

Endicott College  
Beverly, Massachusetts  
School of Arts and Sciences  
Department of English

Course Number: ENG 337  
Course Title: American Indian Experience: An Introduction to the Literature  
Credits: 3  
Pre-requisites: ENG 101 or equivalent  
Semester/Year: Spring 2006  
Class location: AC 120  
Class Time: MWF 1-1:50  
Faculty: Pauline G. Woodward, Ph.D.  
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CATALOG DESCRIPTION: American Indian experience recorded in fiction, autobiography, poetry, and essay in the 20<sup>th</sup> century brings to light specific tribal traditions, values, and practices. The course emphasizes the content and structure of the literature influenced by United States Government policies on native people, families, and tribes. Historical, geographical, political, and economic contexts are considered in this study of works produced by American Indians.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

At the completion of this course students should be able to:

- Trace specific Indian traditions and practices, such as storytelling and forming community, to their tribal origins
- Explain significant connections between literary subject matter and American government policy
- Interpret historical events and probe their impact on indigenous people as represented in the literature
- Differentiate between Western and Indian ways of understanding experience
- Discern the ways in which Christian and Native practices have intertwined in the lives of Indian people
- Collect meaningful data from the primary readings to examine in light of critical investigations
- Use research guides and supplementary texts to investigate topics related to required course readings
- Produce research essays that reflect thought about the connections between Indians living today and the tribal traditions from which they have come

Topical Outline:

Storytelling and structure in Tracks by Louise Erdrich, Ojibwa  
Narrativity and myth in Erdrich's novel  
Land appropriation (Jace Weaver)  
Environmental concerns (Winona Laduke) Anishinaabe  
Family and community in Tracks (Erdrich)  
Ojibwa history (Gerald Vizenor) Anishinaabe  
Christianity in Ojibwa ceremony (Basil Johnston)Ojibwa  
Writing the Literary Research Essay  
Anna Mae Pictou Aquash, poem by Joy Harjo, Muscogee Creek  
Writing about Aquash (MicMac) (Devon Mihesuah, Choctaw)  
Film "The Spirit of Annie Mae"  
American Indian Movement: Views according to Vine Deloria, Jr. (Sioux) and Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe)  
Reservation Life, Lanniko L. Lee (Sioux) and Florestine Renville (Dakota)  
Boarding School experience  
Adoption of Indian children  
Medicine River by Thomas King (Cherokee)  
Significance of the past/impact of mixed blood  
Defining American Indian Literature (Jace Weaver)  
Humor as means of survival (Vine Deloria Sioux)  
Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), Storytelling  
Using the SAIL data base: <http://oncampus.richmond.edu/faculty/ASAIL/indices.html>  
Roofwalker Susan Power, (Yankton Sioux)  
Parallel realities in Power's fiction and histories  
Intersecting communities in Roofwalker  
Tonto and the Lone Ranger by Sherman Alexie, (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene)  
Alexie's ironies  
Writing the Literary Research Essay

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Reflective questions are posed for each class reading. Students are expected to use textual evidence in the class deliberations. Understanding the text requires attentive reading and writing about the text. Formal assignments include written interpretations of the readings, research inquiries into cultural, political, and historical contexts, oral presentations of textual interpretations, and research

essays that make use of primary and secondary sources. From time to time, there will be a student note-taker who will record class deliberations with opportunity for amending individual contributions.

**Literary Research essays are problem-based. In the works we are reading and viewing many problems surface for indigenous people. Native scholars give different emphases to various problems:**

**There are three issues around which native peoples are waging a resistance today, as in past centuries, to the neocolonialism and exploitation by the dominant states of the Western Hemisphere: they are land, self-government, and indigenous rights. (346 Lobo and Talbot).**

EVALUATION METHODS:

NOTEBOOK WRITING: 25 points

CLASS LEADERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE: 25 points

(Students take responsibility for presenting research and leading class discussion.)

