

The University of Texas at El Paso

Department of English

Native American Literature
English 3316 (CRN: 12872)
 T/R, 4:30 – 5:50 p.m., Hudspeth 300

Fall 2016
 Dr. Robert Gunn
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Native American Literatures, like the American Indian Peoples of North America, are extraordinarily rich in history, variety, and complexity. This course offers an introductory survey of Native American literatures through examples of classic Native oratory, poetry, autobiography, songs, traditional legends, short stories and novels. A primary concern of this survey will be to transcend the culturally potent, and remarkably persistent, image of “the Indian” as a singular identity in the American imagination in recognition of the diversity of Native lifeways, languages, histories, and cultural legacies across lands now included in the geopolitical territory of the United States. Accordingly, in reading closely and thoughtfully works by members of the Pequot, Cherokee, Lakota & Yankton Sioux, Laguna, Choctaw, Blackfoot, Ojibwe, and Spokane/Coeur d’Alene Nations (and several others as well), our first task will be to discern and situate the meanings of literary authorship from a diverse variety of cultural, social, and political viewpoints. Topics and themes to be addressed include: literacy, orality, and the relationship of literary innovation to cultural tradition; Indian Removal and the history of land dispossession, and the treaty system; termination, law, and the politics of recognition; tribal identity, assimilation, and difference; AIM, Indian activism, and the Native American Renaissance; the image of “the noble savage” and racial stereotyping; and the strange persistence of the White Man’s Indian in the 21st Century.

Required Texts (available at the UTEP bookstore):

Black Hawk, *Life of Black Hawk, or M̄-ka-tai-me-she-kī-kīk* (Penguin Classics)

Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (University of Nebraska Press)

Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings* (Penguin Classics)

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (Penguin Classics)

James Welch, *Fool’s Crow* (Penguin Classics)

Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* (Harper Perennial)

Sherman Alexie, *Indian Killer* (Warner)

Schedule of Readings (to be completed by corresponding date); “B” indicates a text included on Blackboard.

| Lsn. | Date | Assignment |
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| 1 | Aug. 23 | Introductions. |
| 2 | Aug. 25 | Native American Oratory, Land, and Nationhood “Indian Eloquence” (B); Pontiac (Ottawa), “The Master of Life” (B), “I am a Frenchman, and I wish to die a Frenchman” (B); James Logan, Tahgahjute (Cayuga), “I appeal to any white man to say...” (B); Red Jacket, Sagoyewatha (Seneca), “You have got our country, but are not satisfied” (B), “We like our religion, and do not want another” (B), “We are determined not to sell our lands” (B), “I am an aged tree and can stand no longer” (B); Tecumseh (Shawnee), “Sleep no longer, O Choctaws and |

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| | | Chickasaws” (B), “Let the white race perish” (B), “When the white men first set foot on our grounds, they were hungry” (B), “Father!—Listen to your children!” (B), Tenskwatawa, “The Prophet” (Shawnee), “It is three years since I first began that system of religion which I now practice” (B); Black Hawk, Makataimeshiekiakiak (Sauk), “I am going to send you back to your chief, though I ought to kill you” (B), “Farewell to Black Hawk” (B), “Your houses are as numerous as the leaves upon the trees” (B) |
| 3 | Aug. 30 | Assimilation and Removal: The Cherokee Elias Boudinot, “An Address to the Whites” (B), “Memorial of the Cherokee Council, November 5, 1829” (B), Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Letter to Martin Van Buren” (April 23, 1838) (B) |
| 4 | Sep. 1 | Black Hawk’s War and As-Told-To Autobiography Black Hawk, <i>Life of Black Hawk, or Mâ-ka-tai-me-she-kià-kiàk</i> (Introduction-49) |
| 5 | Sep. 6 | Dissent and Marginalization Black Hawk, <i>Life of Black Hawk</i> , cont’d (49-end) |
| 6 | Sep. 8 | Reversing the Conquering Gaze: Ethnology, War, and Advocacy Sarah Winnemucca, <i>Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims</i> (1883) (1-75) |
| 7 | Sep. 13 | The Bannock War and the Reservation System Winnemucca, <i>Life Among the Piutes</i> , cont’d (76-202) |
| 8 | Sep. 15 | Indian Passports Winnemucca, <i>Life Among the Piutes</i> , cont’d (203-end). |
| 9 | Sep. 20 | The Finality of Conquest: Wounded Knee and the Ghost Dance Ghost Dance Songs and Selections (B); Black Elk (as told to John G. Neihardt), from <i>Black Elk Speaks</i> (B) |
| 10 | Sep. 22 | Class cancelled |
| 11 | Sep. 27 | Orality, Tradition, and Literary Form Zitkala-Ša, <i>Old Indian Legends</i> (5-63) Paper #1 Due |
| 12 | Sep. 29 | Autobiography, Fiction, and “Bicultural Play” Zitkala-Ša, cont’d., <i>American Indian Stories</i> , “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” “The Great Spirit,” “The Soft-Hearted Sioux,” “A Warrior’s Daughter,” “A Dream of Her Grandfather,” “The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue-Star Woman,” “America’s Indian Problem” (68-160) |
| 13 | Oct. 4 | Poetic Voices Selections from Mary TallMountain, Nora Dauenhauer, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Jim Barnes, N. Scott Momaday, Gerald Vizenor, Paula Gunn Allen, James Welch, Simon Ortiz, Gladys Cardiff, Gail Tremblay, and Linda Hogan (B) |

