

Susan Power

Indiens

### Honors Seminar:

## Contemporary Native American Art, Film, and Literature Spring 2010

Professor Vanessa Holford Diana

ENGL297-H01 (crn#30965) MW 1:40-2:55 Bates Room 221

some of the artists we'll study: Susan Power, Louise Erdrich, Hershman John, painter Bunky Echo-Hawk, Leslie Marmon Silko, hip-hop artists Indiens, N. Scott Momaday, hip-hop artist Litefoot, Marilou Awiatka, Eric Gansworth, Sherman, Alexie, painter Jim Denomie

#### **Contacting Prof. Diana:**

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

**Please note:** you will be required to make at least one appointment with me this semester to discuss your independent project. I look forward to working with you individually, as well as in class.

#### **Course Description:**

This seminar will be conducted as a conversation among a community of learners interested in contemporary Native American artistic expression through film, music, literature, and visual arts, which we will consider in specific tribal, historical, and cultural contexts. Intended to introduce you to a range of issues and artistic expression that represents just a sample of contemporary Native American cultural diversity, this course considers texts by Native American artists who challenge our culture's stereotypical ideas about their cultural identity and history. In the fiction, poems, plays, paintings, songs, and films 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.

Honors Seminar courses require your active participation, so I expect you to contribute to our class discussions daily. The independent research project, also a staple of Honors Seminar courses, will allow you to find an issue in Native American studies most interesting to you, perhaps one that allows you to draw on the disciplinary perspectives of your major. 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. Note you will be REQUIRED to attend Gansworth's reading on the evening of March 10, 2010 (7pm downtown gallery).

#### **Required Texts (available at campus bookstore):**

Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene) *Flight* (2007)

Eric Gansworth (Onondaga) *Mending Skins* (2005)

Native American Rights Fund *Visions for the Future: Celebration of Young Native American Artists* (07)

Susan Power (Sioux) *Roofwalker* (2002)

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

### **Assignments and Grade Breakdown:**

**\*Class Participation: (15%)** The small class size of a seminar is intended to create a forum in which all students contribute to a group dialogue about course materials, so I have built into your overall average a participation grade based on the following rubric:

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.

Thoughtful participation in class discussion is essential for this class to be a success; in particular, I urge you to make an extra effort to participate in classmates' facilitated discussions.

**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 and Class Presentation Reports: (40%)** Due most days when we have new reading/texts assigned, Reading *Journal Entries* are informal responses, which should be brief (1-2 pages typed) and specific, zooming in on to pay close attention to one or more details from that day's assignment to spur class discussion. Often these responses should include questions for class discussion or LEADS for future research. Periodically, you will be asked to present to class informal *reports* on what you wrote in entry, sometimes including film, music, or visual examples you considered at home.

**\* Paper 1 (15%)** 5-6 pages. Intended to serve as a submission for the Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference (scheduled for April 23 at UMass Amherst), this short paper asks you to provide historical or cultural context for a contemporary Native American visual artist's work, for Sherman Alexie's novel *Flight* or N.Scott Momaday's play *The Moon in Two Windows*. This focused analysis considers how an artist comments on a cultural or historical issue through her/his artistic genre. See assignment sheet for details.

**\*Capstone Research Paper: (25%)** A 12-15 page research paper in which you choose a contemporary or historical issue in Native American studies and formulate a thesis about how one or more Native American artists comment on that issue. Topics to be developed in consultation with instructor. See assignment sheet for details.

**\*Capstone Presentation: (5%)** 10-minute presentation to classmates summarizing capstone paper's major arguments.

**Rewrite Policy:** If you are not satisfied with your grade on the first paper, 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.

### **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.

**Attendance Policy:** Because this course is a seminar built on your contributions, attendance will directly affect final course grade. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. Instead, you may miss **3 classes** during the semester for illness, emergencies, or personal reasons with no penalty to your grade. 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. 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.)*

### **Historical Fiction: Alexie's Time Travel**

#### **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.

**Week 2:**

**Monday, January 25:** (Due today: ) Read Sherman Alexie *Flight* pages \_\_\_\_

**Reading journal:** formulate a questions about today's reading including reference to at least one specific passage (with page number) from assigned pages. Use question as a way to zoom in on an aspect of the text you found interesting (approx. 1 page).

