

Experience 1, 4 credit hours

RETC 008, M-F, 9:00-11:45

Instructor: Dr. O. Alan Weltzien

Office: MH 315B

Office Hours: M-W, 1:30-2:30, and by appt.

Phone: -7431 and -6858 (home: before 10 p.m.)

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Required texts:

Coates, Grace Stone, *Black Cherries* (1931; Bison Books, 2003)

McGuane, Thomas, *The Cadence of Grass* (Vintage, 2002)

Newby, Rick, Ed, *The New Montana Story: An Anthology* (Riverbend, 2003)

Savage, Thomas, *The Power of the Dog* (1967; Little Brown, Back Bay, 2001)

Wrigley, Robert, *Lives of the Animals* (Penguin, 2003)

Also, e-reserve, including Dorothy Johnson's "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance" and "The Hanging Tree"; possibly other handouts

Course statement:

Our region, as much as any in the U.S., undergoes rapid change wherein newer populations and attitudes revise and in some cases, rewrite older attitudes. "The West" even our Northern Rockies portion of it comprises a bundle of stereotypes which popular culture in some cases preserves, but which literature typically questions and subverts. Our course surveys traditional literary genres—poetry, short stories, novels—as well as three movies that together, demonstrate shifting representations of The West. We'll be studying paired texts: old and recent short stories, old and new novels, old and recent films. From them, we'll build up ideas about literary forms as well as ideas about shifting literary trends in our region—which, in the past generation and more, has become one of the hot literary regions in the country.

Course objectives and policies:

This course

--introduces you to a variety of literary genres and some of the vocabulary of literary analysis and evaluation.

--familiarizes you with sharing your interpretations, oral and written, with others through meaningful discussion.

--provides you the chance to learn more about the relationship between literature and identity, i.e. yourself

--enables you to learn more about the Northern Rockies as a vibrant, contemporary literary region with a literary history.

--forces you to think about changes in regional and local culture and identity, i.e. ways in which the New Montana revises or upsets, or even confirms, old Montana.

Ours is a discussion course, largely carried by you via the Literature Study Groups, so your attendance is vital. Given the very compressed nature of X1, you can't afford to miss any days. More than one absence results in lowering your course grade. For similar reasons, assignments submitted late will be graded down a full letter grade per late day. I remind you that in your written work, plagiarism is a serious academic offense, one compounded by the ease of the Web. Please review UM-Western's plagiarism policy: any problems with plagiarism will jeopardize your passing the course.

A statement about courtesy: our class, dependent upon concentrated study and exchange of interpretations, requires candor but civility at all times. This mutual respect includes entering and exiting class at the designated times, robust classroom participation, and demonstrated flexibility about new ideas and approaches—open-mindedness. It also means careful listening and honesty always leavened with politeness.

Course requirements:

Class participation: whether you judge yourself a quiet classmate or not, here you're expected to take an active part in your literature study group as well as any other classroom format. You must share your interpretations of texts and respond to those of others.

Discussion questions: you will write responses to those discussion questions I generate, and later develop and provide discussion questions for texts we'll discuss that or the following class day.

Four short response/reaction essays: you will draft and submit 1-2 pp., thoughtful responses to selected readings from our course, one from poetry, short stories, the two novels, and the three films.

Oral readings: from each of our brief tours in poetry, short stories, and novels, you'll present to the class an oral reading of a poem or excerpt of your choice, (5 minutes), followed by a brief interpretation. At your conclusion, class members will have the chance to ask you questions.

You will keep all written work in a portfolio which you'll submit on the final day of the course.

Evaluation: Participation, 20%; Discussion questions, 20%; Response/reaction essays, 40%, Oral readings/presentations, 20%.

