

## Contemporary American Indian Fiction

Spring 2004

This course is dedicated to the memories of James Welch, Louis Owens, Lee Francis, and Elaine Jahner

English 5327-001 Office Hrs: T-Th 2-3:30; or by apt. 405 CH  
Dr. Roemer **Please schedule all appointments.**  
TH: 6-8:50 p.m. Phone: 272-2729  
Carlisle 100 roemer@uta.edu

### Goals [& Means]

1. to introduce students to selected novels written since 1968 by authors with Native American heritages and to resources for studying these texts [classes/readings/tapes];
2. to discuss aesthetic, theoretical, ethical, cultural, and political issues raised by the texts (e.g., concepts of identity, place, gender and language; implications of integrations of mainstream and non-mainstream cultures and literary conventions including combinations of oral and written literatures) [classes/ readings/exams/paper];
3. to examine in particular canon formation issues (the first three novels), how fiction by Indian authors can redefine representations of American history (second four novels), and recent trends in fiction (Sarris, Alexie, and short readings) [classes/exams/paper];
4. to enhance research and writing skills [paper].

### Required Readings

Course packet (CP): theoretical & contextual readings and fiction  
HOUSE MADE OF DAWN, Momaday  
WINTER IN THE BLOOD, Welch  
CEREMONY, Silko  
FOOLS CROW, Welch  
SOLAR STORMS, Hogan  
LAST REPORT ON THE MIRACLES AT LITTLE NO HORSE, Erdrich  
SHELL SHAKER, Howe  
GRAND AVENUE, Sarris  
LONE RANGER & TONTO, Alexie  
Selections: TALKING LEAVES (TL) & NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH (NBT)

### Topics, Readings, Exams, Paper, Tentative Dates

**Introductions:** The Course; Historical, Cultural, and Institutional Contexts and Controversies; Research Tools

Readings: Handouts; Readings Packet (except for Roemer on Silko, Sears, and Powers); Cook-Lynn, Allen, and Ortiz in NBT 1/22

**Establishing an Audience:** Canon Formation

A (30,000-year) Belated Ground Breaking via Pulitzer

Reading: HOUSE MADE OF DAWN and "Man Made of Words" (NBT) 1/29

NEW YORK TIMES Front-Page Recognition

Reading: WINTER IN THE BLOOD 2/5

The Canonized "Indian" Novel

Reading: CEREMONY; Silko, "Lang. & Lit"; "Yellow Woman" (NBT); Roemer on Silko (CP) 2/12  
Distribute Take-Home Exam 2/12

### Historical Reconstructions

19th-Century Plains Secular and Visionary History

Reading: FOOLS CROW 2/19

**Take-home Exam Due 2/19**

20th-Century Tight Time Focus Crossing Place Boundaries

Reading: SOLAR STORMS 2/26

## 20th-Century Tight Place Focus Crossing Time Boundaries

Reading: LAST REPORT and Castillo (NBT) 3/4 & 11

Spring Break 3/15 - 21

18th & 20th, Secular and Visionary Crossings

Readings: SHELL SHAKER 3/25

**In-Class Exam 4/1**

### **Discuss Exam/Prospectus Due/Individual Conferences 4/8** **The Diversity of Recent Fiction**

Readings: GRAND AVENUE 4/15

LONE RANGER 4/22

Selections from TL,NBT,CP:

Vizenor, Dorris, King, Owens, Henry 4/29

Earling, Endrezze, Glancy, Hill, Brant,

Cook-Lynn, Walters, Sears, and Power 5/6

Review for (optional?) Third Exam 5/6

**Paper Due 5/7**

**(Optional?) Third Examination / Papers Returned 5/13**

#### Examinations:

The first exam (**due 2/19**) will be a take-home essay question relating to the "canon formation" section of the course (the first three novels). The second (**4/1**) will be an in-class essay exam on the four fictional "historical reconstructions." I will distribute a study sheet for this exam on 3/25. The third essay exam (**5/13**) will cover the recent fiction; I will distribute a study sheet on 5/6.

Grading criteria for the essay questions include a demonstrated ability to maintain focus on the questions and to support claims with relevant references to the fictional and critical readings.

#### Paper:

Due 5/7. (Approximately 15 - 18 pp.; about 4,000 words). **Please avoid small fonts** [like the one I'm using now to save paper for the English Department]. Think of the paper as a conversation. The dialogue begins in your head with your interest in and questions about a particular fiction or issue. It then goes public with your discussions with me and your colleagues in the class. The conversation becomes print / electronic public when you gather and integrate the writing of critics, whose work can support, challenge and/or modify your initial arguments. Begin early to define your topic and arguments. You are required to turn in a prospectus on **April 8** (see prospectus format attached to this syllabus); I will discuss the prospectus with you on that date. But you should begin work on the prospectus long before that date.

