

Spring 2010  
M. Eleanor Nevins  
Office: AB 506  
Office hours: M 1:00-2:00, Friday 12-1 and by appointment  
Phone: 682-7953  
E-mail: [mnevins@unr.edu](mailto:mnevins@unr.edu)

## **Anthropology 400e/600e: Native American Literatures**

### **Course Description:**

In this course we will explore contemporary Native American written and oral literatures. We will be addressing the question of how Native American Literature has been defined, exploring relationships between Native American communities, Native American identified individuals, and institutions of the dominant society that form the social context for this definition. Two issues will run throughout the class. First, we will question received ideas about the distinction between "oral tradition" and "literature," noting that many Native American cultural practices, particularly those concerning religion and cosmology, incorporate orally delivered memorized texts in the form of chants, narratives, prayers and songs. We will examine how these oral literatures are often utilized as resources in responses to challenges posed by colonialism and Christian missions. And secondly, we will ask how our own cultural assumptions influence the way we understand works of Native American Literature and consider the extent to which ethnographic accounts of language use and meaning within contemporary Native American contexts may change our understandings. We will compare the written work of contemporary Native American authors with examples of oral performances by persons living in Native American communities, including performances recorded by local artists, educators, anthropologists, linguists and folklorists. Our readings will be interwoven with experiences of films, audio-recordings and Internet publications.

### **Required Texts:**

*Native American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology*, edited by Gerald Vizenor. Longman Press. 1995.

*Papago Woman*, by Ruth Underhill. Waveland Press. 1985 (reprint).

*Yaqui Deer Songs/Maso Bwikam: A Native American Poetry*, by Larry Evers and Felipe S. Molina. University of Arizona Press. 1987.

*Finding the Center: The Art of the Zuni Storyteller, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, by Dennis Tedlock. University of Nebraska Press. 1999.

*Wise Words of the Yup'ik People: We Talk to You Because We Love You*, by Ann Fienup-Riordan, with translations from the Yup'ik by Alice Rearden. University of Nebraska Press 2005.

## Assignment Structure:

### Undergrads

5 mini-exams, each 10%  
2-3 page interpretive essay  
Final paper (8-10 pp.)  
Participation 10%

### Grads

3 page essay 50%  
5-7 page 10%  
10-12 page 30%  
10%

Five short exams will be set, one for each of the class readings. Exams are made available at the conclusion of each reading and must be attempted within four days, and completed within one week. In addition to the on-line mini-exam, **graduate students** are expected to write short essays (2-3 pages) discussing the main text in relationship to supplemental readings chosen in conjunction with the instructor.

For their interpretive essay, students will choose from a set of questions, and apply this question to the reading of their choice from weeks 8 and 9.

For their research papers, students will have the choice of synthesizing two or more of the class readings (three or more for graduate students) or conducting their own research projects applying methods and conceptual frameworks encountered in class to the oral literature of a particular group, or to a number of works by the same author. A thematic comparison involving two authors is also possible. It is fine for students to use their interpretive essay as a stepping-stone to a more extensive research on a particular author.

Class participation includes structured student-led discussions, participatory readings as well as short presentations of research projects. Of course, attendance, doing the reading and participating in class discussion is part of the package.

Letter Grades will be assigned with the following point values:

A: 92.5-100  
A-: 89.5-92.4  
B+: 87.5-89.4  
B: 82.5-87.4  
B-: 79.5-82.4  
C+: 77.5-79.4  
C: 72.5-77.4  
C-: 69.5-72.4  
D+: 67.5-69.4  
D: 62.5-67.4  
D-: 59.5-62.4  
F: 0-59.4

The course is designed to provide a well-rounded learning experience for all students. Every assignment for the course should be completed or at least attempted in order to receive a passing grade. Opting out of an assignment is not an option. I reserve the right to assign a grade of “I” (incomplete) or “F” (fail) at my discretion in the event that students fail to attempt an assignment even if factoring in a “0” for that assignment results in an overall passing grade.

### **Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and on time. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. Students are expected to contact me, in advance where possible, about absences, and to be prepared to provide documentation for medical excuses. Unexcused absences will result in grade penalties in the following manner:

Absences	Penalty on Participation Grade
2	none
3	-5 points
4	-10 points
5	-15 points
6	-20 points
7	-25 points
8	-30 points
9	-35 points
10	-40 points
11+	0 participation grade

### **Disability Statement**

Students with documented disabilities may have different examination requirements and conditions of examination to accommodate their needs. Reasonable accommodation in the learning process will be made for students with documented disabilities by the university (documented at Student Services). If you currently have a documented disability approved by the University, provide me appropriate University documentation and accommodation information within the first two weeks of school. If the documentation of a disability occurs after that time, then provide the information as soon as possible after the documentation occurs.

### **Academic Dishonesty Statement**

Cheating, whether on exams or papers, will not be tolerated and will result in grade penalization and will be reported to student judicial affairs. Academic dishonesty includes sharing answers on an exam, obtaining advance copy of an exam or a portion of an exam, purchasing papers or portions of papers from any source. Copying papers or portions of works not authored by the student without proper citation and acknowledgement is also cheating (consult a style guide such as the Chicago Manual of Style for proper citation formats). I expect that the written work students turn in for this course is written for this class. If the student has work from previous classes that she

would like to bring into this class—consult with me first and we'll come up with a plan to build upon that previous work without duplicating it or allowing it to stand in for the new assignments.

### **E-mail Statement**

I check e-mail once a day Monday through Friday and answer student inquiries according to urgency and the time allowed. This means that you should not expect an instantaneous reply to e-mail inquiries. Messages sent on a Friday may not be received until the following Monday. Keep this in mind as you plan your communications.

