

Survey of Native American Literature

Fall 2003

Office: ASH 189L
brobins@mail.unomaha.edu

554-3326
 Wed. 4:00 -- 5:00, Tues & Thurs. 3:00 4:30

Course Description:

(From UNO catalog) An introduction to the literature of the oral tradition among Native American peoples and to the written literature of post-contact and contemporary times. (Prerequisite: English 1160 or permission of the instructor.)

This is a course devoted to the narrative and literary expressions of the indigenous peoples of North America. While we cannot hope to cover all the tribal groups, through selected examples from oral and written traditions, our focus will be on gaining a greater understanding of the diverse histories, cultural perspectives and artistic values of many Native American peoples.

We will explore:

- Value systems and aesthetics that arise from very diverse cultural groups.
- American history with an emphasis on Native American experiences and perspectives.
- The long-term affects of colonialism as expressed in literature.
- Some of the attitudes that have contributed to both the exclusion of Native American oral and written texts in literary studies and the rising popularity of these same texts.

We will not:

- devote significant time to those works about Native Americans by non-Indian writers or filmmakers except as points of contrast in class discussion.
- promote overly romantic or racist attitudes and interpretations.

Texts: (in probable order of reading & discussion)

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| Bruchac, Joseph. | <i>Lasting Echoes: An Oral History</i> |
| Simms, Thomas. | <i>Otokahekaapi: Sioux Creation Story</i> |
| Peyer, Bernd. | <i>Singing Spirit: Early Short Stories by N.Am. Indians</i> |
| Hobson, Geary. | <i>The Remembered Earth.</i> |
| Erdrich, Louise. | <i>Love Medicine</i> |
| Howe, LeAnne. | <i>Shell Shaker</i> |
| La Flesche, Francis. | <i>The Middle Five: Indian Schoolboys of the Omaha Tribe</i> |
| Alexie, Sherman. | <i>The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven</i> |

Additional required or recommended readings may be made available at the Reserve Desk in the UNO library or on **Blackboard**. Please be patient as I continue to build this site and take the time to review the essays, websites, art, etc. that are being placed there to enhance your cultural awareness.

Response Papers, Exams & Homework:

Students will be expected to do a variety of interpretive and research tasks both in writing and in short class presentation or discussions.

General Guidelines: Response Papers are 2-3 typed pages (approx. 1000 words), double-spaced in MLA format. These should not be merely plot summaries! Instead, these should be opportunities for exploring ideas raised in class discussion and reflecting on our readings. Additional research is not required for these short papers but is highly desirable to improve interpretations. It is expected these essays will be the products of close readings with the inclusion of appropriate quotes from the literary texts in question. Exams will cover content from the readings, biographical information on the authors, lecture and websites on Blackboard as announced in class. Homework will include answering questions related to assigned readings, research, and the selection of a poem to be read in class with a short interpretive follow-up.

Grading & Expectations for Students:

An extensive knowledge of Native American history and culture is not expected for this course, but maintaining an open mind about history and culture is required! Questions are always welcome and indeed, participation in class discussion and in groups is required. However, please try to remain sensitive concerning the stereotypes which could emerge and try to engage in acts of understanding rather than acts of judgement and condescension.

Good discussion in a literature class is a must, therefore it is expected that all required readings will be completed in time for class and that all students will contribute ideas, observations, questions and interpretations. To contribute to our understanding of the long history of stereotyping and cultural appropriation, all students are encouraged to attend local/regional events such as Pow Wows, conferences, lectures, performances, etc. by Native Americans when available.

KEEP CELL PHONES TURNED OFF!! Arrive on time and always be respectful of others in class. Share your ideas but don't dominate discussion. Encourage others, as well as yourself, to stretch your ability to understand diverse points of view.

Plagiarism & Academic Honesty:

Students must produce their own work and be able to produce to the instructor drafts and working papers for all writing assignments. Quoting or paraphrasing the words of others without the proper acknowledgement will be regarded as an act of plagiarism and could subject the student to failure of the course and/or other disciplinary measures.