

Prof. Channette Romero
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EGL 234H
Introduction to American Indian Literature & Film
MWF 1:45-2:50 pm, Bailey Hall 106
Fall 2005

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide an introduction to the narratives of the indigenous peoples of North America. We will be reading traditional oral literatures that predate colonization, such as myths, prayers, and songs, as well as examining the ways these oral traditions are repeated and revised in the contemporary genres of poetry, fiction, autobiography, and film. While we cannot hope to cover all of the tribal groups, through selected examples from oral and written traditions, our focus will be on gaining an understanding of the diverse histories, cultural perspectives, and issues facing tribes across North America. We will pay particular attention to issues of stereotyping, racism, poverty, land rights, cultural “authenticity,” and spirituality. A course highlight will be a class visit by Joseph Bruchac to discuss Abenaki storytelling and views of the environment.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories*
N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*
Luci Taphonso, *Blue Horses Rush In*
Leslie Silko, *Ceremony*
Sherman Alexie, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*
Joy Harjo, *She Had Some Horses*
Louise Erdrich, *Tracks*
Joseph Bruchac, *At the End of Ridge Road*
Simon Ortiz, *From Sand Creek*
LeAnne Howe, *Shell Shaker*
Wendy Rose, *Bone Dance*

Additional required readings will be distributed in class. Articles to be distributed are designated with an asterisk (*) below.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Plagiarism

Each student will be asked to abide by the College’s Code on Plagiarism (see attached Exhibit A).

Film Requirement

Each student must view the assigned films before the class in which the film is discussed. The best way to see these films is during the class viewings. However, students who are unable to make the class viewings may check the film out from Schaffer Library’s Reserve Desk for in-library viewing.

Attendance

Each student will be expected to attend every class. More than two absences will incrementally lower your participation grade by 10%. Students with more than four absences will automatically fail this course.

Participation: 10%

Each student will be expected to actively participate in class discussions.

Writing Assignments: 20%

Take-home and in-class writing assignments will be given periodically throughout the course. These writing assignments are intended to help prepare you for the kinds of critical reading and writing skills required in the course papers. If you are absent the day a writing assignment is given out in class, it is your responsibility to locate the assignment on the class Blackboard page (online.union.edu) under "Assignments" and complete the assignment before returning to class.

Oral Presentation: 15%

Each student will present a 5-10 minute oral presentation analyzing all or part of the assigned reading for that day. This involves reading the assigned texts well in advance and locating a few key passages you wish to discuss with the class as a whole. You should not summarize these passages for the class. Instead, use your own ideas about these passages to make an original argument about the text. (For specific presentation grading criteria, please see attached Exhibit B.)

Paper 1: 25%

A short paper, approximately 5 pages, will be due October 12. A copy of this paper must also be submitted electronically to the "Digital Dropbox" located under the "Tools" section of our class Blackboard page. This paper will ask you to provide a critical reading of the importance and function of a key topic in one of the texts we have read thusfar in the course. You should not merely summarize all the places in which your topic appears in the text of your choosing. Instead, your goal in this paper should be to make your own original argument about the importance and function of your topic, basing that argument on critical readings of a few key passages.

Paper 2: 30%

A longer paper (7-8 pages) will be due at the start of class on November 14. A copy of this paper must also be submitted electronically to the "Digital Dropbox" located under the "Tools" section of our class Blackboard page. This paper assignment asks you to look critically at a common theme in two of the novels we have read this term. (For instance, you might want to look at the way war is represented in *Ceremony* and *From Sand Creek*, or the role of the trickster figure in *American Indian Stories* and *Skins*, etc.) This assignment asks you to examine not only the similarities and differences between the texts' representations of a particular theme, but to make an argument about how their pairing allows you to read each more complexly. Your goal in this paper is to make nuanced, critical connections between two texts. A one-page paper proposal will be due November 9.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Oral Tradition

- SEPT 7 Introduction
SEPT 9 Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (68-73, 83-103, 110-117)
Lakota Winter Counts: <http://wintercounts.si.edu>
SEPT 12 Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (5-18, 27-41, 45-46)
*Ojibwe origin myth and tales
SEPT 14 *Iroquois origin myth
*Seneca Long House Legend
*Choctaw origin myth and Removal
SEPT 16 FILM: Dir. Victor Masayesva, Jr., *Itam Hakim, Hopiit* (1984)
*Navajo origin myth, Coming of Horses Chant, and Night Chant
*Pueblo origin myth
*Leslie Silko, "Language & Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective"
Appropriating the Oral Tradition in New Mediums
SEPT 19 N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*
SEPT 21 Luci Taphonso, *Blue Horses Rush In* (Preface, 5-6, 11-13, 35-48, 95-104)
SEPT 23 Leslie Silko, *Ceremony* (1-52)
SEPT 26 Leslie Silko, *Ceremony* (bottom 52-168)
Laguna land: <http://oncampus.richmond.edu/~rnelson/mapping/index.html>
SEPT 28 Leslie Silko, *Ceremony* (169-top 215)
SEPT 30 Leslie Silko, *Ceremony* (215-262)
OCT 3 Sherman Alexie, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto* (1-53, 59-82, 93-109)
OCT 5 Sherman Alexie, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto* (130-180)
OCT 7 Sherman Alexie, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto* (181-223)
OCT 10 FILM: Dir. Sherman Alexie, *Business of Fancy Dancing* (2002)
OCT 12 **PAPER 1 DUE**
(in-class) Joy Harjo, *She Had Some Horses*
Joy Harjo, *Letter From the End of the 20th Century* (Audio CD)
Contemporary Protest Literature
OCT 14 Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (1-61)
OCT 17 Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (62-165)
OCT 19 Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (165-205)
OCT 21 Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (206-226)
OCT 24 FILM: Dir. Jay Rosenstein, *In Whose Honor?* (1997)
Joseph Bruchac, *At the End of Ridge Road* (1-74)
OCT 26 Joseph Bruchac, *At the End of Ridge Road* (75-96)
Bruchac Class Visit (1:45-2:50 pm)
Bruchac Storytelling Presentation (Nott Memorial, 7:30 pm)
OCT 28 Simon Ortiz, *From Sand Creek* (Preface, 1-51)
OCT 31 Simon Ortiz, *From Sand Creek* (52-95)
NOV 2 FILM: Dir. Chris Eyre, *Skins* (2002)
NOV 4 LeAnne Howe, *Shell Shaker* (1-51)
NOV 7 LeAnne Howe, *Shell Shaker* (52-143)
NOV 9 LeAnne Howe, *Shell Shaker* (144-188)
PAPER PROPOSAL DUE
NOV 11 LeAnne Howe, *Shell Shaker* (189-222)
NOV 14 **PAPER 2 DUE**
(in class) Wendy Rose, *Bone Dance*

EXHIBIT B

(This is a sample of the form I will be using to grade your presentation.)

Name: _____

Oral Presentation Grading Criteria

Effective Use of Textual Evidence/Quotations _____

Reflects Original Thought & Critical Thinking _____

Reflects Organization & Preparation _____

Performance 25

Total Points (out of a possible 100) _____

***Please note: Each of the four criteria is worth 25 possible points. You will not be graded on performance; everyone automatically earns the full 25 points in that category.**

CONTACT SHEET

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Major/Minor:

Previous literature and American Indian studies coursework:

Favorite movies, books, other interests, etc:

“I have read and understood the requirements for this course and agree to them,”
