

Susan Power

English Composition 2: Writing About Native American Texts

Professor Vanessa Holford Diana Spring 2010
ENG 0102-016 (crn# 30951) MWF 11:30-12:20 Parenzo Room 109
ENG 0102-021 (crn# 30958) MWF 12:35-1:25 Bates Room 221

some of the authors we'll read: Susan Power, Sherman Alexie, Zitkala-Sa, Louise Erdrich, Hershman John, Luther Standing Bear, Eric Gansworth, Marilou Awiatka, Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday.

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Office: Mod Hall 102H Office Hours: M W 10:20-11:20; F 1:35-2:35& by appt.

Course Description:

Like all sections of English 102, this course will build on the academic writing skills that you developed in English 101, enabling you to develop further critical reading, thinking, and writing skills, improving your ability to communicate clearly and convincingly in any academic field. In this special thematic section of English 102 you will write a variety of essays in response to texts by Native American authors who challenge our culture's stereotypical ideas about their cultural identity and history. In the fiction, poems, plays, autobiographical stories, and visual arts we will discuss, Native American writers and artists explore the impact of media images on their self-perception, the realities of race relations, and their experiences with education, spirituality, and family. As a class, we will consider the writing strategies these authors employ to communicate their messages, and you will try out a number of writing strategies to communicate your own messages, as well as using research skills to learn more about authors, events, or tribal groups about which you read. You will also have an opportunity this semester to meet one of the authors we study this semester: Onondaga writer and painter Eric Gansworth, whose book we will be reading in class, will visit WSC in March while his paintings are on exhibit in our downtown gallery.

You should expect to spend 2-3 hours outside class to prepare for each class meeting. I expect you to contribute actively to class discussion by asking thoughtful questions, coming to class prepared, and offering thoughtful feedback on peers' writing. Please see the Composition Program's brochure for further details about the objectives for English 102.

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Required Texts (available at campus bookstore):

Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene) *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2009)

Eric Gansworth (Onondaga) *Breathing the Monster Alive* (2006)

Susan Power (Sioux) *Roofwalker* (2002)

Any writing handbook that includes grammar, style, and punctuation (the handbook you purchased for English 101 should be fine)

Any college-level dictionary

A 3-ring binder for keeping writing process steps, handouts, reading journal entries: you need to keep EVERYTHING you write this semester!

I will provide supplemental readings (photocopies) over the course of the semester

Grading Criteria:

I do not grade on a curve. My grading standards are tough but fair, and I endeavor to communicate my expectations for each assignment clearly. Please take advantage of my office hours to clarify any questions about my grading standards or your standing in the course. **Important Note: In order to pass English 102, you must hand in all of the graded assignments.** Skipping an essay will result in a failing grade for the course. **When grading essays, I follow these criteria (taken from WSC English Dept. web page, adapted from Syracuse grading guidelines):**

An **A** paper is superior, written far above the minimum standards; it goes beyond merely avoiding error. It has a positive value and displays originality, imagination, vitality, and a feeling for words. Ideally, it should present fully and accurately a new idea or a new treatment of an old idea, though in practice a paper that does not quite attain this standard sometimes receives an A. The organization of the A paper should not only be logical but natural. The superior paper should be forceful and appropriate in style, and almost completely free of formal and mechanical errors.

A **B** paper falls a little below the A standards. It too has a positive value that goes beyond avoidance of error, but it lacks in one or more qualities that would bring it closer to perfection. It may develop an idea fully and accurately, but lack elements of originality; it may have all the qualities of an A paper except naturalness or organization; or it may be marred by improper form, inappropriate style, or occasional obscurity.

A **C** paper is adequate but may not be developed fully; its logic may be unconvincing; its organization, paragraphs, or sentences weak; or it may be marred by obscurity or an unhappy choice of words. Frequently an essay might rate an A or B in content and is given a C because it lacks coherence overall. Just as often, an essay may be relatively correct in form, but its content may be uninspired and dull, thus warranting a grade no higher than a C.

A **D** paper is unsatisfactory and largely faulty but does not warrant complete failure. It may contain little or nothing worth saying, or it may be full of

gross formal or mechanical errors. It may fail substantially to meet one or more of the minimum standards listed above.

The totally unacceptable paper (F) fails even to approach minimum standards, fails substantially to meet the requirements of the assignment, or plagiarizes from other sources.

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Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

***Class Participation:** (10%) Thoughtful, active participation in class discussion, peer review workshops, and attendance. Here is how I will calculate your participation grade:

You contribute thoughtfully to class discussion every day	A range
You contribute to class discussion many days	B range
You contribute to class discussion occasionally and answer questions when asked	C range
You rarely contribute to class discussion and often do not answer questions	D range
You never contribute to class discussion and never answer questions	F

Any absences will reduce participation grade somewhat.

A note on disruptive and off-task behavior: using cell phones, texting, wearing ipod headphones, doing homework for another class all communicate that you do not want to be in class and do not respect the work of your classmates or me. If I see you texting, doing other work, etc., I will record a failing participation grade for that day. If you have an emergency that requires you to keep a phone on during class period, you should let me know before the start of class. Otherwise, please turn off and put away all electronic devices before class. In addition, our classroom should be a comfortable and friendly place where we can explore ideas and enjoy working together, and paying attention to classmates' comments helps create positive community of learners, but off-topic chatting with classmates is disruptive and will lower participation grade.