### **WebCT Statement**

This course employs webCT for a number of key functions. Class presentations (mostly powerpoint), exams, e-mail communications, related websites and some assigned readings are all conducted through webCT. As a student you are responsible for assuring your own access to webCT. If you have any problems your first recourse should be the IT information desk via phone or at the library.

Exams taken through webCT are sometimes vulnerable to disruption on your local network if you take them at home, or sometimes system problems at UNR. To manage any problems that come up in a timely way, the exam deadline will be managed in the as follows: 1) Students are given four days in which they must have attempted the exam. 2) At the end of this four days, any complications or problems that arose must be communicated to me immediately. 3) We then have three days to resolve the problem. 4) After this time there will be no further opportunities to take the exam for credit.

## **Schedule**

### **Autobiography and Responses to Colonialism**

#### **Ethnographic Compilations of Native American Life Stories**

##### **Week 1**

**Tues: 1/22:** Underhill ch 1

**Thurs 1/24:** Underhill ch 2

##### **Week 2**

**Tues: 1/28:** Underhill ch 2 (continued)

**Thurs 1/30:** Underhill ch 3

**Fri 2/1 Mini-exam 1 on WebCT**

#### **Native American Authors Write Their Own Autobiographies**

### Week 3

**Monday 2/4 11:00 P.M. Last chance to take mini-exam 1**

**Tues: 2/5:** Vizenor pp. 1-31.

Introduction

William Apress, from "A Son of the Forest"

**View** selection from "Gerald Vizenor"

[grads read selection from Paula Gunn Allen's commentary in *Voice of the Turtle*]

**Thurs 2/7:** Vizenor p. 32-67.

Luther Standing Bear from "My People, The Sioux"

John Rogers from "Return to White Earth"

N. Scott Momaday from "Way to Rainy Mountain," "The Names"

**View** "Ishi in Two Worlds"

### **Trickster Dramas: Undermining Stereotypes with Humor**

### Week 4

**Tues: 2/12:** Vizenor. pp. 299-336. Vizenor "Ishi and the Wood Ducks: Postindian Trickster Comedies"

**Thurs 2/14:** Vizenor, pp. 337-358. Harry Geiogmah "Foghorn"

**Mini-exam 2 on WebCT**

### **Oral Poetry and Community Collaboration**

### Week 5

**Tues: 2/19:** Evers and Molina ch 1

**Thurs 2/21:** Evers and Molina ch 1 (continued)

### Week 6

**Tues: 2/26:** Evers and Molina ch 2

View Seyewailo film.

**Thurs 2/28:** Evers and Molina ch 2 (continued)

### Week 7

**Tues: 3/4:** Evers and Molina ch 3

**Thurs 3/6:** Evers and Molina ch 4

**Mini-exam 3 on WebCt**

### **Native American Authors Appropriating (and Amending?) Western Literary Genres Poetry**

### Week 8

**Tues: 3/11:** Vizenor pp. 245-269

Mary TallMountain, Maurice Kenny, Jim Barnes, Diane Glancy, Simon Ortiz, Linda Hogan, Roberta Hill Whiteman.

View *Linda Hogan*, V10580, she is interviewed by Wendy Rose.

[grads read Webster on Navajo poets, selections TBA, also the introduction from *Stealing the Enemy's Language*]

**Thurs 3/13:** Vizenor pp. 270-295

Wendy Rose, Ray Young Bear, Joy Harjo, Luci Tapahonso, Louis Erdrich, Sherman Alexie

View *Joy Harjo*, V10586 she is interviewed by Greg Sarris.

### **Fiction**

#### **Week 9**

**Tues: 3/18:** Vizenor pp. 105-74.

John Joseph Matthews, D'Arcy McNickle, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, N Scott Momaday, Vizenor, Paula Gunn Allen, James Welch

**Thurs 3/21:** Vizenor pp. 175-242.

Thomas King, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louis Owens, Betty Louise Bell, Le Anne Howe, Evalina Zuni Lucero, Louise Erdrich, Kimberly Blaeser, Gordon Henry, Jr.

Silko "Running on the Edge of the Rainbow: Laguna Stories and Poems" video

**2-3 page essay due**

#### **Week 10**

**Spring Break**

### **Oral Narrative as Oral Literature**

#### **Week 11**

**Tues: 4/1:** Tedlock, introduction and "The Boy and the Deer"

[grads read Tedlock's *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation*, and Barre Toelken's "Poetic Reinterpretation and the Pretty Languages of Yellowman"]

**Thurs 4/3:** Tedlock, "The Hopis and the Famine" "Coyote and Junco" and "The Girl and the Little Ayahuuta"

#### **Week 12**

**Tues: 4/8:** Tedlock, "The Women and the Man" and "The Sun Priest and the Witch-Woman"

**Thurs 4/10:** Tedlock, "When Newness Was Made, Part 1," "Nick," "When Newness Was Made, Part II" and "A Story Was Made"

**Mini-exam 4 on WebCT**

### **Oratory and Community Collaboration: Mobilizing Tradition to Effect Change**

#### **Week 13**

**Tues: 4/15:** Fienup-Riordan pp. 1-42.

**Thurs 4/17:** Fienup-Riordan pp 43-78.

#### **Week 14**

**Tues: 4/22:** Fienup-Riordan pp. 79-121.

**Thurs 4/24:** Fienup-Riordan pp. 122-161.

**Week 15**

**Tues: 4/29:** Fienup-Riordan pp 162-208.

**Thurs 5/1:** Fienup-Riordan pp. 209-254.

**Week 16**

**Tues: 5/6:** Fienup-Riordan pp. 255-304.

**Mini-exam 5 on WebCt**

**Final paper due by the time of our Final Exam: Thurs May 8<sup>th</sup> 7:30-9:30 A.M.**