

ENGL 6360  
Spring 2011  
Thursdays, 5:30-8:10  
CC316

## Cormac McCarthy & Leslie Marmon Silko: Cowboys and Indians of the Apocalypse

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We can make several initial comparisons between Leslie Marmon Silko and Cormac McCarthy. They both have written extensively of the U.S. Southwest. They are stylistically complex and experimental. They challenge postmodernism even as they engage and partake in its characteristics. They are both writers of epic, concerned thematically with history, civilization, violence, religious/spiritual tradition, and apocalypticism. On the other hand, McCarthy and Silko might be from different if parallel universes. In addition to her fiction and poetry, Silko writes nonfiction (essays, book reviews, memoir, etc.) and has given many interviews discussing the significance of her work. McCarthy (at least until quite recently) is reclusive and rarely gives interviews, and even more seldom makes any commentary on the craft of his fiction. While this may be largely a matter of personality, it is tempting to relate their differing political-aesthetic stances to their cultural positions: Silko's identification as an indigenous woman, to put it briefly, is more explicitly political while McCarthy (though no less political) wishes his art to stand without commentary, arguably a preference bespeaking cultural privilege. This course will consider many facets of these authors' work, but will swirl around their understandings of history and preoccupations with the apocalyptic.

### Books:

Leslie Marmon Silko:

*Ceremony*

*Almanac of the Dead*

*Gardens in the Dunes*

Cormac McCarthy

*Blood Meridian*

*The Crossing*

*No Country for Old Men*

*The Road*

In Addition: expect to read assigned secondary (critical, theoretical, contextual) materials, TBA, as we go.

### Policies:

Office Hours: I encourage you to visit during my office hours or to make an appointment to meet with me to discuss any aspect of this course.

Attendance: I take role every day. This is a graduate seminar. Please do not be absent.

Work: Please be prepared for and committed to the reading load for this course! You must complete all assignments to succeed in the course. Your shorter papers will be evaluated largely on your analysis or close reading of the text. The final paper, part of which is a formal topic proposal, has a substantial research component. Late papers will be penalized.

Participation: Participation is of great importance to the success of this course, your learning, and our shared enjoyment of our scholarly work. Therefore, coming to class prepared and willing to take part in discussion will be rewarded. Poor citizenship, on the other hand, will be detrimental to your final grade.

WTAMU seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This university will adhere to all federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with Disability Support Services and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodations.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: All work submitted for this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of all sources (ideas, paraphrases, summaries, quotations) must be properly documented. Academic dishonesty has dire consequences at WTAMU. I photocopy suspected plagiarized papers for a leisurely investigation that may continue long after I hand them back. For university rules and consequences, check the following link:

WT Academic Integrity Code:

<http://www.wtamu.edu/administrative/ss/code/appendix1.htm>

**Work:**

- Short Paper 1: Close Reading Assignment . . . . . 10%  
Choose either *Ceremony* or *Blood Meridian*. Select a short passage through analysis of which you demonstrate the significance therein to the work's theme. (3 pages)
- Short Paper 2: Comparative Thematic Analysis . . . . . 15%  
Make a thematic comparison between *Almanac* and either *Blood Meridian* or *The Crossing*. Crucial to this is to focus on a manageable idea and well-chosen short passages. (5 pages)
- Group Presentation Project: Annotated Bibliography / General Course Participation . . . . . 20%  
Two groups, one per author. Each group will compile an annotated bibliography of significant criticism on their author's work. Emphasis should be on relevant work and more recent scholarship. This project will require time for interlibrary loan of books and articles, as Cornette Library and e-text-availability will not be sufficient. The goal is to generate useful resources for research/writing of final papers. Groups will present an overview of their findings in class.

Final Paper (with topic proposal) .....	50%
Based on approval of topic proposal, your final paper topic should be 12-15 pages and should have an extensive Works Cited list.	
Presentation of Final Paper .....	5%

**Schedule of Readings & Assignments (subject to revision)**

(The lack of page numbers below indicates the hope and goal that you will do as best you can to read ahead and to be prepared as possible to discuss a work without arbitrary limits. However, as a general and practical rule, consider yourself responsible for the half or third of the text corresponding to the amount of time we are spending on it.)

- Jan. 20 Intro to Course; *Ceremony*
- 27 *Ceremony*
- Feb. 3 *Blood Meridian*
- 10 *Blood Meridian*; Short Paper 1 due
- 17 *Almanac of the Dead*
- 24 *Almanac of the Dead*
- March 3 *Almanac of the Dead*
- 10 *The Crossing*
- 17 {(Spring Break)}
- 24 *The Crossing*; Short Paper 2 due
- 31 *Gardens in the Dunes*; Topic Proposals encouraged
- April 7 *Gardens in the Dunes*; Group Project Presentations
- 14 *No Country for Old Men*; Topic Proposals due
- 21 *No Country for Old Men*
- 28 *The Road*
- May 5 *The Road*; Final Paper due
- Finals: May 9-13; Presentations of Final Papers