

"The truth about stories is that's all we are"

-- Thomas King

Required Texts

1. Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Art by Ellen Forney. 2007. New York: Little Brown, 2009. Print. ISBN 0316013692
2. Carlson, Lorie Marie, Ed. *Moccasin Thunder: American Indian Stories for Today*. New York: Harper, 2005. Print. ISBN 0066239575
3. Erdrich, Louise. *Tracks*. 1988. New York: Harper, 1989. Print. ISBN 0060972459
4. Harjo, Joy. *She Had Some Horses*. 1990. New York: Norton, 2008. Print. ISBN 039333421X
5. Momaday, N. Scott. *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1969. Print. ISBN 0826304362
6. Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. 1977. New York: Penguin, 1986. Print. ISBN 0140086838
7. Womack, Craig. *Drowning in Fire*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2001. Print. ISBN 0816521689
8. Zobel, Melissa Tantaquidgeon. *Oracles*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2004. Print. ISBN 0826331912
9. Materials distributed in class and texts posted to HuskyCT
10. Your writing! Keep all of it (notes, informal writing, papers) handy for the duration of the semester.

Course Description

In this course, we will sample the rich and diverse body of texts that Native Americans have been creating for centuries. We will read a selection of traditional stories in translation and writings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but our principal focus will be on works from the last hundred years. We will engage a wide range of genres--including novels, short stories, speeches, essays, poems, songs, and films--by Sherman Alexie, Louise Erdrich, Joy Harjo, N. Scott Momaday, Samson Occom, Leslie Marmon Silko, Zitkala-Sa, and Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel, among others. We will read critical and theoretical sources in addition to primary texts. Assignments will include daily reading notes and discussion questions, three short papers, a midterm exam, and a final exam.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to

- Demonstrate a familiarity with a variety of Native American literary texts representing a range of tribal nations, time periods, and genres.
- Define Native American literature in terms of historical development, common themes, and approaches based on diverse theoretical, political, tribal, regional, and generic concerns.
- Identify ways in which Native American literature represents, responds to, and resists colonialism.
- Discuss the treatment of history and the future in Native American texts.
- Analyze the significance of specific passages from Native American texts for understanding the meanings of those texts as well as the larger contexts of which they are a part.
- Critically engage scholarship from Native American literary studies and Indigenous studies.
- Demonstrate a growing familiarity with current events and issues of concern in Indian country and relate your knowledge of those events/issues to Native American literary texts.

Course Requirements and Grading

Midterm Exam:	15%
Final Exam:	25%
Participation, Informal Writing, Quizzes:	30%
Three Papers:	30%

Grades and their numerical values:

A: 94-100	B-: 80-83	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-93	C+: 77-79	D-: 60-63
B+: 87-89	C: 74-76	F: 0-59
B: 84-86	C-: 70-73	

In accordance with university guidelines, "A" work is *superior*, not very good or above average. It meets assignment requirements and far exceeds expectations. "B" work is *above average*. It meets requirements and shows excellence in some aspects. "C" work is *satisfactory*. It meets all basic requirements. "D" work does not fully meet basic requirements. "F" work falls short of basic requirements in several ways.

Midterm Exam and Final Exam

The midterm exam will constitute **fifteen percent** of your grade; the final will constitute **twenty-five percent**. The format for both exams will be short and long essay prompts drawn from course readings, lecture, and class discussion. You will be required to demonstrate that you have read all of the required course material carefully. Since the exam questions will be drawn, in part, from class discussion, you will also need to attend class, participate attentively, and take notes on the class discussion as well as lectures and readings in order to succeed on the exams. The midterm exam will take place on October 17th. The final will take place during exam week. The final exam will be cumulative.

Participation, Informal Writing, Quizzes

Thirty percent of your total course grade, **ten percent** for each unit, will be based on your class participation, informal writing assignments, and quizzes. I will notify you of your participation/informal writing/quiz grade following each of the three major units for the course.

Participation: You are expected to come to class on time and to participate attentively in all discussion, group work, activities, and short presentations during class time. Tardiness, being distracted (by texting, talking, etc.), and failure to fully participate will hurt your grade.

Informal Writing: You are required to prepare reading notes and at least two discussion questions for every class period (excepting on the days of the midterm and final exams) that adhere to the guidelines discussed in class. You must complete a first draft of each of your three major papers (the drafts will count towards your informal writing grade rather than your paper grade). You will also at times have short in-class and take-home writing assignments, with guidelines given in class. Finally, you are required to read and comment in HuskyCT on at least three of your classmates' first papers and at least three of their second papers following instructions distributed in class.