*** Reading Journal Entries (Homework) and Reading Quizzes:** (15%) To become a good critic of literature, you need to get into the practice of reflecting on what you read. Therefore, throughout the semester, I will ask you to write informal responses to the assigned readings in a section of your notebook devoted to your reading journal. Periodically, I will check these homework assignments or base in-class activities on them, so your completion of reading journal entries will be a significant portion of this grade. In addition, unannounced reading quizzes will also be given in class to check that you are keeping up with reading assignments.

***Paper #1** (15%) (4 pages) *Absolutely True Diary Entry and Accompanying Letter:* a personal narrative inspired by Alexie's semi-autobiographical novel along with a letter to publishing house explaining connection between your story and Alexie's. See assignment sheet for more details.

***Paper #2:** (20%): *Comparative Analysis:* A 4-5 page analysis of two texts exploring a shared theme. See assignment sheet for more details.

***Paper #3 :** (15%) *Poetry Explication:* A 3-4 page close reading analysis of how stylistic elements (such as figurative language, word choice, tone, rhythm, and structure) contribute to meaning in one poem. See assignment sheet for more details.

Paper #4: (25%): *Researched Proposal* on one reading selection from the semester: A 6-7 page argument for inclusion of one text (reading or film) in another course offered at WSC, written as a proposal to a Department Chair. Will incorporate 4 secondary sources. See assignment sheet for more details.

Rewrite Policy: If you are not satisfied with your grade on papers 1-3, you can rewrite IF you meet with me to discuss plans for *significant* revisions. Merely correcting errors in spelling or grammar that I have marked does *not* constitute significant revisions. Rewritten draft must be submitted with original graded essay within 2 weeks of the date when original was returned. New grade will be the average of original grade and grade on rewrite. Original grade will *not* be lowered in the event that a rewrite earns a lower score than the original.

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Extra Credit Policy: Over the course of the semester, I will offer various extra credit opportunities, such as attending campus events and writing responses to them, bringing rough drafts to the reading and writing center, or volunteering rough drafts for in-class discussion. Extra credit assignments can be used to boost your grade in the category of reading journal entries/quizzes. Each extra credit event write-up is worth 30 extra credit points on a quiz or a missed reading journal entry. Volunteering drafts or going to the Reading and Writing Center is worth 15 extra credit points or a ½ of a missed journal entry.

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Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another's words or ideas. Any outside sources used in essays must be properly credited and documented following MLA guidelines. As you know, student papers and literary study guides are available on the web and from other sources. Instructors at WSC are well aware of these various on-line essay sources, and we can use internet programs to search for plagiarized material. Writing teachers can also detect when a student's writing is not his or her own through attention to tone and word choice. Plagiarism of any type will result in an F for the assignment, probable failure of the course, and possibly more serious action by the college. Records of all plagiarism cases are kept on file in the Office of Academic Affairs. Retain notes, drafts, and any other relevant materials -- including sources --for all major writing assignments because you will be required to submit these with final drafts. Consult with me if you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism.

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Attendance Policy: Because this course is designed as a workshop, attendance will directly affect final course grade. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. Instead, you may miss 4 classes during the semester for illness, emergencies, or personal reasons. Two lates = one absence. After the allotted absences are used up, I will deduct one point from your *final course average* for each additional absence. Your class participation grade is also adversely affected by any absences. Excellent attendance will be rewarded; if you attend *every* class this semester you will have *two points added* to your final course average. Quizzes can not be made up if you are absent, and late papers will lose one full letter grade for each

day late. If you need to miss a class, make arrangements with me in advance to submit assignments early. Use voice mail or e-mail to contact me in the event of an emergency.

Snow Cancellation Policy:

Please note that class will only be canceled due to snow when the entire college cancels classes. In the event of a snow cancellation, you should assume that we will follow the syllabus in order to catch up as soon as possible. Therefore, any assignment due on a cancelled class day should be turned in the next time we meet.

Schedule of Assignments

(This schedule is subject to minor changes. Reading assignments due on the day listed.)

Week 1

Wednesday, January 20: Introduction to course and each other; discuss pop culture images and stereotypes of Native Americans; introduction to Sherman Alexie; discuss reading journal.

"Absolutely True" Fiction: Alexie's Young Adult Novel and Reader Response

Friday, January 22: (Due today:) Read Sherman Alexie *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* pages 1-24. [note one copy of this book is on reserve at circulation desk of Ely Library.] Reading journal entries on assigned pages are due each day we have new reading to discuss. For full credit, write at least a half-page long paragraph including reference to at least one specific passage (with page number) from assigned pages. Use these entries as a way to zoom in on an aspect of the text you found interesting; see discussion questions on *Absolutely True Diary* for ideas. **Reading Journal Prompt:** For your first entry, consider these questions: what are your first impressions of Junior's character? What role do the cartoons play for you as a reader? Was there a moment in these opening pages that you could relate to based on your own experience? (*Note, you are NOT required to answer all of these questions in your reading journal! They are meant to spur ideas.)

Week 2:

Monday, January 25: Read Alexie *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* pages 25-103. **Reading journal prompt:** Please note in your reading journal entry at least one specific scene from these pages that you found compelling and why. Also, on page 56 is a cartoon of Reardon's mascot: how is the school mascot related to Junior's self-perception at Reardon? How does Alexie seem to be treating the topic of stereotypes in general? What are some of your thoughts on the sports mascot debate?

