are found to have represented the work or ideas of others as your own, intentionally, or unintentionally, you will face serious consequences, as follows:

- 1. Any student who is found to have plagiarized a paper or assignment, in full or in part, must meet with the professor of the class for which the paper is written.**
2. The professor will review the suspect work with the student.
3. If this is the first time the student has been found to have plagiarized, he/she will receive an "F" for that paper or assignment and/or the course.
- 4. For second offenses of plagiarism, the student will receive an F for the course.**

Additionally, and in accordance with Stockton College policy, the Literature Program faculty will report all instances of plagiarism to the Provost of Academic Affairs.

Students may be subject to discipline by the college, such as being placed on academic probation or expelled. <http://www2.stockton.edu/bulletin/undergrad/chap7.pdf>

If it is the final assignment that is plagiarized, although I will not necessarily meet with the student, I *will* report the incident to the Provost of Academic Affairs. If you have any questions about plagiarism, I will be glad to discuss them with you.

Reading Schedule: (may be revised-changes will be posted on Blackboard)

Week 1

January

21 Snow day

23 Discuss course objectives; identify groups for presentations; historical overview (Trout). Video: *The Spirit of Crazy Horse (60 mins)*. Handouts: Paula Gunn Allen, "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective" in Allen, ed. *Studies in American Indian Literature* (1983) 3-22; Vine Deloria, Jr. "Indians Today, the Real and the

Unreal" from *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969), reprinted in L. Trout, ed. *Native American Literature* (1998) 7-15.

Week 2

28 Discuss Allen and Deloria
Discuss Eastman, Chs I – V (1-37)

30 Discuss Eastman, "An Indian Boy's Training" 41-96, "Wild Harvests" 200-209;
"First Impressions of Civilization" 239-247. **Critical response essay due.**

Week 3

February

4 Video: *In the White Man's Image* (58 mins)
Discuss: Zitkala-sa, "Impressions of An Indian Childhood," and "The School Days of Indian Girl"

6 Discuss Zitkala-Sa, "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," "The Great Spirit," "A Warrior's Daughter," "A Dream of her Grandfather." **Critical response essay due.**

Week 4

11 Group presentation. McNickle, Ch. 1-6. Handout, Charles R. Larson, "Rejection: The Reluctant Return" in *American Indian Fiction* (1978) 66-78, 94-96.

13 McNickle, Ch. 7-14

(LITT Career Panel 4:30, Room TBA)

Week 5

18 McNickle, Ch. 15-end. **Critical response essay due.**

20 Group Presentation. Momaday 3-42. Handout: Robert L. Berner, "The Way to Rainy Mountain: Structure and Language" in K. Roemer, ed. *Approaches to Teaching Momaday's The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1988) 54-60.

Week 6

25 Momaday, 43-end. Video: *Momaday: Voice of the West*.
Critical response essay due.

27 Group Presentation. Silko, 1- 82 ("Ts'its'tsinako, Thought Woman" – "everything was so beautiful")
Handout: Paula Gunn Allen, "The Feminine Landscape of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*" in *Studies in American Indian Literature*, 127-133.

Week 7

March

4 Silko, 83 – 166 ("The hot weather" to "fooling around with Indian war heroes")

6 Silko, 167-end ("He sat back in the chair"- "Sunrise") . **Critical response essay due.**

MARCH 8 – 16 Spring Break

Week 8

18 Group Presentation. Erdrich, "The World's Greatest Fisherman" – "Lulu's Boys."
Handout: Louis Owens, "Erdrich and Dorris's Mixedbloods and Multiple Narratives"
in *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (1992) 192-205.

20 Erdrich, "The Plunge of the Brave" – "Crown of Thorns"

Week 9

25 Preceptorial Advising – no classes

27 Erdrich, "Love Medicine" – "Crossing the Water." **Critical response essay due.**

Week 10

April

1 Ortiz, Group presentation. Ortiz, Preface-49.

2 Preceptorial Advising – no classes

3 Ortiz, 50-end. **Critical response essay due.**
Discuss Final papers.

Week 11

8 Group presentation: Alexie, Ch. 1-3.

10 Alexie, Ch. 4-6

Week 12

15 Alexie, Ch. 7-end. **Critical response essay due.**

17 Group presentation: Tapahonso, Preface, 3-34.

Week 13

22 Tapahonso, 35-104. **Critical response essay due.**

24 Everyone is working on final papers.

25 The Really, Really Big LITT/LANG BASH

Week 14

29 Class post-mortem. **6-8 page papers due.**

May 1: reserved for make-up class if needed.

More on Teaching Presentations for Native American Literature:

The purpose of this group project is to learn about the history and culture of your writer. In turn, your group will be responsible for broadening the rest of the class' understanding of Native American culture. Success in this project will depend not only on western analytical linear thinking, but also on developing a sense of dependency on others for the success of the group and realizing one's identity as part of a harmonious whole. In traditional Native cultures an individual (in the western sense) does not exist outside the interdependence of tribal life. The group gives meaning to the individual, who is enhanced as a valued part of the whole group.

The presentations will require you to decide what information is most important about your tribe and its culture, how to organize it clearly, and what method of presentation would be most effective. You should be able to respond to questions from the rest of the class. Plan to meet with your group well before the presentations. Much of the learning in this class will be in your group meetings as well as through your teaching the rest of the class.

Considerations for the presentation (using whatever format your group deems appropriate):

- Demographic and geographic information. Who and how many are (or were) the tribe, where they have been, and where they are now?
- a list and explanation of significant dates and events in the tribe's history;
- an account of some crucial, culturally-defining characteristics and historical themes;
- the tribe's values and beliefs and the oral traditions that define them;
- an art object and what it reveals about the culture;
- what the people are doing today and particular issues or concerns that are important to them;
- ceremonies or rituals that express an aspect of tribal history or culture

Your presentation should conclude by relating the tribal material you have discovered to the writer's text in question and might consider:

- what specific Native American values are expressed in the work?
- in what ways, if any, does the text's form relate to the values expressed?
- how well does the piece work in terms of what you assume to be its goal?
- how are the values similar or different from others you have examined?
- are there particular passages you would like to share and why? Are there sections that you find particularly surprising, annoying, intriguing, disturbing, etc.? Why?
- would you recommend this work to others and why?

Remember: Presentations can take any form--the more creative the better--and must enlist class participation.