Quizzes: You will periodically be given quizzes on assigned readings; these will include true/false, multiple choice, and/or short answer questions. Quizzes will be given at the start of class, and you will not be allowed to make them up if you are tardy, so come to class on time!

Please note that you will only be allowed to make up class activities, quizzes, and in-class assignments if you have an excused absence. If you have an unexcused absence, you will receive a zero for that work. In addition, you will be required to draw on material from class discussion for the midterm and final exams, so you will need to attend class in order to do well on those. In other words, your grade will naturally suffer in major ways if you skip class. Repeated unexcused absences will further hurt your grade (see Attendance Policy).

Three Papers

Every student is required to write three short papers (950-1400 words each), with the due dates for each paper spread out over the course of the semester (see Course Schedule). Each of the three papers is worth **ten percent** of the course grade for a total of **thirty percent**. You can decide which order you write them in, but over the course of the semester, you must write one of each of the following types of paper:

- 1) **Explication of a passage from a course text.** Select from one of the course texts a short passage (a brief poem or stanza from a poem, a paragraph from a novel, an image described over 2-3 sentences of a short story, etc.) that you find profound, puzzling, or provocative. Transcribe the short passage onto the top of the first page of your essay, and cite it. In the essay that follows, first make observations about the content, style, tone, and overall meaning (obvious, suggested, literal, and/or symbolic meanings) of the passage. You will likely want to re-quote certain phrases and words from the passage in order to work closely with them. Then consider the significance of the passage you have analyzed within the larger work from which it comes. How does the passage contribute to the meaning(s), style(s), and feeling(s) of the text as a whole? Cite specific passages from throughout the text to bolster this part of your analysis. As you explore the passage's contribution to the larger work, you may want to discuss why you were initially drawn to the passage and then describe how your initial reaction to the passage and sense of its place in the larger work has been confirmed, challenged, or complicated in the process of writing this essay.
- 2) **Annotated bibliography of critical sources.** Select at least three critical sources--scholarly articles or book chapters--on one or more of the course texts or on a cultural, political, or historical issue related to one or more of the course texts. To get credit for this assignment, you need to select relevant peer-reviewed scholarly sources. I recommend searching the MLA database, the HOMER catalogue, and the academic journals *Studies in American Indian Literature*, *American Indian Quarterly*, and *Wicazo Sa Review*. I also strongly encourage you to consult with me as you are selecting sources. I am very happy to assist you with your search, and I can direct you to sources that match your interests. You will want to skim several sources before deciding on the three you want to read carefully and respond to for this assignment.

In your 3-4 page annotated bibliography, cite each source and follow the citation with a two-to-three paragraph annotation that summarizes the source's key points and explains how the source contributes to your understanding of one or more course texts, referencing specific material from the critical source as well as the course text(s) to support your observations. In each annotation, you also need to counter, with evidence from a course text, one of the scholar's interpretations and/or extend one of the scholar's observations to a different course text, again with evidence from that course text.

- 3) **Essay on Current Issue in Indian Country.** Research a current event or contemporary issue in Indian country and relate your research to one or more course readings. For this assignment, focus your research on popular rather than scholarly sources. Find two to three sources from newspapers (such as *Indian Country Today* or any of the hundreds of local tribal papers) magazines (such as *Native Peoples* or *American Indian Magazine*, the magazine of the National Museum of the American Indian), tribal nation websites, blogs by Indigenous writers, or songs/short films/music videos/etc. by Indigenous artists. Topics like "mascots" or "fishing rights" or "gaming" are too big, so if you are interested in such topics, use your initial research time to hone in on a discrete event such as a recent school board meeting, current legal case, or upcoming Indigenous cultural, artistic, or political gathering. Or hone in on a particular means of addressing the issue such as music videos, newspaper editorials, or facebook groups.

In your essay, you should not summarize the sources you select. Rather, you should craft a thesis-driven argument that focuses on how your sources illuminate the very specific issue you have selected and how this adds to your engagement with one or more course readings. Reference specific material from the sources you select from your research as well the course reading(s) you engage as you develop your argument.

Papers are due at the beginning of class in print form (double-sided or on recycled paper if possible), so please try to anticipate printing or computer problems by generating a copy of your essay well before class time. Unless you have made arrangements with me before the due date, late papers will receive zero credit. You are required to post the final draft of Papers 1 and 2 to HuskyCT by 5pm on the day

after they are due so that your classmates can read and respond to them.