Wednesday, January 27: Read Alexie *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* 104-168. **Journal prompt:** In these pages Alexie treats a wide range of serious issues, including addiction, racism, romantic relationships, community acceptance and rejection, poverty, friendship, gender roles, being part of a sports team, Christmas, grandmothers, mourning, funerals Choose a point during these pages where you were able to *relate* to Junior's character: what experience in your own life did a passage make you think about? What similarities and differences do you find between Junior's experience or thoughts on a topic and your own?

Friday, January 29: Conclude Alexie *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* 169-230. **Journal prompt:** on p. 217 Junior lists the various tribes he belongs to: make a list your "tribes"; what do you think was one of the most important messages Alexie was trying to get across to readers in Junior's story? What writing strategies did he use to try to achieve that purpose? What do you think is the ideal age for reading this book?

Week 3:

Monday, February 1: Brainstorming notes for Paper 1 Due: Use Steps detailed on page two of assignment sheet for Paper 1 to generate notes and consider topics for your story. Then draft at least 2 pages (typed) in which you begin to tell your story. In class: finding a thesis in your story, considering possible visual elements, drafting letter to publishing house. *Bring *Absolutely True Diary* to class this week!

Wednesday, February 3: Revised Draft (3 full pages minimum) DUE! (I will check for changes made between Monday's draft and today's). Focus on developing description and voice. Adding to cover letter. *Bring Writing Handbook to class today!

Friday, February 5: Polished Draft (3 full pages and completed cover letter) DUE! (I will check for changes made between Wednesday's draft and today's). **Focus on sentence-level corrections. *Bring Writing Handbook to class today!**

Challenging Assimilation, Celebrating Native Cultures: Education Stories

Week 4:

Monday, February 8: Paper 1 Final Draft due today (bring all rough drafts with peer review comments). Film excerpts: schools for Native American children

Wednesday, February 10: Zitkala Sa autobiographical stories (copy provided by Prof. D). **Reading Journal Prompt:** How does Zitkala Sa present the theme of education in these stories? Zoom in on TWO specific quotes (include page numbers) and write about what seems important to you about each.

Friday, February 12: Luther Standing Bear autobiography excerpt from *My People The Sioux* (copy provided by Prof. D). **Reading Journal Prompt:** zoom in on at least one specific passage from Luther Standing Bear's story that you see as connected in some way to Zitkala Sa's writing: what similarities and differences do you find?

Week 5:

Monday, February 15: No Class: President's Day

Wednesday, February 17: N. Scott Momaday *The Moon In Two Windows* pages _____. (copy provided in class) **Reading Journal Prompt:** Zoom in on TWO specific quotes that represent an interesting theme or aspect of characterization in this play. For each, write a quote sandwich paragraph answering the question, what is Momaday showing or making us ask in this moment of the play?

Friday, February 19: N. Scott Momaday *The Moon In Two Windows* pages _____.

Reading Journal Prompt: Zoom in on TWO specific quotes *from the pages we read for today* that represent an interesting theme or aspect of characterization in this play. For each, write a quote sandwich paragraph answering the question, what is Momaday showing or making us ask in this moment of the play?

Week 6:

Monday, February 22: Conclude N. Scott Momaday *The Moon In Two Windows* pages _____. **Reading Journal Prompt:** Draw a comparison between a specific scene or character in this play and a specific moment in either Sherman Alexie's, Luther Standing Bear's, or Zitkala Sa's story: zoom in on at least one specific passage from today's pages that you see as connected in some way to one of the earlier writings: what similarities and differences do you find?

Wednesday February 24: Susan Power "First Fruits" (From *Roofwalker* 111-137)

Reading Journal Prompt: Draw a comparison between a specific scene or character in this short story and a specific moment in Sherman Alexie's, Luther Standing Bear's, Zitkala Sa's or Momaday's texts: zoom in on at least one specific passage from today's pages that you see as connected in some way to one of the earlier writings: what similarities and differences do you find? In class: discuss story, connections, approaches to Paper 2: Comparative Analysis.

Friday, February 26: First notes for Paper 2 due: Using Brainstorming Guidelines on Paper 2 Assignment sheet, generate ideas and list of examples from two texts you want to compare. In class: Focus on formulating thesis and parallel examples.

Week 7:

Monday, March 1: Revised Draft of Paper 2 Due for peer review workshop. Focus on clear thesis and comparative transitions. Due for peer review workshop.

Wednesday, March 3: Final Draft of Paper 2 Due. Film *The Legend of Boggy Creek*.

Friday, March 5: Eric Gansworth *Breathing the Monster Alive*: Read opening introductory essay. **Journal Prompt:** Based on the opening essay in this collection, how would you summarize Gansworth's project in *Breathing the Monster Alive*? What questions is he exploring? What comments about writing did you find most interesting?

The Craft and Sound of Poetry: Storytelling on the Page

Week 8:

Monday, March 8: Read Eric Gansworth *Breathing the Monster Alive* pages (approx. 1-40) **Journal Prompt:** choose one poem and write an explication of it: First, discuss overall meaning of the poem; second, zoom in on a specific line/image you particularly like and discuss its meaning. Also, what is your impression of the paintings in the book: how do they impact your experience of reading?