MID-TERM RESEARCH ESSAY/ ORALPRESENTATION: 25 points

FINAL RESEARCH ESSAY/ORAL PRESENTATION: 25 points

**(NO LATE ESSAYS WILL BE ACCEPTED)**

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attendance is rewarded in course evaluation. Progress reports are sent after 2 absences. There are no excused absences in this class. If there is an extraordinary circumstance, please advise me of the situation.

ADA POLICY: Every effort is made to accommodate students with special needs. Please let me know about these needs at the beginning of the course.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Endicott College's policy on Academic Honesty as stated in the College Catalog is followed in this course. Class members are required to sign the Academic Honesty Pledge.

REQUIRED READINGS (These texts should be purchased. Bring the text we are reading to every class):

Alexie, Sherman. The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven. NY: HarperCollins, 1994.

Erdrich, Louise. Tracks. NY: Harper& Row, 1988.

King, Thomas. Medicine River. 1998. NY: Penguin, 1995.

Lee, Lanniko L. et al. Shaping Survival: Essays by Four American Indian

Tribal Women. Eds. Jack W. Marken and Charles L. Woodard. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

Power, Susan. Roofwalker. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2002.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. Storyteller. NY: Arcade Publishing, Inc., 1981.

RESERVE READINGS (available on a 2-hour basis):

Deloria, Vine. Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto Jr. Norman: U. of Oklahoma Press, 1983.

---. "Indian Humor." Nothing But the Truth: An Anthology of Native American Literature. Eds. John L. Purdy and James Ruppert. River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001. 39-53.

Harjo, Joy and Gloria Bird, Eds. Reinventing the Enemy's Language: Contemporary Native Women's Writings of North America. NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997. Introduction to "Beaded Soles" Provides background on Susan Power.

---. In Mad Love and War. Middletown,CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1990.

Hollrah, Patrice. The Old Lady Trill, The Victory Yell: The Power of Women in Native American Literature. NY: Routledge, 2004.

Laduke, Winona. All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999

Lobo, Susan and Steve Talbot, Eds. Native American Voices: A Reader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001

Mihesuah, Devon. Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, and Activism. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.

---. "Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash: An American Indian Activist," in Sifters: Native Women's Lives. Ed. Theda Perdue. NY: Oxford University Press. 204-222.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today. NY: Simon&Schuster, 1995.

Vizenor, Gerald. The People Named the Chippewa. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Weaver, Jace. That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community. NY: Oxford University Press, 1997

RECOMMENDED READINGS for extended research:

Andrist, Ralph K. The Long Death: The Last Days of the Plains Indians. Norman: U Oklahoma Press, 1993.

Bernstein, Alison R. American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs. Norman: U Oklahoma Press, 1991.

Brown, Dee. Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West. NY: Holt, 1970.

Chavkin, Allan. Ed. The Chippewa Landscape of Louise Erdrich. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999.

--- and Nancy Feyl Chavkin. Conversations with Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994.

Crow Dog, Mary with Richard Erdoes. Lakota Woman. NY: Harper Perennial, 1990.

Deloria, Vine. Ed. The Indian Reorganization Act: Congresses and Bills. University of Oklahoma Press, 2002.

Erdrich, Louise. Baptism of Desire. 1989. NY: Harper Perennial, 1991.

---. The Beet Queen. 1986. NY: Harper Perennial 1998.

---. Love Medicine. 1984. NY: HarperPerennial, 1993.

Hagen, William T. Taking Indian lands: The Cherokee (Jerome Commission, 1889-1893) Norman: U Oklahoma Press, 2003.

Howe, LeAnne. Shell Shaker. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2001.

Johnston, Basil. Ojibway Ceremonies. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.

---. Ojibway Heritage. NY: Columbia University Press, 1976.

