

Spring Quarter 2010
English 586: American Indian Literature and Culture
Professor C. Allen

Office: Denney 520
Office hours: Wed 11:00 – 1:00
& by appointment
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COURSE POLICIES & SYLLABUS

We remember it all.
We remember, though we are just skeletons
whose organs and flesh
hold us in.
We have stories
as old as the great seas
breaking through the chest,
flying out the mouth,
noisy tongues that once were silenced,
all the oceans we contain
coming to light.
—Linda Hogan (Chickasaw), “To Light”

This course will introduce students to 20th- and 21st-century American Indian literatures, in a variety of genres and media, and to relevant ways of understanding Indigenous self-representation in its historical, cultural, and political contexts. We will examine works of prose fiction (short stories and novels), poetry, memoir, drama, nonfiction (journalism, activist writing, and scholarship), film (documentary, feature, and animation), and music (“traditional” and contemporary), as well as relevant web-based materials. To help focus our study, we will read, view, and listen to texts produced primarily since the 1960s and maintain a loose focus on American Indian “performance” and American Indian engagements with “history.” This course should be of interest not only to students specifically interested in American Indian literatures, but also to students interested in U.S. ethnic literatures more broadly, American literature, postcolonial literatures, and twentieth- and twenty-first-century studies. Students will help lead class discussions and complete several writing assignments.

Required Texts

Sherman Alexie, *The Business of Fancy Dancing* [film, shown in class]
Sherman Alexie, *Ten Little Indians: Stories* (Grove)
Hanay Geiogamah, *New Native American Drama: Three Plays* (U of Oklahoma P)
Diane Glancy, *Stone Heart: A Novel of Sacagewea* (Penguin)
Joy Harjo, *She Had Some Horses* (Norton) [poetry]
Allison Hedge Coke, *Blood Run: Free Verse Play* (Salt Publishing) [poetry/drama]
LeAnne Howe, *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story* (Aunt Lute) [novel]
Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water* (Bantam) [novel]
Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories* (University of Minnesota Press) [lectures]
Susan Power, *The Grass Dancer* (Penguin) [novel]

Additional short primary texts and critical articles and chapters available on Carmen.
Books available from SBX, 1806 N. High Street (291-9528).

Course Policies

Attendance. You should plan to attend every meeting of this class. Regular attendance is required, and I will take attendance every class period. Students who miss more than two class meetings without providing an excuse recognized by the university as legitimate (such as documented proof of a serious illness, or participation in a university-sponsored event) will have their final course grades lowered by one third of a letter grade for each unexcused absence over two. **Five or more unexcused absences are grounds for failure of the course.**

Preparing Essays. When you turn in your essays (described below) you are required to 1) type or word process your essay in a readable, 12 point font, 2) double-space your text and provide one-inch margins, 3) place your name and the course number on the first page, 4) number your pages after page one and place your last name next to the number on each page, 5) title your essay, and 6) edit and proofread the final version.

Late Essays. Essays are due at the beginning of class on the date due. Plan accordingly, especially if you are prone to computer problems. Late essays will lose a letter grade for every day late. Please speak to me ahead of time if you anticipate problems meeting essay deadlines.

Academic Integrity. The basic idea of academic integrity is that the university holds you accountable for the work you hand in for assessment. All work is expected to be your own. When quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing the work of others, you are expected to cite your sources. The university considers plagiarism—using someone else’s words or ideas as if they were your own—a serious and punishable act of academic misconduct. It is also an act of academic misconduct to hand in recycled or revised work originally produced for another course without the permission of both instructors. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Students With Disabilities. The Office for Disability Services, 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact ODS at 292-3307.

Useful Addresses and Numbers

Department of English

Main Office, 421 Denney Hall, 292-6065
www.english.osu.edu

Undergraduate Advising for the English Major

Sharyn Talbert, 413 Denney Hall, 292-6735
talbert.2@osu.edu

Writing Center

475 Mendenhall Lab, 688-4291
www.cstw.org (on-line appointment scheduling and on-line tutorials)

Assignments

1. **Class Participation. 10%**

Students will be rewarded for actively contributing to class discussions and for listening attentively, as well as for coming to class on time, well prepared (including having checked the class Carmen site for the day's discussion questions), and with a positive attitude. Informal assignments, including in-class writing, will count as part of the participation grade.

2. **Discussion Leader. 20%**

Each student will serve as a designated discussion leader once during the quarter. When you are a discussion leader, you are responsible for 1) preparing 5 – 8 questions to help spur class discussion, **which you will post on the class Carmen site no later than 5:00 p.m. the evening before class**, 2) pointing the class to relevant passages or scenes in the assigned text(s) for close reading, 3) offering your own interpretations and/or critiques of the assigned texts, and 4) suggesting connections among the assigned texts and previous readings or films. Discussion leaders will be graded individually; however, it is a good idea to consult with the other discussion leaders for your day to avoid repetition.

3. **3 Short Essays. 70%**

Essay #1 due Tues, 4/20. 20%

Essay #2 due Tues, 5/18. 25%

Essay #3 due Fri, 6/4. 25%

See the Daily Syllabus for specific essay prompts.