Wednesday March 10: Read Eric Gansworth *Breathing the Monster Alive* (approx. pages 40-65) choose one new poem and write an explication of it: discuss overall meaning and zoom in on specific line/image you particularly like. Draw a connection to one or more paintings in the book. As you read, write at least one question you'd like to ask the author/artist.

Tonight! Eric Gansworth Artist's Reception and lecture at downtown gallery. I'll provide details in class. Shuttle Bus available from campus!!!

Friday March 12: Finish *Breathing the Monster Alive*. **Reading Journal Prompt:** Respond to Gansworth's talk and images at gallery: how has your understanding of his work changed as a result of this event?

Week 9:

March 15-19: No Classes this week for SPRING BREAK

Week 10:

Monday, March 22: poetry focus: copies provided in class

Wednesday, March 24: Read selections from poetry packet pages TBA. **Reading Journal Prompt:** Choose your favorite two poems from these pages, write a few lines about your impressions of each: main idea, striking images, comment on style. In class, discuss poems,

Friday, March 26: Read selections from poetry packet pages TBA. **Reading Journal Prompt:** Choose your favorite two poems from these pages, write a few lines about your impressions of each: main idea, striking images, comment on style. In class, plans for presentations.

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Week 11:

Monday March 29: Due today: Poetry explication notes (See Paper 3 assignment for guidelines). Poem presentations

Wednesday, March 31: Poem presentations

Friday, April 2: First Draft of **Paper 3 due for Peer Review workshop.**

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Week 12:

Monday, April 5: Revised draft of **Paper 3 due for Peer Review workshop.**

Wednesday, April 7: **Final draft of Paper 3: Poetry Explication due today;** introduce researched proposal assignment. Brainstorming workshop: Proposal ideas.

Friday, April 9: No class meeting today.

Week 13:

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Monday, April 12: Susan Power "Angry Fish" (From *Roofwalker* 54-71) **Reading Journal Prompt:** Power writes this story in the tradition of magical realism: what does she achieve by making the statue of St. Jude a talking character? Zoom in on a specific quote from the story in your answer. In class: discuss story; discuss proposal topic ideas.

Wednesday, April 14: Susan Power "Stone Woman" (From *Roofwalker* 147-159) **Journal Prompt:** This story is in a section of *Roofwalker* called "Histories": what historical references does Power make in this short story? Find one historical or cultural reference in the story and do a quick internet search on that topic: what did you find out, and how did it enhance your reading of this story? Make a clear connection. In class: discuss story; discuss proposal topic ideas.

Friday, April 16: Brainstorming Notes Due (see Paper 4 Assignment Sheet). In class: Researched Proposal brainstorming: developing arguments, listing research questions. BRING WSC BULLETIN to class today! Discuss independent research steps for next week.

Week 14

Monday, April 19: No Class! Patriot's Day

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Extra Credit opportunity this week: Watch one of the films on reserve @Ely Library circulation desk {I'll provide titles in class} : write a 1-2 page (double spaced) response to the film in which you discuss the film's overall story, a scene you found particularly striking, and connections to readings we've done in class. This can replace a quiz grade.

Wednesday, April 21: MEET IN ELY LIBRARY TODAY! Class will gather at circulation desk main entrance. BE ON TIME!

Friday, April 23: No class meeting: individual time to complete Independent Research Worksheet, read your new sources, take notes, and begin Source Annotation Worksheets for next week.

Week 15

Monday, April 26: Library Research Worksheet and 2 source annotation worksheets due. Writing without sources. In-class: free-writing exercise.

Wednesday April 28: 2 NEW Source Annotation Worksheets Due. Paper outline due: list main arguments in support of your chosen text. Outline should include specific examples from primary text (with page numbers) and secondary sources. Workshop on integrating source material into your argument. BRING YOUR HANDBOOKS for focus on MLA style for in-text citation and works cited entries.

Friday, April 30: Rough draft (including examples from primary text) (4 pages min.) due for workshop.

Week 16:

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Monday May 3: Revised draft of Paper 4 due today for peer review workshop; BRING YOUR HANDBOOKS.

Wednesday, May 5: Revised draft of Paper 4 due today for peer review workshop; BRING YOUR HANDBOOKS.

Friday, May 7: Revised draft of Paper 4 due today for peer review workshop; BRING YOUR HANDBOOKS.

Week 17:

Monday, May 10: Paper 3 Researched Proposal Due.

Last class! course evaluations. **Paper #4 due today** (including outlines, rough drafts with peer review notes, copies of secondary sources)

Internet Resources on Native American literature and cultural representation

<http://www.ipl.org/div/natam/>

Internet Public Library/ Native American Authors: *NOTE! Use the "Browse by authors" link on this site, not the search box!!* This website provides information on Native North American authors with bibliographies of their published works, biographical information, and links to online resources including interviews, online texts and tribal websites. Currently the website primarily contains information on contemporary Native American authors, although some historical authors are represented.

http://www.nativewiki.org/Storytellers:_Native_American_Authors_Online

contains information on Native American poets and novelists. Toward this end, most of the sites residing here have been constructed with the collaboration of the authors. A useful and fairly current page. Listed by tribal membership. Great resource (*NOTE: use the search box function on this page to look up your author.*)

<http://www.nativeculturelinks.com/mascots.html>

A compilation of web sites and writings on the issue of Indian mascots used by sports teams.