Krupat, Arnold. Red Matters. Philadelphia: U of Penn Press, 2002.  
 Larson, Robert W. Red Cloud: Warrior Statesman of the Lakota Sioux. U of Oklahoma Press, 1999.  
 Leeming, David and Jake Page The Mythology of Native North America. Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 1998.  
 Mason, W. Dale. Indian Gaming: Tribal Sovereignty and American Politics. Norman: U Oklahoma Press, 2000.  
 Owens, Louis. I Hear the Train: Reflections, Inventions, Refractions. Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 2001.  
 ---. Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel. Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 1992.  
 Perdue, Theda and Michael D. Green. The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.  
 Riney, Scott. The Rapid City Indian School. 1898-1933. Norman: U of Oklahoma Press,  
 Senior, Siobhan. Voices of American Indian Assimilation and Resistance: Helen Hunt Jackson, Sarah Winnemucca, and Victoria Howard. Norman: U Oklahoma Press, 2003.  
 Standing Bear, Luther. Land of the Spotted Eagle. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Book, 1978.  
 Zitkala-Sa. American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings. Eds. Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris. NY: Penguin, 2003.

#### ONLINE RESOURCES:

[http://www.endicott.edu/production/academic/library/am\\_indian.htm](http://www.endicott.edu/production/academic/library/am_indian.htm) This site has been prepared for use in this class by the instructor and Abby Nelson, former Reference Librarian. <http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources/indices/NAvideo.html>  
<http://www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html>. Bureau of Indian Affairs  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwss-iloc.html>. Indian Land Cessions in the US  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/curthome.html>. Images and text from the work of Edward S. Curtis  
<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~mihesuah/>  
<http://oncampus.richmond.edu/faculty/ASAIL/indices.html>

#### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Note: The syllabus is subject to change.

**Notebook writing assignments involve explaining and interpreting the focus idea in depth. One full typed page, single-spaced, including at least one quoted passage with appropriate citation, represents the standard length. Notebook writing is due on the assigned date. It may not be submitted after the class discussion.**

**Student leaders who manage the class discussion should offer 3-4 ideas from the assigned reading with explanations/interpretations and ask for students' ideas and responses to generate discussion.**

Monday Jan 30

Reading the syllabus (Bring syllabus to every class.)  
 Determining the expectations; looking at assignments

Wednesday Feb 1 **Guide question: Where does the storyteller's authority come from?**

READ Tracks, Chapters 1 and II  
 FOCUS for Discussion: Ojibwa history as Nanapush tells the story  
 Pauline's version of Fleur Pillager's story

Note: There are several terms for the people named the Chippewa: Ojibwa, Ojibway, and Anishinabe among them.

Friday Feb 3 **Guide question: What ideas about family are presented in this story of Ojibwa loss in 1913-14?**

READ Tracks, Chapter III  
 Prologue and Epilogue in The People Named the Chippewa by Gerald Vizenor RESERVE  
 NOTEBOOK WRITING: Focus on Nanapush's character and his relationship with others/ How do the mythical Naanaboozho and the fictional Nanapush resemble one another?

Monday Feb 6 **Guide question: What separate realities can be sorted out in this account by Pauline Puyat? How does Pauline see the world?**

READ Tracks Chapter IV  
 FOCUS for Discussion: Community in Tracks: insiders and outsiders; Pauline's view of the world

Student Leader

Wednesday Feb 8 **Guide question: What significant issues emerge in the attempts to describe American Indian Literature?**

READ Chapter 1 in That the People Might Live by Jace Weaver RESERVE  
 FOCUS for Discussion: Choose one important idea from this chapter to explain to the class. Make a copy of the article in order to be prepared to quote from text during class discussion. This is one example of a critical source.

Friday Feb 10 **Guide question: How do Weaver's ideas apply to Tracks?**

NOTEBOOK WRITING: Apply one idea from Weaver's discussion of the composition of American Indian literature to Tracks.