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| 14 | Oct. 6 | Midterm |
| 15 | Oct. 11 | Captivity and Homecoming Leslie Marmon Silko, <i>Ceremony</i> (1-81) |
| 16 | Oct. 13 | Silko, <i>Ceremony</i> , cont'd., (81-166) |
| 17 | Oct. 18 | Completing the Ceremony Silko, <i>Ceremony</i> , cont'd., (166-end) |
| 18 | Oct. 20 | Savage Satire Sherman Alexie, <i>Indian Killer</i> (1-124) |
| 19 | Oct. 25 | Alexie, <i>Indian Killer</i> , cont'd (125-204) |
| 20 | Oct. 27 | Alexie, <i>Indian Killer</i> , cont'd (205-end) |
| 21 | Nov. 1 | Road Tripping: The United States is Another Country <i>Smoke Signals</i> , Dir. Chris Eyre (Film to be shown in class) Paper #2 Due |
| 22 | Nov. 3 | <i>Smoke Signals</i> , cont'd & film discussion (Read ahead in <i>Fools Crow</i>) |
| 23 | Nov. 8 | The Novel as Historical Recovery James Welch, <i>Fools Crow</i> (1-151) |
| 24 | Nov. 10 | Welch, <i>Fools Crow</i> , cont'd., (152-248) |
| 25 | Nov. 15 | Welch, <i>Fools Crow</i> , cont'd., (249-end) |
| 26 | Nov. 17 | Trauma, Innocence, Guilt Louise Erdrich, <i>The Round House</i> (1-83) |
| 27 | Nov. 22 | Violent Jurisdictions Erdrich, <i>The Round House</i> , cont'd (84-199) |
| | Nov. 24 | THANKSGIVING |
| 28 | Nov. 29 | Sovereignty, Law, and Justice Erdrich, <i>The Round House</i> (200-end) |
| 29 | Dec. 1 | Final Reckonings and the Sacred Hoop |
| | Dec. 2 | Final Papers Due in my office box by 5:00 p.m. |

A Final Exam will be administered on Tuesday, December 6th, between 4:00 and 6:45 p.m..

Course Requirements:

Reading of required texts. The reading load for this course is substantial; it is therefore important that you stay current in your work. Additionally, many of these texts can be quite challenging to read; to really understand them, you will need to read them more than once. As Thoreau said, reading “in a high sense” is “not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tiptoe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to” (*Walden*, “Reading”). Let us be readers on Thoreau’s model. Practically speaking, this means re-reading, underlining, making marginal notes, writing provocative questions and observations to bring with you to class, and actively connecting ideas and techniques between the texts we read.

Attendance and Participation (10%): Your ongoing participation is vital to your learning and to the success of the course for all. Come to our sessions prepared to share your questions and observations; the more involved you are on a daily basis, the more you will learn and enjoy. Faithful and on-time attendance is an important component of this, and is expected. Please be advised that, upon your sixth unexcused absence, you stand to be dropped from the course (i.e., prior to the University drop deadline of October 28th), or will fail the course (after October 28th). Do not assume that I will drop you automatically prior to the Oct. 28 deadline for reasons of excess absence; if you know you need to drop, it is your responsibility to do so. In keeping with standard departmental policy, absences are only excusable in cases of documented family or medical emergency.

Short Papers (15%; 15%): Two short critical essays, 4-5 pages in length, will be due on September 27th, and November 1st. Details of assignment to follow.

In-Class Presentations (10%): Each student will offer a short in-class presentation (10 minutes) on a given day’s reading assignment; these presentations are intended to provide a gateway into discussion of the text and are encouraged to enlist relevant information from the author’s biography and tribal background. Students will sign up for their preferred presentation dates during the first week of class.

Final Paper (20%): A longer Term Paper (6-8 pages) will be due on Friday, Dec. 2nd. I will provide more information on this as the class unfolds, but you may write on any topic that bears relevantly on our work in the course. I will also have suggestions for you, depending on your interests. Please feel free to come talk to me during my office hours to help develop ideas. MLA bibliographical guidelines are to be followed.

Midterm and Final Exams (10%; 20%): Details to follow.

Plagiarism. This is a form of academic fraud, and I take it very seriously. You will not receive credit for any work that has been plagiarized; moreover, any work suspected of plagiarism will be forwarded, as a matter of official University Policy, to the Office of the Dean of Students for adjudication. The consequences of plagiarism can be very serious, resulting in reduced course grades, course failures, and sometimes in academic suspension. I understand, though, that citing sources properly can be confusing at times; if you’re ever in doubt, just ask me.

Cell Phone Policy: No cell phones in class; please silence them and put them away for the duration of our class sessions. Although some of you may have electronic text editions of titles from the syllabus on, say, a kindle app, I ask you to recognize that cell phones are woefully inadequate reading devices for serious intellectual work in a classroom setting. Other cell phone uses are likewise not permitted; they are a distraction to all, and their use (however habitual, however addicting—believe me, I get it) is disrespectful to your fellow students and to me. If I see you texting, checking your email, &c., I will ask you to leave and mark you as absent for the day. If you have reason to anticipate an emergency phone

call (say, a sick child or relative that may require you to excuse yourself during class), please inform me before class begins.