
WMS 463/ENG 460 Native American Women's Literature and Culture

Fall 2001 Monday 1:30-5 PM Brk 476

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Required Texts:

Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux). *The Sacred Hoop*

S. Alice Callahan, (Creek). *Wynema*

Diane Glancy, (Cherokee). *Pushing the Bear*

Beth Brant (Mohawk). *Mohawk Trail*

Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo). *Ceremony*

Ella Cara Deloria (Lakota Sioux). *Waterlily*

Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa). *Tracks*

Susan Power (Standing Rock Sioux). *The Grass Dancer*

Linda Hogan (Chickasaw) *Mean Spirit*

Course Goals:

1. To explore the importance of the oral tradition and the sense of place to Native American writers.
2. To identify what might constitute a literary tradition for Native American women.
3. To cultivate an awareness of the Native American woman's place in her culture as seen through each writer.
4. To identify similarities and differences between various tribal identities and how these are carried out in the literature.

Class Procedures:

Class sessions will consist of discussion of readings and presentations. The success of this course depends upon teachers and students sharing responsibility for class sessions as colleagues. Your attendance, preparation for class, and class participation are important to make this class work. You will be asked to complete a self-evaluation at the end of the course. Do not expect to pass this course if you miss more than three class sessions for whatever reason.

Grading:

Grades will be based on class participation and attendance; 10 critical reading papers 2-3 pages per week; one theme-oriented 8-10 page paper; a group presentation and an individual annotated bibliography; and overall performance. You are encouraged to take the course for credit/no credit to take the pressure off of learning a new discipline. Grades are not an indication of what I think of you as a person, but are my evaluation of how well you have done the class work. "A" is for superior work; "B" is for good work; "C" is for average or adequate work; "D" is for work with some inadequacies; and "U" is for unsatisfactory work. Please note that all work must be completed in order to pass the course. Requests for Incompletes must be discussed with the instructor by the last class period.

Critical Response Papers:

You will be asked to write 10 critical response papers (2-3 double-spaced, wordprocessed pages) of your analyses of the texts and issues surrounding a literary esthetic appropriate to Native American women's literature to prepare for discussion and to record personal observations about the materials and class. These will be collected after class discussion. **Late papers will not be accepted, and you must be in attendance to hand in a paper.** Make a copy for your peer reader. Questions to keep in mind are: 1) What are the main points/purposes of the author? 2) In what way(s) might we consider this writing different or the same as other contemporary American writing in form, content, style, genre, etc.? 3) What kinds of literary and/or personal tradition(s) is the author drawing upon and what

examples of this do you see in the work? 4) What was new, particularly meaningful, surprising, annoying or intriguing about the work? 5) Are there particular passages you would like to read out loud in class or to celebrate in some way and why? 6) How does your life experience relate to the work in question? 7) What questions do you have about the work?

Discussion Teams:

Class members should lead class discussion at least once during the semester (graduate students twice) on the assigned readings for the night in order to bring a variety of concerns, opinions, and formats to our attention. This is in addition to the tribal presentations and responsibility for discussion of the writer from your tribe.

Tribal Presentations:

This is an opportunity to explore a Native American writer and her culture in more depth. Each class member will become part of a tribe representing one of our writers. Each tribe will work together to learn its history and culture. You will be responsible for paying special attention to your tribe throughout the semester, teaching the rest of the class about yourselves and keeping a record of your investigations. Each group will make an oral presentation--half to be focused upon your tribal history and the other upon the author's work and the connections between the tribal history and the work. Your personal annotated bibliography on your research should be written up and handed in at the time of the presentation. Annotation is a critical paragraph describing the source and its usefulness for your research.

The purpose of the group project is to learn and experience in some depth the history and culture of your writer. In turn, the class will be dependent on the group for broadening our understanding of Native American culture. Success in this project will not only depend on western analytical linear thinking, but, more importantly, on developing a sense of dependency on others for the success of the group and realizing one's identity as part of a harmonious whole. In traditional Native cultures an individual (in the western sense) does not exist outside the interdependence of tribal life. The group gives meaning to the individual, who is enhanced as a valued part of the whole group.

Considerations for the 20-30 minute presentation on your tribe using whatever format you think appropriate: a) demographic and geographic information. Who and how many are (or were) you, where you have been, and where you are now; b) a list and explanation of significant dates and events in your history; c) an account of some crucial, culturally-defining characteristics and historical themes; d) the oral traditions that define your values and beliefs and those values and beliefs themselves; e) an art object and what it reveals about your culture; f) what your people are doing today and particular issues or concerns that are important to you; g) ceremonial presentations should express in a holistic way an aspect of your group's history or culture.

The rest of the session should relate the tribal material you have discovered to the writer's text in question and might consider: a) What specific Native American values are expressed in the work? b) How well does the author do in matching form to the values expressed? c) How well does the piece work in terms of what you assume to be its goal? d) How are the values similar or different from others you have examined? e) Are there particular passages you would like to share and why? Are there pieces which you find particularly surprising, annoying, intriguing, disturbing, etc., and why? Would you recommend this work to others and why? Presentations can take any form--the more creative the better--and should enlist class participation.

The presentations will require you to decide what information is most important about your culture, how to organize it clearly, and what method of presentation would be most effective. You should be able to respond to questions from the rest of the class. Plan to meet with your tribal group well before the presentations. Much of the learning in this class will be in your group meetings as well as through your sharing with the rest of the class.

Theme Papers:

One 6-8 page paper (10-12 pages for graduate students) on a literary theme of your choice, using class materials due October 29. Sample topics: Compare/contrast the writing of *Waterlily* and *The Grass Dancer*; apply Allen to one or more of our works; explore issues around being a full-blood or mixed-blood in literature and/or as an author.

CAUTION: Be sure to review how to paraphrase, quote, and document your sources in your written material using the Modern Language Association (MLA) format. Avoid plagiarism which could result in your receiving no credit for the course. See the handouts outside the Learning Center, 4th floor of Brookens.

Tentative Schedule: Reading (to be done prior to class)

8/27	Introduction	
9/3	Holiday	
9/10	Allen, <i>The Sacred Hoop</i>	"Intro," 1-7; "Ways of Our Grandmothers," 10-50, "The Sacred Hoop," 53-75; and "Something Sacred," 102-117
9/17	No class	Work on Tribal Presentation
9/24	Deloria, <i>Waterlily</i>	(library session)
10/1	Power, <i>The Grass Dancer</i>	Chapts. 1-5
10/8	Power, <i>The Grass Dancer</i>	Chapts. 6-end
10/15	Glancy, <i>Pushing the Bear</i>	
10/22	Callahan, <i>Wynema</i>	
10/29	Hogan, <i>Mean Spirit</i>	First half of book to p. 188 Theme paper due
11/5	Hogan, <i>Mean Spirit</i>	Second half of book
11/12	Allen, <i>The Sacred Hoop</i> and Brant, <i>Mohawk Trail</i>	pp. 194-208; 245-61
11/19	Silko, <i>Ceremony</i> pp. 1-130	(See Allen's discussion pp. 118-26) (video 50 minutes)
11/26	Silko, <i>Ceremony</i>	pp. 131 ("Note on Bear People") to end
12/3	Erdrich <i>Tracks</i>	pp. 1-95 (Chapts 1-4)
12/10	Erdrich, <i>Tracks</i>	pp. 96-end
12/17	Allen, <i>The Sacred Hoop</i>	pp. 209-21; 262-8; Sanchez handout

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Building E, Room 11, 217-206-6666.