Monday Feb 13 **Guide question: What role does humor play in helping to form community?**

READ Tracks Chapter V  
 Student Leader  
 READ "Indian Humor" in Nothing But the Truth 39-53 RESERVE

NOTEBOOK WRITING Ideas about community in Vine Deloria's essay and links to Tracks  
Focus for Discussion: Nanapush's ability as a teacher; Nanapush as trickster; humor as a means of survival  
What has happened to Nanapush's influence over the tribe?

Student Leader

Wednesday Feb 15 **Guide question: How can Pauline's behavior be explained--especially with regard to her relationship to Fleur?**

READ Tracks Chapter VI

NOTEBOOK WRITING: Choose one quotation from Pauline's narration to interpret. Consider her responses to Nanapush as well as Fleur.

Friday Feb 17 **Guide question: Who is Nanapush in traditional Anishinabe culture?**

READ Tracks Chapter VII and VIII

RESEARCH "The Trickster and World Maintenance" by Laurence W. Gross in SAIL 17:3 Fall 2005

Be aware that the SAIL index is available from [http://www.endicott.edu/production/academic/library/am\\_indian.htm](http://www.endicott.edu/production/academic/library/am_indian.htm)

NOTEBOOK WRITING: A summary of the major ideas in the article and a citation according to MLA electronic format.

Monday Feb 20 Presidents' Day No class

Wednesday Feb 22 **Guide questions: How does Christianity surface in Tracks? What has happened to the tribe and the relationship to the land? What ideas about giving birth seem to be present in Tracks?**

READ Tracks Chapter IX

NOTEBOOK WRITING: Focus on the land issues or the ways in which Christian beliefs are interpreted by Pauline or the clash between Western and native tribal ways. Other possibilities include observations about matters concerning women, for example, the birthing events.

Student Leader

Friday Feb 24 **Guide Question: What are the requirements of a literary research essay? See end of syllabus.**

PRESENT orally the major ideas from research articles on Tracks. Use the Expanded Academic EBSCO database or use a chapter from one of the reserve texts, for example, "White Earth: A Lifeway in the Forest," in All Our Relations by Winona Laduke, a chapter from Hollrah, Mihesuah, or Vizenor.

**Include the following information:**

**Name of author**

**Title of article**

**Source (journal title)**

**Explain in detail at least 3 major ideas from the article**

**Indicate the potential specific usefulness of this article for the research essay. How exactly do the ideas in the article link to the fictional events or behaviors in Tracks?**

Monday Feb 27

WRITE the research essay on Tracks for peer review.

Include the background, thesis/focus, and evidence paragraphs. Use in-text citations for quotations from primary and secondary sources and a list of works cited. Follow MLA format.

IN CLASS PEER RESPONSE

Wednesday March 1 **Guide question: Who is Anna Mae Aquash?**

READ "For Anna Mae Pictou Aquash, Whose spirit is present here and in the Dappled Stars(for we remember the story and must tell it again so we all may live)" poem by Joy Harjo In Mad Love and War, 1990 **RESERVE**

Student Leader

Focus for Discussion: What ideas about Anna Mae is Harjo presenting?

READ sections in Indigenous American Women by Devon Mihesuah "Research and Writing" and "Writing About Anna Mae Pictou Aquash" 1-13 **RESERVE**

Student Leader

FOCUS for Discussion: Mihesuah's approach to writing about Native women

Friday March 3 **Guide question How does Devon Mihesuah account for the murder of Aquash?**

READ Mihesuah's essay on Aquash in Sifters: Native Women's Lives. See Mihesuah's Web site. The same essay appears in Indigenous American Women

Student Leader

Focus for Discussion: Annie Mae's life from the record

READ the interviews of Denise and Deborah Moloney-Pictou in Indigenous American Women

Student Leader

Focus for Discussion: Annie Mae's life from the point of view of her daughters

Monday March 6

WRITE Revised Essay on TRACKS

ORAL PRESENTATION of essay

Wednesday March 8 **Guide question: What is the evidence of community in the American Indian Movement?  
How do Weaver's ideas apply?**

READ "Dennis of Wounded Knee" in The People Named the Chippewa. RESERVE  
VIEW The Spirit of Annie Mae, National Film Board of Canada production

Information about the death of Anna Mae Pictou Aquash: [http://www.freepeltier.org/aquash\\_agents1.htm](http://www.freepeltier.org/aquash_agents1.htm)

NOTEBOOK WRITING: What concerns are raised by Aquash's life and death?

