Syllabus for Native American Literature

– A Postgraduate Course

(Spring 2016)

Institute: Shanghai International Studies University, P.R. China
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Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to a variety of Native American literature; to brief them on the cultural, religious, philosophical and historical ideas that are particularly relevant to this field of study; and to examine the thematic concerns and artistic values of Native American literature. It will also explore the interaction between American Native and non-Native writings. The works to be read include novels, poetry and drama by Native American writers, along with literary criticism. Studying these works will enable students to interpret Native American literary texts of distinct features written in different eras, to have an overall understanding of the history and trend of Native American literature, and to acquire a methodology for the study of Native American literature. This course aims to help students to interpret and criticize both Native American literature and literature by other ethnic groups from multiple perspectives as well as improving their proficiency in, and awareness of, literary criticism.

Week 1  Orientation and Overview of American Indian literature
Week 2  American Indians in Historical Perspective
Week 3  Oral Literature (Orature)
Week 4  Early Native American non-fictional writings in English (I):
  sermons and historical narrative
“A Sermon, Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, An Indian” (Samson Occom)

Week 5  Early Native American non-fictional writings in English (II): essays and autobiography
“An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man”  (William Apess)

Week 6  Contemporary Native American writings (I): postcoloniality and the political elements
“A Good Chance”  (Elizabeth Cook-Lynn)

Week 7  Contemporary Native American writings (II): Indianness and survivance
“Literary Aesthetics and Survivance” (Gerald Vizenor)
“The Last Lecture on the Edge”  (Gerald Vizenor)

Week 8  Contemporary Native American writings (III): historicity, empowerment, and short story cycle
Love Medicine  (Louise Erdrich)

Week 9  Contemporary Native American writings (IV): sense of space and identity, and time in Native American storytelling
“Borders”  (Thomas King)

Week 10  Contemporary Native American writings (V): female narrative, the role of storytelling and Native respect for ancestry
“Aunt Moon’s Young Man”  (Linda Hogan)
“New Shoes”  (Linda Hogan)

Week 11  Contemporary Native American writings (VI): cultural values, American Indian boarding schools, and Relocation Act
“Yellow Woman”  (Leslie Marmon Silko)
“Lullaby”  (Leslie Marmon Silko)

Week 12  Contemporary Native American writings (VII): the Native American Literary Renaissance, Native American views on nature and governmental policies
*House Made of Dawn*  (N. Scott Momaday)

**Week 13**  Contemporary Native American writings (VIII):

Native American irony, styles of Native American poetry

“The Killing of A State Cop”  (Simon Ortiz)

“Relocation”  (Simon Ortiz)

**Week 14**  Contemporary Native American writings (IX):

Tribalography and hybridity

“Moccasins Don't Have High Heels”  (LeAnne Howe)

**Week 15**  Contemporary Native American writings (X):

Native American humor and youth writing

“How to Write the Great American Indian Novel”  (Sherman Alexie)

*The Absolute True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*  (Sherman Alexie)

**Week 16**  Contemporary Native American writings (XI):

Reservation and off-reservation narrative

“Earl Yellow Calf” from *The Indian Lawyer*  (James Welch)

Notes: This schedule is subject to change. Deviations may be necessary and will be announced to the class by the instructor.

**Course Policies:**

Attendance and participation are crucial components of this course. Each student will be allowed no more than 2 absences without suffering a penalty on his or her final grade.

The grade breakdown is as follows:

**Attendance:**  5 %

**Participation:**  10%

**Presentation:**  15%

**Essay (3000 Words):**  70%
**Must read:**


**Strongly Recommended Secondary Reading**

**Reference for basic information of Native Americans and Native American literature:**


**Reference for further academic research on Native American literature:**


Krupat, Arnold, and Brian Swann, eds. *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native
Important Historical Places, Persons, Moments and Events

Alcatraz Island
American Indian Movement (AIM)
American Indian Literary Renaissance
Battle of the Little Bighorn
Boarding schools
Captivity narrative
Carlisle Indian Industrial School
Chief Joseph
Chief Seattle
Custer, George Armstrong
Lewis and Clark Expedition
Columbus Day
Crazy Horse
Eastern Navajo Dine against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM)
Ethnography
Five Civilized Tribes
General Allotment Act (1887)
Geronimo
Ghost Dance
Hiawatha
Indian Gaming Regulatory Act
Indianness
Indian Reorganization Act (1934)
Indian Territory
Long Walk of the Cheyenne
Manifest Destiny
Navajo Long Walk of 1864
Navajo Code Talkers
Peltier, Leonard
Pocahontas
pow wow
Red Cloud
Removal
Relocation
Sacajawea
Separatism
Strategic essentialism
The Comanche Code Talkers of World War II
Trail of Broken Treaties
Trail of Tears
Wounded Knee Massacre (1890)