Each paper will be graded primarily based on how well it fulfills the criteria specified above. Thus, in every case, the majority of your grade will be based on your ability to articulate your own observations and develop your own arguments as you carefully select and engage specific material from course texts and the other texts to which each assignment directs you (class discussion, scholarly sources, or popular sources). A small percentage of your grade will be based on the clarity, style, and correctness of your prose.

All papers should be 950-1400 words (approximately three-to-four double spaced pages) and follow MLA formatting and citation guidelines.

A first draft of each paper will be due the class period before the final draft is due. We will workshop the drafts during class. I strongly encourage you to begin your research and writing process well before the first draft due date and to meet with me to discuss your ideas. As you write and revise, I also urge ALL of you to visit the excellent **University Writing Center**. The writing center has two locations: the First Floor of the Homer Babbidge Library and CLAS 159. Make an appointment at writingcenter.uconn.edu. I highly recommend the Writing Center for even the most confident writers. The tutors there will work with you--at any stage of the writing process from brainstorming to polishing a final draft--to identify strategies for building on your strengths and addressing your weaknesses. Go!

Course Policies

Attendance

This is a discussion-based class, so your attendance is necessary for the work of the course to move forward. If you find that work, family, or other obligations prevent you from attending class, **drop this section immediately**. You won't be able to succeed in this course unless you are present in class. You won't be permitted to make up work that you miss because of unexcused absences. In addition, if you are absent (without explanation) from three classes, your final grade will be reduced (an A to an A-, for example). Each subsequent unexcused absence will further reduce the grade (an A- to a B+, then a B+ to a B, etc.). If you need to miss a class, talk with me **ahead of time** to get the absence excused and arrange to make up work you will miss. If you have an emergency that prevents you from getting in touch in advance, contact me as soon as you can. Talk with me during the first week of class if you are involved in athletics or other UConn events that will require you to miss class. I will take attendance at every meeting.

Academic Integrity

According to the UConn Student Code, "Academic misconduct is dishonest or unethical academic behavior that includes, but is not limited, to misrepresenting mastery in an academic area (e.g., cheating), intentionally or knowingly failing to properly credit information, research or ideas to their rightful originators or representing such information, research or ideas as your own (e.g., plagiarism)." See http://www.community.uconn.edu/student_code_appendixa.html for details. Any instance of academic misconduct in this course--cheating or plagiarism of any kind on papers, exams, quizzes, or informal writing assignments--will result in **failure for the course**. In accordance with university requirements, all academic misconduct will also be reported to the Office of Community Standards.

Extra Credit

For extra credit, you may attend a museum (I highly recommend the Mashantucket Pequot museum), exhibit (such as the audio tour of cultural objects in the Mohegan Sun casino), lecture, film showing, or other event related to Native American literature or culture. Within **two weeks** of the visit or event, write an essay that includes a one-page summary of highlights from your experience (not every detail, just aspects that stood out to you, intrigued you, or puzzled you) and a one-to-two-page reflection in which you discuss specific issues/questions that the experience raised for you while also drawing connections between the experience and our class discussion of one or more Native American texts. You can do up to two extra credit essays over the course of the semester. Each can raise your total course grade up to 2% depending on the quality. You may submit essays at any class session up until November 30th. I will not accept extra credit essays after **November 30th**.

Disabilities and Other Special Needs

Please speak to me within the first week of class if you have a disability or other special needs that will affect your performance in the course. The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) will work with students to document disabilities and arrange accommodations for students with special learning needs. See <http://www.csd.uconn.edu> for more information.

If Class is Cancelled

Check your e-mail regularly in case of class cancellations determined by me or by the university (due to severe weather, etc.). If class is cancelled for any reason, I will e-mail you with instructions for how to complete the coursework and submit your homework for that day so that we can stay on schedule. **You will be responsible for doing the assigned reading and other homework due on any given day (including major papers), even if we are not meeting physically.**

Respect

We will discuss some complicated, disturbing, and controversial topics this semester. I will do my part to create a safe space in which all students can learn and share ideas. I ask that you do the same, treating one another with patience and respect as you work through the material of the course and develop your responses to it. Like the authors of the literature we study, we will at times disagree (it would make for a boring class if we didn't!). While I expect all of us to respect one another even when we deeply disagree, I also ask that we all listen to one another carefully and remain open to the possibility of actually having our own minds changed sometimes.

Talk to me!