4. **Extra Credit. Additional 10%**

Attend the OSU University pow-wow, April 24 and 25, and write a 2 – 3 page response to your experience. What did you see, hear, and learn? Who did you meet? How did the OSU pow-wow relate to what you learned about pow-wow culture in the novel *The Grass Dancer*?

Daily Syllabus

Week 1

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| Tues 3/30 | Introduction to course policies and syllabus.
In-class screening of DVD <i>James Luna: Emendatio, a Performance Rehearsal at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian</i> (2005).
Sign up for Discussion Leaders on the class Carmen site. |
| Thurs 4/1 | Read Roemer, "Introduction" and "Timeline: literary, historical, and cultural conjunctions"; Porter, "Historical and cultural contexts to Native American Literature"; Momaday, "The Gourd Dancer" and "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919"; and Alexie, "13/16" (Carmen).
In-class screening of video by Shelley Niro, <i>It Starts With a Whisper</i> (1992). |

Week 2

Tues 4/6 Read King, *The Truth about Stories*.
Discussion leaders #1: _____

Thurs 4/8 Read Harjo, *She Had Some Horses*.
In-class listening to Harjo spoken word and music recordings.
Discussion leaders #2: _____

Week 3

Tues 4/13 Review *She Had Some Horses*. Also, visit Harjo's web site (Carmen link) and read Coltelli, "Joy Harjo's poetry" (Carmen).
In-class listening to Harjo spoken word and music recordings.
Discussion leaders #3: _____

Thurs 4/15 Read Huntsman, "Introduction," and Geiogamah, "Body Indian," "Foghorn," and "49" in *New Native American Drama*.
Discussion leaders #4: _____

Week 4

Tues 4/20 Read Power, *The Grass Dancer*, through [].
Discussion leaders #5: _____

Essay #1 due in class.

Prompt: Imitate one of the poems in *She Had Some Horses*—developing your own content but trying to follow the form of the poem as closely as possible—and then write a 3 page essay that discusses what you learned about the original poem and Harjo as a poet by performing the imitation.

Thurs 4/22 Read Power, *The Grass Dancer*, through end.
Discussion leaders #6: _____

Sat 4/24 University Pow-wow, sponsored by the American Indian Council, 11:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., RPAC. Grand entry at 1:00 p.m.

Sun 4/25 University Pow-wow, 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., RPAC. Grand entry at 1:00 p.m.

Week 5

Tues 4/27 Read Glancy, *Stone Heart: A Novel of Sacajawea*.
Discussion leaders #7: _____

Thurs 4/29 Review *Stone Heart*. Also, read Allen, "The One Who Skins Cats"; Alexie, "What Sacagawea Means To Me"; Mohica, "Birdwoman and the Suffragettes: A Story of Sacajawea"; Colby, Preface to *Sacagawea's Child: The Life and Times of Jean-Baptiste (Pomp) Charbonneau*; and Bragg, "Sacajawea" (Carmen).
In-class listening to radio play "Birdwoman and the Suffragettes."
Discussion leaders #8: _____

Week 6

Tues 5/4 Read Hedge Coke, *Blood Run: Free Verse Play*. Visit web sites for Blood Run, Cahokia Mounds, and the Newark Earthworks (Carmen links).

Discussion leaders #9: _____

Thurs 5/6 Review *Blood Run* and earthworks web sites. Also, read Hively and Horn, “Geometry and Astronomy in Prehistoric Ohio” (Carmen).

Discussion leaders #10: _____

evening On-campus screening of Inuit film *The Fast Runner*, 6:00 p.m. Location TBA.

Week 7

Tues 5/11 Read Howe, *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*.

Discussion leaders #11: _____

Thurs 5/13 Review *Miko Kings* and read Howe, “Choctalking on Other Realities” (Carmen). Also, visit Howe’s web site (Carmen link).

Class visit by LeAnne Howe.

Week 8

Tues 5/18 Read Alexie, *Ten Little Indians* and “The Business of Fancydancing” (Carmen). Also, visit Alexie’s web site (Carmen link).

Discussion leaders #12: _____

Essay #2 due in class.

Prompt: Discuss how form and/or narrative structure affect our experience and understanding of the story and/or characters in *Stone Heart*, *Blood Run*, and/or *Miko Kings*. 4 – 5 pages.

Thurs 5/20 In-class screening of DVD *The Business of Fancy Dancing*.

Week 9

Tues 5/25 Review texts by Alexie.

Discussion leaders #13: _____

Thurs 5/27 Read King, *Green Grass, Running Water*, through [].

Discussion leaders #14: _____

Week 10

Tues 6/1 Read King, *Green Grass, Running Water*, through end. Also, read Cox, “‘All this Water Imagery Must Mean Something’: Thomas King’s Revisions of Narratives of Domination and Conquest in ‘Green Grass, Running Water’” (Carmen).

Discussion leaders #15: _____

Thurs 6/3 Final class discussion.

Fri 6/4

Essay #3 due in my mailbox, 421 Denney, by 5:00 p.m.

Prompt: Write a critical essay about some aspect of at least two of the assigned texts that you have not already written about. (For comparative purposes, you may also include one or more texts you have written about previously.) This is your opportunity to be creative and to reflect on issues and themes raised across the course. 4 – 5 pages.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to minor adjustments over the course of the quarter. It is each student's responsibility to keep up with changes announced in class.