

Native North American Indian Literature

LITT 3208

Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

Fall 2000

Dr. Deborah Gussman

Course Description: Some common themes in Native North American Indian writing are the recovery of identity, revision of stereotypes, resistance to colonization, traditional connection with the land, and sovereignty. These themes and the questions they raise will form the basis for our examination of representative Native North American Indian writings in English from the early 20th century through the present.

Required Texts:

Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene), Reservation Blues (Warner Books 1996)
Charles Eastman (Sioux), Indian Boyhood (Dover 1971)
Louise Erdrich (Ojibwa/Anishanabee), Love Medicine (Harperperennial 1984)
D'Arcy McNickle (Cree/Salish), The Surrounded (U of New Mexico P 1978)
N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), The Way to Rainy Mountain (U of New Mexico P 1977)
Simon Ortiz (Acoma), From Sand Creek (U of Arizona P 1981)
Zitkala-Sa [Gertrude Bonnin](Sioux) American Indian Stories (U of Nebraska P 1986)
Leslie Marmon Silko(Laguna), Ceremony (Penguin 1986)
Luci Taphonso(Navajo), Blue Horses Rush In (U of Arizona P 1997)

Course Requirements

1. You are expected to attend class regularly having completed the assigned reading and/or writing and to be prepared to discuss the texts and your own work. If you are late or miss class frequently (more than four absences), you will find it difficult to earn a satisfactory final grade.
2. Journal entries on all assigned readings: select and analyze formal (e.g. characterization, setting, modes of persuasion, structure) and thematic elements (author's purpose as reflective of period, personal and social values, etc.) -- approximately 1-2 pages/class. Journal to be collected three times during the semester.
3. One 2-3 page essay, due at mid-term. This paper will develop more fully and formally an early journal entry.
4. Group project: The goal of this project is for you to supplement our more "literary" investigations by examining the biographical, tribal, and cultural context of the books we are reading. The idea is to give the rest of the class an overview/history of the nation with which each writer is affiliated, as well as an understanding of an individual writer's personal history in relation to his or her tribal affiliation. The presentations will be about thirty minutes per group: each group of students should make and distribute copies of a one-page outline and bibliography for the class. Feel free to be creative, to incorporate other media (photography, video, music, etc.), and to find interesting ways to engage the rest of the class in the information you are presenting.
5. One longer essay (8-10 pp) due at the end of the term. This paper may focus on any of the books presented in class. It will offer a literary analysis and close reading of the text that takes into consideration some of the cultural, social and/or tribal issues and that incorporates outside reference materials (including at least two literary/critical essays).

Reading Schedule: (Subject to revision)

Week 1

T 9/12 Overview/handouts
TH 9/14 handouts/film

Week 2

T 9/19 Eastman (1902)
TH 9/21 Eastman

Week 3

T 9/26 Zitkala-sa (1921)
TH 9/28 Zitkala-sa

Week 4

T 10/3 Group presentation. McNickle (1936)
TH 10/5 McNickle. Journals due

Week 5

T 10/10 Group Presentation. Momaday (1969)
TH 10/12 Momaday

Week 6
T 10/17 Group Presentation. Silko (1977)
TH 10 19 Silko

Week 7
T 10/24 Silko. Short paper due.
TH 10/26 Silko.

Week 8
T 10/31 Preceptorial Advising: No Class
TH 11/2 Group Presentation: Erdrich (1984)

Week 9
T 11/7 Erdrich. Election Day–Class held, but don't forget to vote!!!
TH 11/9 Erdrich. Journals due.

Week 10
T 11/14 Group presentation: Ortiz (1981). (1981)
[W 11/15 Preceptorial Advising]
TH 11/16 Ortiz

Week 11
T 11/21 Group presentation: Alexie (1996)
[W 11/22] Deadline to withdraw with a W grade
TH 11/23 Thanksgiving Holiday: No Class

Week 12
T 11/28 Alexie
TH11/30 Alexie

Week 13
12/5 Group presentation: Taphonso (1997) Journals due
12/7 Problem-solving for final papers

Week 14
T 12/12 Taphonso.
TH 12/14 8-10 page papers due.