

Linda Karell, Ph.D.
lkarell@english.montana.edu
Wilson 2-176 (994-3768)

Office Hours: MWF 11:00-12:00
And by appointment

English 431
Studies in a Major Author

Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris

Whether read as individual authors or as a literary “power couple,” Louise Erdrich and (her late husband) Michael Dorris are enormously important Native American writers. They were feted—separately and together—as among the finest contemporary writers America has produced, and they made intriguing arguments about their collaborative writing process. In this class, we will be looking at the concept of “major author” by examining these two writers, together and apart; the fascinating and compelling literary storytelling their fiction traces; and the intriguing and troubling events that surrounded their lives and Dorris’s death. We will adhere to no particular literary theory or perspective; rather, at different points in the class, we will engage the writing from a number of theoretical lenses.

Required Texts

Dorris, Michael. *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*
Dorris, Michael and Louis Erdrich. *The Crown of Columbus*.
Erdrich, Louise. *The Antelope Wife*.
---. *The Beet Queen*.
---. *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*.
---. *Love Medicine*.
---. *The Painted Drum*.
---. *Tales of Burning Love*.
---. *Tracks*.

Also: Dorris and Erdrich. *Conversations with Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris*. (Collected interviews). [This is a print-on-demand book and must be special ordered by you at the MSU Bookstore. You must order the book by Monday, September 8th to be included in the shipment and receive it on time.]

In addition, all English majors should have a copy of Harmon and Holman’s *A Handbook to Literature*, which is available at the MSU Bookstore.

On Electronic Reserve

Karell, Linda. “Partners in Collaboration: Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris.” *Writing Together/Writing Apart: Collaboration in Western American Literature*. Lincoln: U Nebraska P, 2002. 31-63.

Class Preparation, Attendance, and General Suggestions

I have no attendance policy per se in upper division courses and, except for trying to learn your names early on, I won’t be taking attendance. Nonetheless, to do well in the course, you do have to be here—prepared and participating. Erdrich in particular can be a

challenging writer, and because we will be using theoretical approaches and terms, you need to be on top of the daily material. Please come to class with the day's assignment thoroughly read and digested and dust off your English 300 notes (or, if you haven't taken 300, bone up on basic literary approaches. I can recommend some titles).

That said, however, I will help you in any way I can. Class format will be a combination of lecture, large and small group discussion, and group activity. I encourage you to work together to discuss ideas, but there IS a difference between collaboration (which I encourage) and plagiarism. Plagiarism or cheating in any way on any piece of work you turn in will result in an F in the course. Enough said.

All assignments are due at the beginning of the class period listed—and that includes completing the assigned reading. If you're not doing the reading, you're a drag on the class; if you enroll in this class, you agree to give it your best effort. In short, come prepared or stay home. Please be on time and turn off all cell phones and ipods, etc., before class begins. All electronic devices must be turned off and stowed under your seat or in the overhead compartment during the final exam.

Office Hours

My office hours are MWF 11:00-12:00 (right after class) but I am on campus almost every day except Thursday, and I invite you to drop by at any time to discuss ideas, work on your response papers, help you make sense of the reading, and so on. I will also arrange to see you by appointment--just let me know. I will return your phone calls, so if you need to speak with me and I'm not available, leave a message and I'll call you back as soon as I can. I can also be reached by email at lkarell@english.montana.edu. I do NOT check email over the weekend or in the evening (well, ok, I do check it sometimes, but I'm trying to train myself not to).

Grading

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Five (5) short response papers:	50%
(Of 6: drop lowest/skip one)	
Collaborative project	15%
Final exam OR final paper	25%
Participation	10%

Your response papers are short (1 page, single spaced) discussions of questions or topics I will provide. The focus of these papers is to demonstrate your critical reading, analytical, and interpretative skills. I will be happy to review your drafts for these response papers with you before you hand them in (in person, no email attachments please), but there will be no opportunity for rewrites. I will be taking various points you make and distributing them to the class for use in our discussions (anonymously, of course).

For your final, you will have the option of writing a final research & analysis paper or taking a final exam. The paper option will be 15 pages and will require you do substantial research

The paper cannot overlap with or duplicate your collaborative project, and you will be responsible for having a consistent and informed theoretical perspective for your analysis. It will be due by 10:00 a.m. Tuesday, December 16.

The final exam is scheduled for Tuesday, December 16, 8:00-9:50 a.m. and it will be given in our regular classroom. It will be an open book, open note exam comprised of six essay questions—you'll choose four. Here, too, you will have to demonstrate that you have awareness of and facility with the theoretical perspectives you use to answer the questions.

