

Literature of Native America

ENGL 156.001
Spring 2014
TR 11:30-12:45
320 Clark

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. . .when one is telling a story and one is using words to tell the story, each word that one is speaking has a story of its own, too. Often the speakers, or tellers, will go into these words' stories, creating an elaborate structure of stories within stories...This perspective on narrative—of story within story, the idea that one story is only the beginning of many stories and the sense that stories never end—represents an important contribution of Native American cultures to the English language.

-Leslie Marmon Silko on Laguna Pueblo language

*I am the one whose death was intended
and didn't die*

-Connie Fife, "Dear Webster"

In this course we will read Native American literature from origin stories, which continue to be told today, to contemporary poetry and prose. We will also examine art work, music, and film in order to approach this literature with the dynamic spirit it deserves. In considering the various stories that Native Americans tell, we will address a number of questions: how is the unique legal relationship between American Indians and the United States government represented in Native literature? How do these authors contest and revise stereotypes of Indians? How should Native American literature be taught and read, given its diversity and its roots in the oral tradition? How do these texts challenge what we think of as storytelling, "America," and even ourselves? Students will be expected to keep up with current events via newspapers and the Internet and to become more acquainted with issues affecting indigenous people. This semester, we are especially fortunate to host Cherokee author Diane Glancy as the Native American Studies Program's Elder-in-Residence.

Note This course fits GEC Objective #9: Non-Western Culture (explores historical, cultural, and/or political issues pertaining to a non-Western region or nation).

COURSE GOALS

By the end of the semester, you should demonstrate:

- An understanding of and appreciation for the diverse oral and written literatures and histories of Native America;
- A sharpened ability to compare, contrast, and draw connections between Native American literary texts;

- Enhanced close reading, writing, and speaking skills.

COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS

The following texts are available at the Book Exchange and the WVU Bookstore. If at all possible, please purchase these editions so that we are all on the same page.

Required:

Purdy and Ruppert, *Nothing But the Truth* (Prentice 2000)

Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (New Mexico 1976)

Silko, *Ceremony* (Penguin 1986)

Glancy, *Pushing the Bear* (Harvest 1996)

Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Little Brown 2007)

One notebook for journal

REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation** (10% of final grade). Poor attendance will lower your final grade. **More than four unexcused absences will result in a zero for attendance and participation.**

Your participation grade will be based on the following:

- Your overall engagement in our discussions and writing activities.** We don't often think of listening as an element of participation, but a productive learning environment is characterized by participants who hear and respect others' words even if they don't agree with them. I welcome debate that is balanced with mutual respect.

- Your completion of assigned readings before coming to class.** Our discussions and writing assignments require your familiarity and engagement with these readings. If you don't come prepared, you do a disservice to yourself and to the other students. Since several assigned readings will be sent to you via e-mail, you need to check your e-mail account frequently.

2. **Reading Quizzes** (10% of final grade). Pop quizzes will be given periodically in order to encourage the completion of reading assignments.
3. **“The First Word” report on an *Indian Country Today (ICT)* article** (5% of final grade). In the first five minutes of most class days, a student will comment on an article from *ICT*. Don't merely summarize the article; discuss how it relates to our class, raise related questions, and/or offer your own take on the issue. You do not need to turn in anything for your First Word, although it would be helpful to pass around a copy of the article. You will be evaluated on your clarity and engagement with the material. For articles, see <www.indiancountrytoday.com>.

4. **Journal** (15% of final grade). In addition to responding to various prompts throughout the semester, you will need to respond to one Native American Studies event. Your response should not be a mere summary of the event; rather, it should connect the event to the issues and materials you have encountered in class. Your journal entries may be typed or handwritten; if the latter, please make sure they are legible. Each should be a minimum of one page. The journal will be due twice over the course of the semester.
5. **Three Exams** (each is 20% of final course grade). These exams ask you to analyze texts and integrate the information that we have discussed, sharpening your ability to engage in the literary analysis that is the hallmark of the discipline. The first exam will take place in class, the second is a take-home text, and the third (also worth 20%) constitutes the final exam.

CLASS POLICIES

Punctual attendance is required. Tardiness or poor attendance will adversely affect your final grade (**more than four unexcused absences will result in a zero for attendance and participation**). Please make every effort to arrive to class on time; important announcements will often be made in the first few minutes of class.

Late work is not acceptable. Any assignment handed in after the class period in which it is due will be penalized for lateness (**reduced 1/2 letter grade each day it is late, including the day it is due**). No assignment will be accepted more than five days after the due date. If a personal emergency arises and you need an extension, speak to me as soon as possible about your situation. Plan ahead for computer mishaps: always keep a back-up file of your work, and give yourself plenty of time to print.

Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Your classmates and instructors deserve your respect and support just as you deserve theirs. Try not to dominate the discussion or get us off track; be patient with classmates who may need to ask a question that seems obvious to you. Likewise, avoid actions that are distracting or that prevent you from getting the most out of the class (e.g. text messaging, holding side conversations, reading the newspaper, etc.). You want to signal that you are paying attention and that you respect others.

I do not discuss grades over e-mail.