<http://www.bluecorncomics.com/stbasics.htm>

The Basic Indian Stereotypes by Joseph Riverwind (Taino): It is the goal of this page to dispel the common myths which surround the Native people of this continent. Stereotypes abound thanks to the lack of education and the media's shortsightedness. The following is a compilation of the most prevalent stereotypes of our people:

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/natauth.htm>

Internet School Library Media Center Native American Author Page. You'll find biography, bibliography, lesson plans, online texts and critical reviews of selected authors whose works are taught in the public schools or at the university level. Literature includes both adult and juvenile. [this page is outdated 2000, so a number of the links are dead. nonetheless a useful author list with critical / pedagogical material and e-texts]

www.NativeWiki.org

A library of information about indigenous nations and peoples (past and present) of the world. Features major sections on Nations and Peoples, Documents and Materials, Geographic Regions and a Picture Gallery of selected images. *Includes special section on Native American Authors Online!* (with helpful links to bio, book reviews, etc.)

<http://etext.virginia.edu/subjects/Native-American.html>

University of Virginia E-text Native American literature available on line--comprehensive collection of 19th and early 20th-century texts on line.

http://classclit.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=classclit&cdn=education&tm=7187&gps=518_760_1020_619&f=00&tt=14&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http%3A//falcon.jmu.edu/%7Eramseyil/native.htm

James Madison U: [Internet School Library Media Center](http://www.classclit.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=classclit&cdn=education&tm=7187&gps=518_760_1020_619&f=00&tt=14&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http%3A//falcon.jmu.edu/%7Eramseyil/native.htm) Native American page. You will find bibliographies, directories to pages of individual tribes, history and historical documents, periodicals and general links. The ISLMC is a preview site for teachers, librarians, students and parents. You can [search](#) this site, use an [index](#) or [sitemap](#).

http://www.anpa.ualr.edu/digital_library/narratives/SanViet.html

Vietnam Powwow: The Vietnam War as Remembered by Native American Veterans [a machine-readable transcription]

http://www.anpa.ualr.edu/digital_library/digital_library.htm

The Native Writers Digital Text Project brings the works of Native poets and writers of fiction and other prose to readers world wide. Featuring out-of-print literary efforts of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and First Nations people of Canada, the project seeks to broaden the definition of "Native Writing" not only by focusing on writers who are not ordinarily anthologized, but also by publishing works which originally appeared in "ephemeral" sources and the periodical press, especially in those publications edited and produced by Natives.

Index of Native American Resources on the Internet www.hanksville.org/Naresources

This extensive index provides links to a wide array of resources on Native American history, literature, art, articles on Native American history, language, movies, and other topics. Of particular interest is the collection of electronic texts that includes primary historical documents as well as books, stories, and articles written by Native authors in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (Goebel from Reading Native American Literature a Teachers Guide).

Native American History and Culture--Smithsonian Institution
http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/History_and_Culture/AmericanIndian_History.htm

This site offers information on a variety of Native American resources, particularly those provided by museums and universities. It also presents a number of selected exhibitions, such as a gallery of Native American portraits and an activity that explains how to read a buffalo hide painting. This site concludes with links to a variety of bibliographies that focus on Native American tribes or issues". (Goebel from Reading Native American Literature a Teachers Guide).

NativeWeb-- Resources for Indigenous Cultures around the World
www.nativeweb.org/

This is an issues-oriented news and information site targeted at a Native audience. It includes articles on topics ranging from current events to sports and music and provides links to thousands of sites of concern to indigenous peoples. Particularly useful is the link to specific U.S. tribal websites". (Goebel from Reading Native American Literature a Teachers Guide).

English 102 / Diana

Spring 2010

PAPER 1: AN "ABSOLUTELY TRUE" DIARY ENTRY

(15% of overall average) (4 pages including cover letter)

STORYTELLING: HELPING READERS REACH A NEW UNDERSTANDING:

As we discussed in class, Sherman Alexie's *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is semi-autobiographical, a mix of fiction and real experiences from Alexie's own teen years. As your thoughtful comments and reading journal entries have demonstrated, a first-person narrative can offer readers insight on a range of important, serious topics. Rather than writing an "absolutely true" story, Alexie crafted details of his novel carefully, creating Junior's voice in such a way that we relate to Junior and we learn from the realizations he discovers about himself, his family, his community, and his friends during his freshman year at Reardon High.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: WRITING A NARRATIVE:

For our first assignment, you will write a brief personal narrative about a topic related to Alexie's novel. The goal is to try out some of the strategies Alexie has used to offer your readers insights on the topic you choose. Like Alexie's novel, your story does not need to be "absolutely true," but it should be based at least loosely on your own experience. Your goal will be to use some of the strategies Alexie used to bring Junior's voice to life. These strategies include, but are not limited to, humor, physical description, dialogue, figurative language (such as metaphors, similes, hyperbole), and even visuals--consider comics, photographs, clip art, etc. Like Junior, you will mix storytelling with reflection on a new understanding or realization you came to in your life as a result of the experience you describe.