I love discussing Native American literature, and I love teaching. I look forward to hearing your ideas about the texts as well as about how we can make this class a rich experience for everyone; it's why I'm here! In addition to office hours, you can email me to set up a time to talk in person or by phone. If you give me a couple of days notice, I will happily read and comment on thesis statements, outlines, or drafts of your papers. Please talk with me anytime about your ideas, your progress in the course, and any questions or comments you have about the class.

Course Schedule

Unit 1: What is Native American Literature?

M Aug 29 Course Introduction, Alexie's "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel,"
Defining Native American Literature Packet

W Aug 31 *True Diary* (1-129), Alexie's website (www.fallsapart.com), course syllabus

M Sep 5 NO CLASS (Labor Day)

W Sep 7 *True Diary* (130-end), Alexie's "Because My Father Always Said" (*Moccasin Thunder* 20-32)

M Sep 12 *Ceremony* (1-106), END OF ADD/DROP PERIOD

W Sep 14 **Paper 1 First Draft Due**, *Ceremony* (106-181)

M Sep 19 **Paper 1 Final Draft Due** *Ceremony* (181-end), short film by Ryan Singer (viewed in class)

W Sep 21 Origin Stories Packet, Thomas King's "You'll Never Believe What Happened," Lee
Francis's "Summer Wind" (*Moccasin Thunder* 132-9)

M Sep 26 *Rainy Mountain*

W Sep 28 Momaday's "The Man Made of Words," Trends in Native American Literary Criticism
Packet

Unit 2: Confronting Colonial Violence: Writing and/as Indigenous Activism

M Oct 3 Selections by Samson Occom, Selections by Zitkala-Sa

W Oct 5 **Paper 2 First Draft Due**, Colonial Violence Packet

M Oct 10 **Paper 2 Final Draft Due**, *She Had Some Horses* (1-46), Harjo's website
(www.joyharjo.com)

W Oct 12 *She Had Some Horses* (47-end), Harjo's "How to Get to the Planet Venus" (*Moccasin
Thunder* 1-19)

M Oct 17 **Midterm Exam** (in regular classroom during regular class time)

Film showing of *Edge of America* in Homer Babbidge Library Video Theater 2, 8-9:45pm

*Note: If you are unable to make the film showing, you can watch the film by picking it up from the front desk of the library.

It will be available there on reserve for you to watch before Wednesday's class.

W Oct 19 *Edge of America*, scenes from *Rocks with Wings* (shown in class)

M Oct 24 *Tracks* (1-61), Secondary Reading on Erdrich TBA

W Oct 26 *Tracks* (62-130), Land Issues Packet

M Oct 31 *Tracks* (131-191), LAST DAY TO DROP A COURSE

W Nov 2 **Paper 3 First Draft Due**, *Tracks* (192-end)

Unit 3: Building "Nation-Peoples": Remembering the Past, Imagining the Future

M Nov 7 **Paper 3 Final Draft Due**, Children's Books of Your Choice: Either with a partner or on
your own, select a children's text by a Native American writer, read it, bring it to class, and be prepared to present the text to your
classmates by summarizing key elements, showing interesting images/passages, and sharing questions the text raises for you.

W Nov 9 *Oracles* (1-98)

M Nov 14 *Oracles* (99-end), short film by Rebecca Perry Levy (viewed in class)

W Nov 16 **Class Guest: Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel**, Mohegan Tribe Website
(<http://www.mohegan.nsn.us/>)

M Nov 21 NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break
W Nov 23 NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break

M Nov 28 *Drowning* (1-133), Selections from Womack's *Red on Red*
W Nov 30 *Drowning* (134-end)

M Dec 5 *Moccasin Thunder*: Lori Marie Carlson's Editor's Note, Helen Maynor Scheirbeck's Introduction, Cynthia Leitich Smith's "A Real Live Blonde Cherokee" (33-41), Joseph Bruchac's "Ice" (84-93), Greg Sarris's "The Magic Pony" (102-31), and Susan Power's "Drum Kiss" (140-52)
W Dec 7 Poetry Packet, Review for Final Exam

Final Exam: TBA (sometime between Dec. 12-18)

W Dec 21 Grades available for you to view through the UConn student admin program

***Important Notes Regarding Course Schedule:**

- I will post to HuskyCT and/or distribute in class texts that are not in the required books.
- In addition to the texts listed here, you will be required to read additional short texts and handouts that will be distributed in class.
- This schedule is subject to change. I will notify you in writing if it does.