Grading criteria defined by basic questions:: Are the focus, topic, approach, and claim(s) clearly defined? Is the focus appropriate for a relatively short research paper? Are the integrations of critical sources and close individual readings and interpretations convincing? Is the paper engaging and coherently organized? Are the "surface mechanics" (e.g., grammar, paragraphing, etc.) and MLA format graduate-level quality?

#### Resources for the Study of Contemporary American Indian Fiction

There are valuable and readily available resources at UTA, especially in the **MultiCultural Collection** on the second floor of the Central Library.

**REFERENCE RESOURCES** include: A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff's *American Indian Literatures*; Kenneth Roemer's *Native American Writers of the United States* (Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 175); Andrew Wiget's *Handbook of Native American Literature*, Louis Owens & Tom Collonnesse's *American Indian Novelists*; Kay Juricek and Kelly Morgan's *Contemporary Native American Authors*; Janet Witalec's *Native North American Literature*; Andrew Wiget's *Native American Literature*. **CRITICAL SOURCES** include Charles Larson's *American Indian Fiction* (out of date), Kenneth Lincoln's *Native American Renaissance*, Paula Gunn Allen's *Sacred Hoop*, Arnold Krupat's *Voice in the Margin*, Louis Owens' *Other Destinies and Mixedblood Messages*, Richard Fleck's *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*, James Ruppert's *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction*, Catherine Rainwater, *Dreams of Fiery Stars*, Eric Gary Anderson, *American Indian Literature and the Southwest*, Sid Larsen, *Captive in the Middle*, Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez, *Contemporary American Indian Literatures and the Oral Tradition*, Joni Adamson's *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice and Ecocriticism*, Craig Womack's *Red on Red*, Jace Weaver's *That the People Might Live*; Chadwick Allen's *Blood Narrative*; and Robert Dale Parker's *The Invention of Native American Literature*. Important **JOURNALS** include: *SAIL (Studies in American Indian Literatures)*, which has its own excellent Web site (<[www.richmond.edu/~rnelson/SAILns/](http://www.richmond.edu/~rnelson/SAILns/)>), *American Indian Culture and Research Journal (AICRJ)*, *American Indian Quarterly (AIQ)*, and *Wicazo Sa Review*. Some excellent articles have also appeared in less specialized journals such as *Critical Inquiry*, *College English*, *American Literary History*, *American Quarterly*, *modern fiction studies*, and *American Literature*. **BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDES** to articles and books on specific authors can be found in recent issues of *American Literary Scholarship*, the *PMLA Bibliographies*, *SAIL*, *AICRJ*. The First Search internet resource available in the Library can also be helpful. Many **WEB SITES** can provide information on Native writers in general and on specific authors. Besides the *SAIL* site mentioned above, two of the best general sites are <[www.anpa.ualr.edu](http://www.anpa.ualr.edu)>, the American Native Press Archives, and <[www.wordcraftcircle.org](http://www.wordcraftcircle.org)>, the site for Wordcraft Circle of native Writers and Storytellers. Examples of the hundreds of individual author Web sites include <<http://nativeauthor.com>>, <<http://www.ipl.org/ref/native/>>, <[www.english.uiuc.edu/maps](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps)> (Momaday homepage), and <<http://users.mwci.net/~lapoz/MBio.html>>. The NativeLit-L e-mail list address is: <[idoym@crux2.cit.cornell.edu](mailto:idoym@crux2.cit.cornell.edu)>. There is a general "American Indian Resources" Web site: <<http://jupiter.lang.osaka-u.ac.jp/~krkvis/naindex.html>>. The Fall 1998 issue of *Wicazo Sa* (13.2) offers an overview of internet resources in Native American studies. The Association for the Study of American Indian Literature (ASAIL) has a listserv for members. For membership information see the *SAIL* web site.

#### Grading Weights

Approximate weights of assignments: If you take all three exams: each exam = 20% (total 60%); paper + 40%. If the third exam becomes optional and you don't take it: each exam = 20% (total 40%); paper = 60%.

Warnings:

Professors are no longer allowed to drop students for excessive absences. If you plan to withdraw from the course, you must follow University procedures. If you do not, you will receive an F for the semester. Excessive unexcused absences (more than three classes) could affect your grade, since the group discussions / presentations are a significant part of the class time.

In the past I have had few problems with plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty. An excellent definition of plagiarism is included in the new (6th Ed.) *MLA Handbook* (Chapter 2). Instances of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will be turned over immediately to the office of the Associate Vice-President for Student Affairs.

Encouragement:

Intangible grading factors: improvement and consistent class participation (especially in the group discussions and presentations) have turned many a C+ into a B- and quite a few B+s into A-s. I am very willing to accommodate disabled students. Early in the semester, they should present their authorized documents from appropriate University offices. Students needing academic or personal counseling should consult the English Graduate Advisor and if necessary the Office of Student Success Programs (817-272-6107)