Plagiarism, a form of theft, is prohibited. Plagiarism is defined as the submission of work that contains ideas not fully your own: ideas taken from publications, other students, your professors, the Internet, etc. Remember that you are required to cite a source if you include a direct quotation *or* if you borrow an idea and put it in your own words. If you have questions about the fine line between being influenced by a text or person and plagiarizing its/his/her ideas, cite the source. For a more detailed

description of plagiarism, as well as the correct form for citation of sources, see a writing handbook or ask me. **The consequences of a proven case of plagiarism may result in an unforgivable “F” in the course.**

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the Student Conduct Code: http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code.

Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. In accordance with that commitment I maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and nondiscrimination. WVU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, disability, age, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestion as how to promote such a positive and open environment in this class is appreciated and given serious attention.

Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation or other assistance in this course should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible, and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700 or Voice/TDD 293-7740).

SCHEDULE

Each piece should be read by the date on which it is listed. This schedule is subject to change. If a reading is available via handout (H), it will be provided the class period before it is due. E-mailed readings (E) will be sent before the class in which they are assigned. Be sure I have the address for the e-mail account you use regularly.

NBT=*Nothing But the Truth*
E=e-mailed reading

H=handout

R Jan. 9 Introduction

Stereotypes and Realities

T Jan. 14 Mihesuah, excerpts from *American Indians: Stereotypes and Realities* (E); Loewen, excerpt from *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (E); Alexie, “How to Write the Great American Indian Novel” (NBT 425); Dunn, “I Am the Real Hollywood Indian” (H)

Oral Literature

R Jan. 16 Allen, "The Sacred Hoop" (NBT 62); Momaday, "The Man Made of Words" (NBT 82); Sample origin stories (E)

T Jan. 21 Silko, "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective" (NBT 159); Silko, "Storytelling" (NBT 544); King, excerpt from *The Truth About Stories* (E)

R Jan. 23 Blaeser, "Trickster: The Compendium" (E); Silko, "Toe'osh: A Laguna Coyote Story" (NBT 548); "Iktomi Takes Back a Gift" (E); Sellers, "The New Coyote" (E)

T Jan. 28 Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (Prologue-XII)

R Jan. 30 *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (XIII-end)

T Feb. 4 Exam One (in class)

Native Identity

R Feb. 6 Weaver, "Indigenous Identity" (E); Turcotte, "Back When" poems (E); Hogan, "The Truth Is" (NBT 492); Allen, "Dear World" (NBT 430); Rendon, "What's an Indian Woman to Do?" (E)

T Feb. 11 Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature" (NBT 120); Zepeda, "Pulling Down the Clouds" and "Cewagi" (E); Tapahanso, "This Is How They Were Placed For Us" (E); Sanchez, "Tribal Chant" (E); Rose, "Naming Power" (E)

R Feb. 13 T Feb. 18 Deloria, "Indian Humor" (NBT 39); Alexie, "The Approximate Size of my Favorite Tumor" (NBT 194); Excerpt from *Me Pretty* (E); Revard, "Report to the Nation" (NBT 333)

T Feb. 18 King, "Borders" (NBT 289); Vizenor, "Almost Browne" (E)

Journal Due

R Feb. 20 Riding In, "Repatriation: A Pawnee's Perspective" (E); Hedge Coke, "Burial Mound" (H); H. Erdrich, "Guidelines for the Treatment of Native Objects" and "Kennewick Man Tells All" (H); Rose, "I expected My Skin and My Blood to Ripen" (NBT 531)

T Feb. 25 *The Way of the Warrior* (in class)

R Feb. 27 Northrup, "Veteran's Dance" (NBT 313); Erdrich, "The Red Convertible" (NBT 232)

T Mar. 4 Silko, *Ceremony* (1-62)

R Mar. 6 Silko, *Ceremony* (62-176)

F Mar. 7 Last Day to Drop a Class

March 8-16 Spring Break

T Mar. 18 Silko, *Ceremony* (176-end)

Telling History

R Mar. 20 Johnson, “As It Was in the Beginning” (NBT 282); Zitkala-Ša, “The Soft-Hearted Sioux” (NBT 406) and excerpt from *American Indian Stories* (E)

T Mar. 25 Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (E); Boudinot, “Address to the Whites” (E); Excerpt from *The Cherokee Removal* (E)

R Mar. 27 Glancy, *Pushing the Bear* (“North Carolina”-“The Stockade”)

T Apr. 1 Glancy, *Pushing the Bear* (“Tennessee”-“Illinois”)

Glancy Lecture (in class; location TBA)

Exam Two Distributed (take-home test)

R Apr. 3 Glancy, *Pushing the Bear* (to end)

T Apr. 8 Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (E); Boudinot, “Address to the Whites” (E); Excerpt from *The Cherokee Removal* (E)

Exam Two Due (take-home test)

Native Performance

R Apr. 10 Kilpatrick, “Genesis of the Stereotypes” (E); Dench, “The Dangers of Employing Redskins as Movie Actors” (E); Spiderwoman Theater, “Winnetou’s Snake Oil Show from Wigwam City” (E)

Journal Due

Showing of *Smoke Signals* (TBA)

T Apr. 15 Alexie, *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (1-66)

R Apr. 17 Alexie, *Absolutely True Diary* (67-129)

T Apr. 22 Alexie, *Absolutely True Diary* (to end)

R Apr. 24 Last Day of Class

Harjo, “I Give You Back” (NBT 477); Hill, “Dream of Rebirth” (NBT 563)

R May 1 (11 a.m.-1:00 p.m) Final Exam