

ENGL 5220
CRN 15378
Thursday 4:00 – 6:20
Brown 3002

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. . . and by appointment
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Native American Literature

Over the course of the last four decades or so, literature by indigenous writers has undergone a series of dramatic and always interesting changes. From assertions of sovereign identity and engagements with entrenched cultural stereotypes to interventions in academic and critical methodologies, the word-based art of novelists, dramatists, critics, and poets such as Sherman Alexie, Louise Erdrich, Louis Owens, N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Simon Ortiz, and Thomas King, among many others, has proven vital to our understanding of North American culture as a whole. In this course we will examine a cross-section of recent and exemplary texts from this wide-reaching literary movement, paying particular attention to the formal, thematic, and critical innovations being offered in response to questions of both personal and collective identity.

This course will be conducted seminar-style, which means that everyone is expected to contribute significantly to discussion and analysis.

TEXTS:

The following texts are available at the WMU Bookstore:

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, by Sherman Alexie (Spokane)
The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse, by Louise Erdrich (Anishinaabe)
Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter, by Janet Campbell Hale (Coeur d'Alene)
The Light People, by Gordon D. Henry (Anishinaabe)
Green Grass, Running Water, by Thomas King (Cherokee)
House Made of Dawn, by N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa)
from Sand Creek, by Simon Ortiz (Acoma)
Nothing But The Truth, eds. John L. Purdy and James Ruppert
Ceremony, by Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna)
Fools Crow, by James Welch (Blackfoot)

The following texts, from which supplemental readings will be drawn, are available through Waldo Library Course Reserves:

Stories Through Theories/Theories Through Stories, eds. by Gordon D. Henry, et al.
Native and Academics, ed. by Devon A. Mihesuah (Choctaw)
Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel, by Louis Owens (Choctaw-Cherokee)
Native American Fiction: A User's Manual, by David Treuer (Anishinaabe)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Preparedness and Active Participation:	20%
In-class Presentation:	15%
Short analytical paper, 4 pages:	15%
Annotated Bibliography (for final project):	15%
Final Research Paper:	35%

- ✓ The short analytical paper will present an interpretive close-reading of a passage or section from any primary text on the syllabus (employing any critical/theoretical framework you choose). You may submit this assignment at any point; it is due no later than the next-to-last regular meeting of the semester.
- ✓ The in-class presentation is to be a group research project that explores the present-day status of critical discussion about the text under discussion, a report on the state-of-the-art, if you will, focusing on critical work published within the last ten (10) years. These projects are to be presented orally to the rest of the class, with a handout bibliography as part of your presentation.
- ✓ The final research paper has the following components: 1) annotated bibliography, with a minimum of 6 print sources for UG projects and a minimum of 10 print sources for G projects; 2) 1-page project proposal; 3) a final thesis-oriented, interpretive research paper, min. 3000 words in length for UG students and min. 4500 words in length for G students.

THE FINE PRINT:

Your attendance and participation will be expected at every class session – we will be discussing a great many topics, issues, and bits of information, and nothing beats being there. Also, late work will not be accepted, unless you clear it with me in advance.

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. [The policies can be found at <http://catalog.wmich.edu> under Academic Policies, Student Rights and Responsibilities.] If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

Note: the only email address that should be used for communication between WMU students and WMU faculty and staff is the email address associated with a BroncoNet ID. Please keep a regular eye on this account, as material and announcements related to this class will from time to time be communicated via email.

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS:

(subject to change)

Week 1	1/13	Introductions poetry by Joy Harjo, Sherman Alexie, Wendy Rose
Week 2	1/20	<i>Fool's Crow</i> , by James Welch • Owens, chapters 1, 5 [on reserve]
Week 3	1/27	<i>The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse</i> , by Louise Erdrich • Castillo, "Postmodernism, Native Literature, and the Real: The Silko-Erdrich Controversy" (<i>Nothing But The Truth</i> 15-22) • Erdrich, "Where I Ought To Be" (handout)
Week 4	2/3	film: <i>Incident at Oglala</i> (dir: Apted, 1991) • Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History" (<i>Natives and Academics</i> 84-99) [on reserve] • Miller, "Licensed Trafficking and Ethnogenetic Engineering" (<i>Natives and Academics</i> 100-110) [on reserve]
Week 5	2/10	<i>House Made of Dawn</i> , by N. Scott Momaday • Owens, chapter 4 [on reserve]
Week 6	2/17	<i>Ceremony</i> , by Leslie Marmon Silko • Owens, chapter 6 • Allen, "Special Problems in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's <i>Ceremony</i> " (<i>Natives and Academics</i> 55-64) [on reserve] • Silko, "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Perspective" (<i>Nothing</i> 159-65) • Silko, "An Old-Time Indian Attack" (166-71).
Week 7	2/24	<i>from Sand Creek</i> , by Simon Ortiz <i>Nothing But The Truth</i> – poetry selections TBA; read also Swann (172-89) and Blaser's introduction to the Poetry section (412-15).

SPRING BREAK

		<p>✓ DUE: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY On this day we'll be discussing current trends in criticism, including the material you've found thus far in your own work. Readings will include several handouts and the following essays:</p>
Week 8	3/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook-Lynn, "American Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story" (<i>Natives and Academics</i> 111-38) [on reserve] • Cook-Lynn, "The American Indian Fiction Writers" (<i>Nothing</i> 23-38) • Allen, "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective" (<i>Nothing</i> 62-81) • Moore, "Decolonizing Criticism" (<i>Nothing</i> 94-119)
Week 9	3/17	<p><i>Green Grass, Running Water</i>, by Thomas King</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secondary readings TBA
Week 10	3/24	<p><i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i>, by Sherman Alexie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secondary readings TBA
Week 11	3/31	<p>✓ DUE: 1-PAGE PROJECT PROPOSAL <i>The Light People</i>, by Gordon Henry</p>
Week 12	4/7	<p><i>Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter</i>, by Janet Campbell Hale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secondary readings TBA
Week 13	4/14	<p>✓ DUE: 4-PAGE CLOSE READING ESSAY film: <i>Skins</i> (dir: Eyre, 2002)</p>
Week 14	4/21	<p>discussion of film(s) poetry, <i>Nothing But The Truth</i> (selections TBA) closing comments</p>
Week 15		<p>✓ FINALS WEEK: Final project due no later than <u>5:00 p.m. on Thursday, 28 April.</u></p>