

ENGL 510.001
HH 341
MTWTh 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Summer I 2014

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Seminar in Literature: Native American Literature

Texts: James Welch (Blackfeet/Gros Ventre), *Fools Crow*
Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa), *Tracks*
Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), *Ceremony*
Linda Hogan (Chickasaw), *Solar Storms*
Susan Power (Standing Rock Sioux), *The Grass Dancer*
Thomas King (Cherokee), *One Good Story, That One*
Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur D'Alene), *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
One additional novel or short story collection selected from a list of texts

Course Objectives: The central objectives of this course are to familiarize students with select works by some of the important Native American writers of contemporary fiction, facilitate their interpretation and analysis of those texts, and prepare them to read additional works by Native American authors with some level of expertise.

During this whirlwind tour of NA fiction, we will encounter and discuss a variety of thematic issues which include the displacement of the Native American, the search for personal and community identity, the conflicts between Euro-American and Native American world views (e.g., the concept of time, attitudes toward environment, the needs of the individual versus the needs of the group, what constitutes physical and mental health, etc.), and the importance of storytelling in maintaining one's relationship with the group and one's relationship to the universe. I hope we will be able to move beyond Cooper's romantic notion of the "noble savage" as well as the current neo-romantic and/or barbarous images promoted in the media (*Dances with Wolves*, *Pocahontas*, *Apocalypto*, *The New World*, et al.) in order to arrive at a more realistic view of the Native American. We will also be looking at all of these works in the context of current thematic and stylistic trends in contemporary literature.

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| Grading: | Class Participation | 30% |
| | Additional Text Presentation (4-5 pages) | 30% |
| | 7-9 page presentation essay (with 250 word abstract) | 40% |

Course Requirements: You will, of course, be required to read all assignments before coming to class and come to class prepared (and willing) to discuss them. I will expect all seminar students to be active and thoughtful contributors to class discussion. In addition, each student will prepare for each class session by identifying a significant "moment" in the text and writing three discussion questions; read an additional assigned text, prepare a 4-5 page seminar report on that text, and present that report to the class; and write a 7-9 page essay which should grow out of the significant intersection(s) between that additional text and one (or more) of the texts of the course, write a 250 word abstract of the substance of that essay, read the essay to the class, and provide photocopies of the abstract for distribution to the class.

Class Participation & Preparation: In a graduate seminar, the success of the class depends upon the full, helpful participation of all seminarians in discussions of the literary texts and the issues which they raise. To help facilitate discussion as well as enhance your knowledge and "ownership" of the literature, for each class session, you will come to class prepared to identify and discuss one significant and meaningful "moment" in the assigned reading as well as to ask three discussion questions about other "moments" in the reading.

Seminar Reports: You will be assigned an additional text to read and study. Due on June 17, your seminar report will consist of a 4-5 page essay “book talk” in which you 1) briefly provide a descriptive overview of the contents/contexts of the text, 2) identify and explain the most significant specific arguments, insights, features, and so forth of the text, and 3) point to ways in which these specifics may enhance the analysis of other texts and the understanding of other issues of the course.

Final Essay & Abstract: I hope your work with the assigned additional text and our class discussion on the day of your seminar report will lead directly to the creation of this 7 to 9 page analytical essay due on the last class meeting. At this session, you will read your essay to the class and distribute a 250 word abstract to your classmates. The primary focus in this essay will be some meaningful “conversation” between the additional text you read for the course and one other text from our assigned readings. Consider these essays potential conference essays and proposals.

Plagiarism: As you are undoubtedly aware, the English Department has a strict policy on plagiarism. As a space/paper saving measure, I am not including the full statement in this syllabus but am willing to share it with anyone who needs a refresher on what constitutes plagiarism. Suffice it to say that I expect any written work you provide in this class to be unique to this class and to reflect your own original insights, ideas and interpretations. Any included ideas which are not your own should be properly cited in the writing you provide.

Attendance: Although, I shouldn’t need to mention it, attendance at all class sessions is expected. If you miss more than one class, you will need to arrange with me a means of making up that session in some meaningful way. If you miss more than two classes, unless there are incredibly extenuating circumstances which I am willing to accommodate, you will fail the course. I hope that sort of problem will not occur and that you are committed to this seminar.

Office Hours: I’m not going to schedule specific office hours, but please do speak with me after class or schedule an appointment to discuss any issues which come to mind. Each of you should speak with me at least briefly about your “plan” for the final essay.

Assignment Calendar

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| June | 2 | Intro |
| | 3 | <i>Fools Crow</i> (through 202; to Part III) |
| | 4 | <i>Fools Crow</i> (to end) |
| | 5 | <i>Tracks</i> (through 95; to Chapter Five) |
| | 9 | <i>Tracks</i> (to end) |
| | 10 | <i>Ceremony</i> (through 152; to “The dry skin/was still stuck/to his body”) |
| | 11 | <i>Ceremony</i> (to end) |
| | 12 | <i>Solar Storms</i> (through 144; to chapter Eleven) |
| | 16 | <i>Solar Storms</i> (to end) |
| | 17 | Due: Additional text seminar reports |
| | 18 | <i>The Grass Dancer</i> (through 156; to chapter 6 “A Hole in the Sheets”) |
| | 19 | <i>The Grass Dancer</i> (to end) |
| | 23 | <i>One Good Story, That One</i> (through 65; to Chapter Nineteen) |
| | 24 | <i>One Good Story, That One</i> (to end) |
| | 25 | <i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> |
| | 26 | Due: Essays and abstracts |