**Wednesday, January 27:** Read Alexie *Flight* pages \_\_\_\_ **Reading journal:** formulate a questions about today's reading including reference to at least one specific passage (with page number) from assigned pages. Use question as a way to zoom in on an aspect of the text you found interesting (approx. 1 page).

**Visions for the Future: Contemporary Visual Artists**

**Week 3:**

**Monday, February 1:** discuss conclusion of *Flight* and **Historical context for Flight mini research reports:** track down one source using a library database (such as History Resource Center: US) that provides context for reading an aspect of *Flight*. Write a 1 -2-page summary of what you learned and how it changes/enhances your reading of the novel. Include source citation! Discuss possible topics for a panel on *Flight* @ undergrad research conference. **Bring Visions for the Future to class:** finding research questions in artists' statements.

**Wednesday, February 3:** Total **reading journal** response for today should be 1 ½-2 pages.

**Part one:** Read introductory essays in *Visions for the Future* (1-31) and note a detail you found interesting. **Part Two:** Internet Research: follow up on the research question you formulated in class and write a summary of what you found. (Some possible options: track down one of the topics an artist mentions in statement: how does knowing more background info on that subject enhance your interpretation of the visual art? Look up one of the artists featured in this collection, what else did you discover about her/him; were you able to find other examples of this artist's work? Find some historical/social context for understanding an issue addressed in the visual work? Visit the Native American Rights Fund website (org that published this collection): what's their mission, current issues they're working on, etc.

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**Historical Drama: Revisiting the Boarding School Experience in Momaday's Screenplay**

**Week 4:**

Monday, February 8: N. Scott Momaday *The Moon In Two Windows scenes 1 and 2* pages 107-138. **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 paragraph answering the question, what is Momaday showing or making us ask in this moment of the play?

**Wednesday, February 10:** conclude N. Scott Momaday *The Moon In Two Windows* pages 139-177. **Reading Journal Prompt: Part One:** Zoom in on a specific scene from today's reading as you answer the question: what was one important question you think Momaday intended to explore in writing this play? **Part Two:** find out more about Ledger Art, which is referenced in the play. Go to [http://www.amerindianarts.us/indi\\_an\\_ledger\\_art.shtml](http://www.amerindianarts.us/indi_an_ledger_art.shtml) for an introduction. Find an image / example that connects in some way to the play: what's the connection you see? Why do you think Momaday chose to include discussion of the Carlisle students as visual artists in the play? **Report** back to class on image you found (bring URL or print out)

**Week 5:**

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

**Wednesday, February 17:** Andrea Salvias **guest lecture** on Momaday play. Rough draft of abstract due for paper 1: literature or art in historical / cultural context. Discuss possible panels for undergraduate conference.

**Week 6:**

**Monday, February 22:** Revised abstracts and rough draft of Paper 1 due for peer review workshop

**NOTE: February 23, 2010 Abstract Deadline for Mass Undergrad Research Conference @ UMass** <http://webapp.comcol.umass.edu/msc/>

**Wednesday February 24: Paper 1 DUE** Film TBA

**Multi-Genre Text: Gansworth's Fiction and Paintings**

**Week 7:**

**Monday, March 1: *Mending Skins*** (pages TBA). **Reading Journal entry** (1 page max): **Part One:** Zoom in on a moment in today's reading about which you have a question or that seems important to you. **Part Two:** what is your impression of the paintings in the book: how did one or more impact your experience of reading? For each entry, as you read, write at least one question you'd like to ask the author/artist.

**Wednesday, March 3: *Mending Skins*** (pages TBA). **Reading Journal entry** (1 page max): **Part One:** Zoom in on a moment in today's

reading about which you have a question or that seems important to you. Part Two: what is your impression of the paintings in the first third of the book: how do they impact your experience of reading? For each entry, as you read, write at least one question you'd like to ask the author/artist.

### Week 8:

**Monday, March 8:** Conclude *Mending Skins* (pages TBA). **Reading Journal entry** (1 page max): Part One: Zoom in on a moment in today's reading about which you have a question or that seems important to you. Part Two: what is your impression of the paintings in the second third of the book: how did one (or more) impact your experience of reading? For each entry, as you read, write at least one question you'd like to ask the author/artist.