If you select the final paper option, you must submit your proposed paper topic in writing by Friday, October 31, and between that date and the due date, I will require you hand in various evidence of your research and developing paper. If you don't select the final paper option by October 31, you will have to take the final exam. You can switch from the final paper option to the final exam option at any time up to the final day of class, but not vice versa. You must complete either the final exam or the final paper in order to pass the course.

Participation will constitute 10% of your final grade. This will be my subjective assessment of your contribution to class discussions, both in groups and in larger class discussions. If you are regularly (and positively) contributing to the class discussions, putting your ideas out there, asking questions, you will do well in this portion of your grade. If you speak rarely, or if you speak only in small groups, you will receive a "C" in this assessment. If you habitually fail to read the assignments, read them only perfunctorily, seem to appear in class only on days when a response paper is due, and/or never participate, you will receive an "F" in this portion of your grade. *You do not need to "know the answers" or be any kind of expert to do well here—you simply have to come to class prepared, ask questions about what fascinates or frustrates you, and have enough faith in yourself to raise your hand from time to time.*

W 9/2	Introduction
F 9/5	Erdrich, <i>Love Medicine</i>
M 9/8	Erdrich, <i>Love Medicine</i>
W 9/10	Erdrich, <i>Love Medicine</i>
F 9/12	No Class: Reading Day
M 9/15	Response Paper #1 Due Erdrich, <i>The Beet Queen</i>
W 9/17	Erdrich, <i>The Beet Queen</i>
F 9/19	Erdrich, <i>The Beet Queen</i>
M 9/22	Response Paper #2 Due Erdrich, <i>Tracks</i>

W 9/24	Erdrich, <i>Tracks</i>
F 9/26	Erdrich, <i>Tracks</i>
M 9/29	Collaboration Workshop
W 10/1	Collaboration Workshop
F 10/3	No Class: Reading Day
M 10/6	Response Paper #3 Due Dorris, <i>A Yellow Raft in Blue Water</i>
W 10/8	Dorris, <i>A Yellow Raft in Blue Water</i>
F 10/10	Dorris, <i>A Yellow Raft in Blue Water</i>
M 10/13	Erdrich, <i>Tales of Burning Love</i>
W 10/15	Erdrich, <i>Tales of Burning Love</i>
F 10/17	Erdrich, <i>Tales of Burning Love</i>
M 10/20	Response Paper #4 Due Dorris and Erdrich, <i>Conversations</i> (non-fiction)
W 10/22	Dorris and Erdrich, <i>Conversations</i> (non-fiction)
F 10/24	Dorris and Erdrich, <i>Conversations</i> (non-fiction) Begin <i>The Crown of Columbus</i>
M 10/27	Dorris and Erdrich, <i>The Crown of Columbus</i>
W 10/29	Dorris and Erdrich, <i>The Crown of Columbus</i>
F 10/31	Final Paper Option: topics due Dorris and Erdrich, <i>The Crown of Columbus</i> Karell, "Partners in Collaboration: Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris" (electronic reserve)
M 11/3	Collaborative projects (no reading)
W 11/5	Collaborative projects (no reading)
F 11/7	Collaborative projects (no reading)
M 11/10	Erdrich, <i>Antelope Wife</i>

W 11/12	Erdrich, <i>Antelope Wife</i>
F 11/14	Erdrich, <i>Antelope Wife</i>
M 11/17	Response Paper #5 Due Erdrich, <i>The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse</i>
W 11/19	Erdrich, <i>The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse</i>
F 11/21	Erdrich, <i>The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse</i>
M 11/24	Individual conferences: final paper
W 11/26	Individual conferences: final paper
F 11/28	No Class: Thanksgiving
M 12/1	No Class: Reading Day
W 12/3	Erdrich, <i>The Painted Drum</i>
F 12/4	Erdrich, <i>The Painted Drum</i>
M 12/8	Response Paper #6 Due Erdrich, <i>The Painted Drum</i>
W 12/10	Erdrich, <i>The Painted Drum</i>
F 12/12	Exam Review

The final exam is scheduled for Tuesday, December 16, 2008, from 8:00 a.m.-9:50 a.m. in this classroom. If you elect to do a final paper, it will be due at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 16, 2008. Papers that arrive later than 10:00 a.m. but before 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 16th will be penalized one letter grade. Papers arriving later than 5:00 p.m. on December 16th will not be accepted.