AUDIENCE AND SCENARIO:

Alexie's publishing house is holding a contest to celebrate the success of *The Absolutely True Diary*. Contestants are asked to write an "absolutely true" diary entry inspired by Alexie's text. The judges (including your professor!) will look for *engaging voice*, *compelling description*, and a *clear POINT* to the story. Here's how to enter:

- 1) Submit your "Absolutely True" diary entry, which should be 3 pages long, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font (standard one-inch margins) to your professor.
- 2) Include a title that uses the words "The Absolutely True Diary of --.." (fill in the rest to reflect YOUR story)
- 3) Write a cover letter to the publishers explaining what in Alexie's novel inspired your diary entry. In other words, what is the connection between your story and Alexie's? How did reading Alexie's book make you think about the topic of your story in a new way? What stylistic influences did Alexie have on the way you chose to tell your story? Letter **MUST include at least one direct quote from Alexie's book, following MLA format for in-text citation.**

DEADLINES:

Monday, February 1: Brainstorming Notes (see back) and 2-page draft;

Wednesday, February 3: First Draft Due for workshop.

Friday, February 5: Revised Draft DUE!

Monday, February 8: Final Draft due (bring all rough drafts with peer review comments).

Paper #1 Formulating a Topic:

Step one: determine an issue you think you have something to say about!

- >Review your class notes about central themes in Alexie's book: what topics from that list are most interesting to you?
- > Go through your photo albums/files: do they remind you of any conflicts, influential events, celebrations that were meaningful to you?
- > Re-read your reading journal entries and circle phrases/sentences that represent ideas you'd like to explore further
- > Make a list of characters in Alexie's book. Then think of people in your own life you could compare to each of those characters. List similarities and differences.

Step two: remember, make up (or a bit of both!) an experience from your own life that lets you comment on that issue.

Step three: tell the story to SHOW (rather than just TELL) the point you want readers to learn.

PAPER #2 (20%) COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

One of the most common writing tasks you will face in college is the **comparative analysis**, which asks you to compare and contrast two authors' treatment of the same theme, question, or argument. We use comparative analysis to understand sides in a debate, to consider how ideas on a subject have changed over time, to understand the complexities of an issue, or to identify issues that are important enough to warrant attention from multiple writers. When we make arguments about any written text, we need to support our claims through close reading, which involves zooming in on a direct quote from the text and then analyzing it.

The Native American writers we have read so far, Sherman Alexie, Luther Standing Bear, Zitkala Sa, N. Scott Momaday, and Susan Power, have explored many shared themes, including education, growing up, cultural identity, history, assimilation efforts, culture clashes, religion, and family relationships. For this paper you will choose a connection between two of our readings that you have found most interesting. The *purpose* of your comparative analysis is to draw some conclusion about what we *learn* by comparing these two selections. This means that in your thesis statement you need to do more than merely state what element you are comparing in the two reading selections. You also need to answer this question: *what is the relevance of the connections/contrasts you have found between these two selections?*

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Length: Paper should be at least 4 full pages long, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, double-spaced

Clear Thesis: Identify the parallel you've identified between two texts, and explain what we learn by comparing these parallel elements.

Organization: Use effective structure and transitions to emphasize connections across the two texts.

Evidence: Practice close reading to support your thesis by including direct quotes from the text to illustrate the point you are making.

MLA format: Follow MLA guidelines (using your writing handbook from English 101) to properly incorporate quotes using in-text citation.

Use MLA format to create a Works Cited page listing the texts you discuss.

STEPS AND DEADLINES:

Friday, February 26: Brainstorming Notes for Paper 2 due (see guidelines on back): workshop on finding supporting examples and connections.

Friday, March 9: First Draft of Paper 2 due for workshop on thesis, support, and organization.

Monday March 1: Rough Drafts of Paper 2 due for workshop on transitions and cohesiveness.

Wednesday March 3: Final Draft Paper #2 due!

Paper #2 Getting Started: Brainstorming Topics

1. Go back through your reading journal entries since the start of the semester and remind yourself what you wrote about in response to our various readings. What were some of the most interesting topics you wrote about in your journal responses?
2. So far this semester we've read Sherman Alexie's *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*; Luther Standing Bear from *My People the Sioux*; Zitkala Sa from "School Days of an Indian Girlhood"; N. Scott Momaday's play *The Moon in Two Windows*, and Susan Power's short story "First Fruits." Make a list ranking these readings from most to least interesting.
3. For the top few works in your ranking, list themes and characters you found most interesting.
4. What connections do you see between various pairs of texts? (shared themes, similar events, etc.) Make a list of paired texts: what does each pair have in common? Which of these connections are most interesting to you?
5. What connections do you see between various characters? (shared experiences, similar struggles, parallel stories, etc.) Which of these connections are most interesting to you?

6. Rank your possible topics in order of interest. Then for your favorite review the two texts you're considering comparing, and identify two or more textual examples you would discuss in a paper on that topic.

Prof. Diana / English 102: Writing About Native American Texts

Paper #3: A Poetry Explication (15% of final average)

Due Dates:

Friday 4/2: First Draft Due (for peer review workshop)

Monday 4/5: Revised Draft Due (for peer review workshop)

Wednesday, April 7: Final Draft Due (bring all rough drafts and peer review notes)

Paper Description:

Imagine you are writing to your classmates, with the goal of helping them understand more fully the meaning a poet is communicating through his or her poem. In this poetry explication, you will focus on one of the poems we have read so far this semester and walk your readers through an explanation of the poem, generally moving from start to finish of the poem, and paying attention to details and the overall sense of the poem's meaning. Your job is both to offer your interpretation of the overall meaning of the poem and to help us understand HOW the poet conveyed that meaning through specific stylistic choices.