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**Wednesday March 10:** Read reviews of Gansworth's work (to be provided). Reading Journal Entry: Zoom in on one critic's comment that you found interesting/relevant. How does it enhance or connect with your reading of *Mending Skins* or impression of Gansworth's paintings? **Required Event Tonight! Eric Gansworth Artist's Reception and lecture at downtown gallery. I'll provide details in class. Shuttle Bus available from campus!!!**

### Week 9:

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

### Contemporary Poetry

#### Week 10:

**Monday, March 22:** poems in class discuss poem presentation homework

**Wednesday, March 24:** Read selections from poetry packet pages TBA. **Reading Journal Entry:** (1 – 1 ½ pages) 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 you chose. **Tonight: Film Screening for Women's History Month: details TBA**

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### Short Fiction

#### Week 11:

**Monday March 29:** finish poem presentations; Susan Power "First Fruits" (from *Roofwalker* 111-137) and "Angry Fish" (From *Roofwalker* 54-71) **Reading Journal Prompt:** for "First Fruits": draw a connection back to one of our earlier readings re the theme of education; For "Angry Fish": Power writes 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.

**Wednesday, March 31:** Power "Stone Woman" and "Museum Indians"(From *Roofwalker* 147--165) **Reading Journal Prompt:** These two stories are in the section of *Roofwalker* called "Histories": what historical references does Power make in each short story? Find one historical or cultural reference in EACH story and do a quick internet search on that topic: what did you find out, and how did it enhance your reading of each story?

### Native American Hip Hop music

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Week 12: **\*Meet with me this week or next to discuss your independent project!**

**Monday, April 5:** Internet research: Step One: Go to [http://canyonrecords.com/genre\\_explanations.php](http://canyonrecords.com/genre_explanations.php) and read over the brief explanation of various genres of Native American music. Then check out some video and sound recordings from contemporary Native American musicians you can find on line. Wikipedia entry on "Native American Hip Hop" includes many helpful leads. I recommend these to start:

<http://www.nativehiphop.net/> (includes links to many videos, such as "Strong" by Feenix)  
Culture Shock Camp on MySpace (check out video for "Wounded Knee") -- then see "Whose Tradition, Punk!?! Video on MySpace to this song)  
War Party on MySpace (check out video for "Feeling Reserved")  
Indians "Redman" on soundclick.com

Browse others you find on your own. Choose one video/sound recording and write a **reading journal** entry describing your response to that selection. What issues do the musicians address? What stylistic aspects of the song strike you? Prepare to **report** to class on music selection. We'll watch/listen to all your choices in class, so be sure to note title/URL of website you used. Discuss research paper topics, developing research plan.

**Wednesday, April 7:** Music selections continued; Research paper **proposal drafts due**. Include at least one new source.

### Week 13:

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**Monday, April 12:** two new sources: annotation notes and beginning draft

**Wednesday, April 14:** draft fleshed out: workshop: identifying remaining research questions.

## Week 14

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

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**This week: independent work on research papers and film response.**  
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**Wednesday, April 21: no class meeting:** watch film on your own this week: choose one of the films on reserve @Ely Library circulation desk {I'll provide titles in class}: write a 2-page (double spaced) reading 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. Discuss whether you'd recommend this film to classmates. CHOOSE a brief clip approx. 5 minutes to show in class (note chapter/location in DVD menu so we can find it quickly)

**Friday April 23, 2010**, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Massachusetts Statewide Undergraduate Research Conference @Umass Amherst (transportation available through Honors Program)

## Week 15

**Monday, April 26: Present** film reviews with clips. (I'll bring in films that were on reserve) @Ely)

**Wednesday April 28:** Conclude film review presentations

## Week 16:

**Monday May 3:** Rough Draft Workshop

**Wednesday, May 5:** Capstone Presentations

## Week 17:

**Monday, May 10: Last class!** Research Paper **Due**; conclude presentations; course evaluations.

### **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\\_O](http://www.nativewiki.org/Storytellers:_Native_American_Authors_O) nline

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 etexts 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](http://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 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-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&amp;pt=14&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http%3A//falcon.jmu.edu/%7Eramseyil/native.htm](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&amp;pt=14&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http%3A//falcon.jmu.edu/%7Eramseyil/native.htm)

James Madison U: Internet School Library Media Center 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](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](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](http://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](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/](http://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)