Also include research ideas for the second literary research essay due at the end of the course.

Friday March 10 **Guide question: What is meant by River Wisdom?**

READ "Ways of River Wisdom" by Lanniko L. Lee in Shaping Survival.

FOCUS for Discussion: Displacement of the Sioux

Student Leader

Monday March 13 **Guide question: How are Dakota life ways affected by whites?**

READ "Dakota Identity Renewed" by Florestine Kiyukanpi Renville in Shaping Survival (Keep in mind the other narratives in this collection may be used in the second literary research essay if the topic pertains)

FOCUS for Discussion: Family experience in Renville's life

Student Leader

READ "Indian Boarding School: The Runaways" by Louise Erdrich in Nothing But the Truth

Wednesday March 15 **Guide Question: What are the results of adoption of Indian children?**

READ from Children of the Dragonfly "The Connection" by Patricia Aqimuk Paul and "Lost Tribe" by Alan Michelson RESERVE

NOTEBOOK WRITING: Particular effects of boarding school experience or adoption policies on children

Friday March 17 **Guide Question: How does the reader account for the time structure in these first few chapters of Medicine River?**

READ Medicine River Chapters 1-5

FOCUS for Discussion: Narrator identity: name, personality, past life, connections to Medicine River

March 20-24 NO CLASSES-SPRING BREAK

Monday March 27 **Guide Question: How does Will relate to others?**

READ Medicine River Chapters 6-9

Student Leader

NOTEBOOK WRITING: Individual characters and the roles they seem to have adopted thus far in the novel/ Which relationships seem to work in a balanced way? Which ones seem unbalanced?

Wednesday March 29 **Guide question; What part does memory play in this novel?**

READ Medicine River Chapters 10-13

FOCUS for Discussion Impact of specific remembered stories

Friday March 31 **Guide question: Which problems in Medicine River are specifically Indian and which are universal?**

READ Medicine River Chapters 14 to end

NOTEBOOK WRITING: Identify one passage to interpret in light of the problem it poses.

Monday April 3 **Guide question: How can Medicine River be interpreted?**

READ Chapter 4 "Indian Literary Renaissance and the Continuing Search for Community (1968-)" in That the People Might Live and selected articles for group presentation

IN CLASS PRESENTATIONS: Include the title of the article, the author, the main ideas of the article in a clear summary. Give the reasons these ideas make sense (or not).

Wednesday April

Continued in class presentations

Friday April 7 **Guide question: Where is the humor in Medicine River?**

RE-READ "Indian Humor" by Vine Deloria, Jr. from Nothing But the Truth RESERVE

NOTEBOOK WRITING Focus on links between Deloria's ideas about humor and examples of humor in Medicine River

Include a seed idea for the literary research essay

Student Leader

Monday April 10 **Guide question: How do Silko's family remembrances connect to her fiction?**

READ from Storyteller 1-17 and 17-32

FOCUS for Discussion Select a quoted passage from "Storyteller" that focuses on an important issue in Indian experience

Student Leader

Wednesday April 12 **Guide question: What ideas about women surface in Silko's stories?**

READ from Storyteller "Lullaby" and "Yellow Woman"

NOTEBOOK WRITING: Select a passage that depicts women's strength to interpret.

