ENGL 206: 20th Century Native American Literature and Issues of Representation

Jennifer Holly Wells, PhD

Summer Session 1

M-Tu-Th 9:00-12:00

The Native American literary tradition was recognized in the mid-20th century and immediately generated questions: How does a culture transition from oral to written stories? Who is included in this literary tradition? Hasn’t the tradition been ongoing for quite some time? Can there really be one monolithic “Native tradition”? We will also look at issues of genre and identity: Leslie Marmon Silko accused Louise Erdrich of being more interested in form than in authentic content. We will read both to investigate the argument and to provide structure for reading the works of other American Indian writers. By looking at First, Second, and Third Wave works by Native authors, we will examine the changes in the traditions as well as topics and attitudes in the literature. Together as a class we will use digital mapping to look at the geographical diversity of the literature, and as a tool to think about the idea of traditions. Authors we read will include Zitkala-Sa, Sherman Alexie, Paula Gunn Allen, Greg Sarris, Louise Erdrich, Vine Deloria Jr., Leslie Marmon Silko, and others. This class will include a mandatory field trip to the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City.

Objectives:

1. Students will become familiar with selected major and minor works of Native literature of the 20th/21st century

2. Students will become familiar with the history and culture surrounding the production of Native American literature

3. Students will become familiar with the forms and genres within Native American literature

4. Students will become aware of the themes of Native American literature, especially transition, humor, and loss

5. Students will be able to write a critical analysis of the works of Native American literature

6. Students will be able to discuss critical aspects of Native American literature

Books:


Erdrich, Louise. *Tracks.*

Assignments:
Participation in every class (15% of final grade) (For this part of the grade, I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences)
Six response papers (30% of final grade)
Two 4-6 page critical analysis papers (40% of final grade; 20% each)
Presentation (15% of final grade)

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** All work in this course must adhere to the College Standards on Academic Integrity. You must do your own work. You must cite sources appropriately in all papers and presentations. You must acknowledge the contributions of other students to your work. Any student who is in violation of this policy will be referred to the Dean's Office for further action. The policy can be found at: [https://uknow.drew.edu/confluence/display/Handbook/Academic+Integrity](https://uknow.drew.edu/confluence/display/Handbook/Academic+Integrity)

**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS:** Should you require academic accommodations, you must file a request with the Office of Disability Services (BC 119B, extension 3962). It is your responsibility to self-identify with the Office of Disability Services and to provide faculty with the appropriate documentation from that office at least one week prior to any request for specific course accommodations. There are no retroactive accommodations.

Schedule:
**Week 1**
May 21: Introduction to class, classmates, and topic  
  Workshop on close reading

May 22: The Controversy
  Silko, “Here’s An Odd Artifact for the Fairy-Tale Shelf” (pdf)
  Silko, “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” and “Tony’s Story,” 358-366
  Silko, “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective” 159-165
  Gunn Allen, “The Sacred Hoop,” 62-81
  Erdrich, “The Red Convertible,” 232-239

May 24: Gunn Allen, intro
  Swann, “Introduction” 172-189
  Ohiyesa, “The Ghost Dance War” 54-61
  Rose, “Three Thousand Dollar Death Song” 533-534
  Ortiz, “The Creation, According to Coyote” 516-517
  Silko, “Storytelling” 544-546
  Walters, “The Warriors” 396-405

**Week 2**
May 28: Memorial Day, no class
May 29: Sarris, “The Woman Who Loved a Snake” 141-158
    McNickle, “The Hawk is Hungry” 305-312
    Johnson, “As It Was in the Beginning,” 282-287
    Kenny, “Akwesasne,” “They Tell Me I Am Lost,” and “Wild Strawberry” (500-508)

    Momaday, House Made of Dawn

June 1: First paper due

Week 3
June 4: Movie: “Smoke Signals”
June 5: Guest speaker Krista White
    DeLoria, “Indian Humor” 39-53
    Alexie, “The Approximate Size of My Favorite Tumor” 194-202
June 7: Erdrich, Tracks

Week 4
    TallMountain, “The Disposal of Mary Joe’s Children” 375-390
    Hogan, “Aunt Moon’s Young Man”
    Harjo, “The Woman Hanging from the Thirteenth Floor” 480481
    Blue Cloud, “The Old Man’s Lazy” 444-446

June 12: Movie: “Thunderheart”
June 14: King, “Borders” 289-297
    Northrup, “Veterans’ Dance” 313-320
    Revard, “Report to the Nation” 333-344

June 15: Second paper due