Your essay will be **3-4 pages long, typed, double-spaced**. In this explication, you will answer two big questions:

1. WHAT does the poet say through this poem? Is s/he presenting a certain view on the world? Making an argument? Asking a question? Challenging us to re-think a topic from a new perspective?
2. HOW does the poet's use of specific literary techniques convey that meaning? For example, consider some of the aspects of style you wrote about in your initial notes (see back).

A note on organization: You should begin your explication by offering readers an overview/summary of the poem and your hypothesis about what the poet is saying through this poem. Then think about a **chronological** structure to your analysis of the poem. As you structure your paragraphs around discussion of specific details of the poem, keep in mind that you should generally move from start to finish, discussing stanzas or lines in the order they're written.

*You can earn 15 *extra credit points* by volunteering a draft to be used for class discussion on 4/2 or 4/5 AND/OR by taking a draft to the Reading and Writing Center to discuss revision strategies with a tutor.

Getting Started on poetry explication: Initial note-taking

Step 1: Go back through the poem and write down a "translation" of the poem's meaning, stanza by stanza.

Step 2: Re-read poem again and note your observations about each of these aspects of style:

- a. The poem's title;
- b. Figurative language such as metaphor or simile;
- c. Imagery (which can be visual or can appeal to other senses like smell or touch or hearing);
- d. Diction (word choice), which allows you to discuss such things as a word's connotation, tone, verbal irony (when words mean more or less the opposite of what they seem to say), overstatement or understatement
- e. Structure: what does the poem look like on the page? What do you notice about line length and placement? Any repetition or other kinds of cyclical structure?
- f. Rhyme: if the poet uses rhyme, what effect does it create?

This semester we have read fiction, autobiography, and poetry by various contemporary and past Native American authors, writers who are not often represented in the high school or college curriculum. This lack of representation is not just a problem in literature courses; Native American perspectives often do not get attention in courses from other departments. Yet the topics our authors have explored through literature are also central to many other courses you may take during your college career, such as courses in American history, education, multicultural and ethnic studies, environmental science, sociology, psychology, women's studies, political science, and more. Teachers in other departments often assign literary texts to supplement their course textbooks because creative writers offer engaging perspectives on a range of life experiences and historical periods. And teachers of American literature or women's literature are aiming to include a diverse range of writers and perspectives among the texts they assign. So, the questions I'm asking you to consider are what **other** departments' classes might be enriched by the inclusion of one of the readings we've done this semester? And for what other English courses might one of the authors you've read this semester be an appropriate addition?

Assignment Description

This assignment asks you to propose that one of the authors we have read this semester should be included in the curriculum for another course offered at WSC. Your paper will be a proposal to the Chairperson of the Department that offers the class you select, suggesting that one of the novels, autobiographies, poems, or short selections we have read this semester should be included in the curriculum for the specific course you've identified. To make your case, you'll need to

- >Identify an appropriate course for which you're proposing inclusion of the text (see WSC *Bulletin* for help).
- >Identify the goals/focus of that course (see WSC *Bulletin* for help) and use those goals to shape your reasons for inclusion of the text you've selected.
- >Present *multiple* ways in which the text would enhance students' understanding of the topic(s) you've identified. This means you can discuss themes, questions, insights, or arguments students will encounter in the text.
- >Use specific examples from the text you're proposing to support your claims. Remember: Generally, direct quotes are far more effective support than paraphrase or plot summary, because they allow you to zoom in on the details of author's language. Don't forget the "quote sandwich" tips we discussed in class.
- >Support your claims with evidence from **FOUR** outside sources: what do the experts say about this author and text or about the issues this text will help students understand?

Requirements:

- > Must be typed, double-spaced, at least **six** full pages long.
- > Must be addressed to the Professor who is Chair of the Department offering the course you've chosen to focus on (written in letter format).
- >Must include a works cited page and use correct in-text citation (both in MLA format).
- > Must include quotes from at least **FOUR outside sources** (NOT including the text you're writing about). Source requirements:

Your research paper must cite a minimum of **4 sources**. At least **ONE of your sources must be a scholarly article (long, with references) or book**. Kinds of sources to consider:

- a. **biographical source** (background on author's life and career)
 - from either a library database such as Literature Resources by Gale or
 - from one of the web sources (Native Wiki or the Internet Public Library sites I listed on page 11 of your syllabus)
- b. **book reviews** on the text you're recommending,
- c. **books or scholarly articles** (published in a scholarly journal, including references) about the author / text / or topic you're discussing;
- d. web-based information from CREDIBLE websites. For example, see the links I provided at the end of our syllabus.

NOTE: You should find at least some of these sources **during our library workshop on April 21**, where you will be introduced to one or more useful library databases. *Please avoid using only Google or similar public search engines!* If you choose also to draw on public web sites, they must pass basic criteria for **reputable, credible** sources. Ask me if you're unsure about a source.

Getting Started Brainstorming Exercise #1

1. What were your top three favorite readings this semester?
2. For each, list
 - a. two topics/subjects the work teaches us about;
 - b. one reason why your fellow students would find the reading interesting;

3. Share your list with a classmate. For one of the works you listed, come up with a subject other than English to which you think the text relates.