Friday April 14 **Guide question: How are males and females presented in Power's stories?**

READ from Roofwalker: "Roofwalker" "Watermelon Seeds" and "Beaded Soles"

FOCUS for Discussion Select a passage relevant to males/females to explain in detail

Monday April 17 No classes Patriot's Day observed

Wednesday April 19 **Guide Question: What does it mean to live in two worlds in Power's fiction ?**

READ from Roofwalker "First Fruits; "Indian Princess"

NOTEBOOK WRITING: Generate a list of specific problem-posing ideas for the literary research essay

FOCUS for Discussion Power's stories and ideas for the final Research Essay

Friday April 21 **Guide Question: How may we interpret links between Power's stories and her histories?**

READ from Roofwalker: "Stone Women" "Museum Indians" and "The Attic"

NOTEBOOK WRITING What problems does Power pose in her fiction and her life experience?

Monday April 24 **Guide question How can community be understood in Sherman Alexie's work?**

READ "Every Little Hurricane", "Because My Father Always Said", "A Drug Called Tradition" and "The Only Traffic Signal on the Reservation"

FOCUS for Discussion Victor's community

Student Leader

Wednesday April 26

SUBMIT the context and tentative thesis for the Research essay and list of works to be cited in the essay

Friday April 28

READ Selected stories from The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven

Each student will present an analysis of a selected story. **Include a brief summary of the action; explanation of a particular element such as character, point of view, setting, theme, or plot; and some explanation of what this writing contributes to readers' understanding of what it means to be Indian**

Monday May 1 WRITE Research Essays

Peer reviews in class

Wednesday May 3 Continued presentations on Alexie's work

Friday May 5 Continued presentations on Alexie's work.

Monday May 8 Submit one page of the literary research essay that includes introduction and integration of quoted sources.

Peer review

Tuesday May 9 Reading Day

Note the one day interval between the last class and the final presentation of the literary research essay.

Wednesday May 10 to Tuesday May 16 Examination Period

**During the examination period for this class--Wednesday May 10 1-3 p.m.--final oral and written presentations of the literary research essay are due. No exceptions will be made.**

#### **Guidelines for the literary research essay:**

APPROACH: The literary research essay depends on the identification of a significant problem or issue derived from the primary sources in the course reading. This problem or issue identified in the primary source should be interpreted by the writer using evidence from the primary source and supported by the critical and theoretical work of scholars. It is possible, but not necessary, to use one or more primary sources, bearing in mind the need to have identified a solid connection between the works. Use two or more critical sources to support the interpretations or to contrast with them.

In addition to this foundation, the literary research essay will display these features:

- context that supplies needed background information
- central thesis that includes major problems/issues statements
- paragraph organization according to the main features of the problem/issue stated in the expanded central thesis statements
- evidence from the primary source predominates; evidence from the secondary source used to confirm, amplify, or contrast
- in-text citations and list of works cited according to MLA format

#### **Guidelines for the oral presentation of final research essay project**

Wednesday May 10 1-3 pm

Information to be covered in the oral presentation of the final research project:

- CONCEPT underlying the project in very specific terms (For example if the foundation of the project is based on the concept of alienation, there needs to be a very specific explanation of the term within the context of the ethnic group. This means naming the

primary sources and explaining the corresponding understanding of the concept according to each source.)

- INTERPRETATIONS of the problem or issue according to the various investigations conducted for the project (For example, if the problem or issue can be interpreted in more than one way, there needs to be a very specific explanation of each interpretation according to the source. This means naming the secondary sources according to each interpretation.)
- SIGNIFICANCE of this problem or issue in the ethnic community (Why does this issue matter to this ethnic group?)
- SIGNIFICANCE of this problem or issue within the context of the larger world (Why does this issue matter to Americans in the general population? Why does this issue matter in the world?)

**In advance of the presentation, prepare several sentences on each point of information.**

**Use notes to deliver your ideas about the project. This is a formal presentation.**

**Rehearse the presentation and tailor it to 4-5 minutes.**