4. Browse through WSC *Bulletin* for a course description that seems like a good possibility.

Developing criteria for your argument Brainstorming Exercise #2

Why is the novel, short story, autobiography, or poem a good choice for teaching students about the subject of the course you've selected?

What themes and literary devices does the author employ especially well?

What do students learn from the selection?

Why might students enjoy reading this selection?

Independent Research Worksheet DUE Monday, April 26

1.) Record here one **specific tip** the librarian told you during instructional session on Wednesday (should not be the same as any classmates').

2.) Record here the details of a source you found on one of the library's **literature databases** (such as Literature Resources by Gale or Project Muse):

Database used:

Search term(s) used:

Title of Article found:

Author:

Where was this article originally published (usually name of a journal)?

3.) Record here the details of a source you found on one of the **library's databases covering OTHER academic fields** (could be a general database such as Academic Search Premiere or a subject-specific database such as History Resource Center: US):

Database used:

Search term(s) used:

Title of Article found:

Author:

Where was this article originally published (usually name of a journal)?

4.) What are some **SUBJECTS** related to your proposal? (consider the author as a subject, his or her tribe, a topic s/he writes about, Native American literature in general, etc.) Try a **SUBJECT search in the Ely Library Catalog** and record the name and call number of a book you found here.

5.) Additional **web browsing**: browse one or more of the internet resources listed in this syllabus. Describe the site you browsed, what you found, and how you or a classmate might be able to incorporate that info into the proposal assignment.

Source Annotation Worksheet

On a separate sheet of paper, please hand in notes on EACH of your four sources answering these questions. 2 source annotations **due Monday April 26**; 2 source annotations **due Wednesday April 28**.

1. Review the first (and possibly last) page of this source: What information do you need to include on your works cited page? Do a sample works cited entry for this source. Consult your writing handbook for MLA style guidelines for works cited entries, and ask if you have questions.

2. Read the source, **highlighting main ideas and useful information**.

3. Identify from that source one **quote** you want to include in your paper. The quote should help you support one of the arguments you're making in your proposal.

4. Write a paragraph built around the "quote sandwich" model, in which you bring in the quote you've selected from this sources. Focus on the following:

- Write a sentence stating the main idea you want to make with the help of the quote you chose.
- Create an identifying tag to introduce the quote. As you introduce the critic's name, consider whether you can identify him or her to help build credibility. For example, you might say, "Scholar Jane Doe describes Alexie's *Absolutely True Diary* as ---." or "Historian John Doe argues the Carlisle boarding school was"
- Write a follow-up sentence in which you make a connection back to your proposal. Show how the quote you just included helps make your case that students would benefit from reading the text you're promoting.

5. Try **PARAPHRASING** (put one or more points from the source in *your own* words). Be sure still to identify whose idea you are presenting. For example, "according to a biography of Susan Power, she ..." or "A study of Native American teens in reservation schools showed that...."
IMPORTANT: remember you still need to **cite** information from a source, even if you've put that info into your own words!

Paper Topic Ideas and other notes.....

Two possible film choices based on Sherman Alexie's work are *Smoke Signals* (based on *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*--a short story collection) or *The Business of Fancydancing*

other ideas:

[personal narrative worked in here somehow?]

Make one paper a poetry explication around time of Hershman's reading?????

Read at least two book reviews of either Alexie or Power text and do comparative analysis assignment based on those, including student's agreement/disagreement?

controversies regarding representations: such as mascots, disney, Thanksgiving curriculum, Hollywood:::reprehen

- The texts I have selected offer students exciting opportunities for critical reading and writing; the readings serve as an effective springboard for inquiry and discourse because they involve students in reflection on our culture's representations of American Indians, their own perceptions of U.S. history and current policies pertaining to tribal communities, and their own understanding of how concepts of race and identity shape our relationships with one another. Students will also have an opportunity to model their own writing on texts we read; in particular, I plan to include a cluster of readings in which writers reflect on their experiences in educational settings (Indian boarding schools, contemporary classrooms), which will enable comparisons for student writers.
- Have a thematic focus:** This course will be organized around a thematic focus on Native American experience and storytelling. Subtext will include education (for one unit, we will read boarding school narratives, and students will write about their own education as it has shaped their idea of American culture); media representation of Indianness (with Debbie Reese website and children's film/literature, as well as sports mascots debate); spirituality, tradition, and "magical realism" (with *The Grass Dancer* and Hershman John poems); and family culture (Alexie, feature films).
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- Assign varied writing tasks, both low and high stakes:** Low-stakes writing tasks will include reading responses and paper dialogues

classmates about aspects of texts, as well as informal responses to opening prompts at the start of class. Formal papers will include personal narrative on education and cultural identity, a film review, a literary and rhetorical analysis of a single text; and a researched argument in the form of a proposal for text inclusion in another course.

5. **Help students develop more advanced research techniques:**

Possible units:

pop culture representations (sports mascots, visual representations like cigar store indians/material land o lakes, hollywood, including disney)

education: boarding school, alexie, power on education and coming of age; momaday play

storytelling: heritage across generations transmitted through stories: Hershman's collection, poems, bring in some from Storyteller

Kinds of research:

cultural context for Grass Dancer

websites from list on syllabus: find out about an author, tribe, or historical event.

oral history: interviewing a family member/elder

photo reflections: modeled on Silko's Storyteller? or comics like Alexie?

reflections on Alexie bringing in students' own experience as members of different "tribes"

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