

**Introduction to Native American Literature**  
**220-004, 220-003 Fall 2007**  
Instructor: Miriam Schacht

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Office hours: MW 3-4:30 and by appointment

This course is an introduction to traditions and innovations in Native American literature through textual analysis and an examination of cultural contexts. Because Native American writing has flourished in recent decades, our primary focus will be on contemporary literature; however, we will also read selections from earlier texts. We will explore how Native writers draw from a range of traditions, and how their works reflect histories of struggle both in style and content. Although written texts will form the core of the course, we will also examine other kinds of texts, including contemporary popular media—especially film—and their representations of Native peoples.

**Required Texts (All Sections):**

Thomas King (Cherokee), *The Truth About Stories*  
N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), *House Made of Dawn*  
Louise Erdrich (Anishinaabe), *Tracks*  
Frances Washburn (Lakota), *Elsie's Business*  
Kathleen Tigerman (ed.), *Wisconsin Indian Literature*

**One of the following, depending on your section and your presentation group:**

**220-003:** N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), *The Way to Rainy Mountain*; Sherman Alexie (Spokane), *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*; Joy Harjo (Creek), *A Map to the Next World*; James Welch (Blackfoot), *Winter in the Blood*; Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), *Kynship*; Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), *Storyteller*.

**220-004:** Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), *The People Named the Chippewa*; Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), *Ceremony*; Luci Tapahonso (Diné), *Blue Horses Rush In*; LeAnne Howe (Choctaw), *Shell Shaker*; Craig Womack (Creek), *Drowning in Fire*; Eden Robinson (Haisla), *Monkey Beach*;

**On Reserve—Required Texts:** Louis Owens (Cherokee/Choctaw), “Other Destinies, Other Plots: An Introduction to Indian Novels,” in *Other Destinies*; Jacquelyn Kilpatrick (Cherokee/Choctaw), “The American Indian Aesthetic,” in *Celluloid Indians*.

Selection of Native American poetry to be announced; this will include poems by Luci Tapahonso (Diné) from *Blue Horses Rush In*, Sherman Alexie (Spokane) from *The Business of Fancydancing* (this is the book of poems and stories, *not* the movie or the screenplay!), and Joy Harjo (Creek) from *She Had Some Horses*. **Reserve readings are available in the library; these are not e-reserves, so plan ahead!** You may copy them for your own use or read them in the library; in order to facilitate other students' access, required course readings are on two-hour reserve only. If you plan to copy them, I strongly encourage you to do so early, so that you don't end up at the library the night before, waiting for the book...

**Other resources:** The following books are on 24-hour reserve in the library, and may be of particular use in developing your papers and/or presentations.

Louis Owens, *Other Destinies*

Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*

Craig Womack, *Red on Red*

Laura Coltelli, *Winged Words*

**Note:** If you are buying your books online, try using the metasearch engines [www.bigwords.com](http://www.bigwords.com) or [www.campusi.com](http://www.campusi.com) to save money and time—they search multiple online bookstores for the books you want and give you the best prices (campus only for individual books, bigwords allows you to search for several books to save on shipping as well).

For more information on English department courses, the English major, etc., the department webpage is at <http://www.english.uwosh.edu/>

## Course Policies and Procedures

A key element of our learning environment is respect. This means that you have the right to expect everyone in this class—including the instructor—to treat you respectfully. You, in turn, will be expected to treat everyone else in the classroom with respect. This applies to all types of communication, including online forums and e-mails. Disagreements and debates are a positive element in a discussion-based class such as this one, so you are also strongly encouraged to develop and articulate your own viewpoint, even—or especially!—if you disagree with other students or with the instructor.

**In-class assignments and participation:** Demonstrate your completion of out-of-class assignments by participating constructively in discussions and other in-class assignments. Being unprepared for class will have a negative effect on this aspect of your grade.

**Oral presentation and handout:** You will choose a group to work with, and you will be asked to present a particular text and its context to the class. Students will be graded as a group unless it becomes clear that some group members are doing significantly more or less work. I *strongly* suggest that your group meet with me prior to your presentation to discuss your plan for the presentation and clarify any open questions. I can also help you find (or evaluate) resources.

**Discussion questions:** These questions are ways for you to engage with the texts as you read them; they also give you a chance to guide classroom discussion. Discussion questions should be open-ended (a yes/no question does not tend to offer a lot of room for discussion!) and thought-provoking. Often these will be due by e-mail.

**Reading quizzes:** Reading quizzes may be given unannounced at the beginning of any class. If you have done the reading, you should do well on these quizzes. If everyone does well on the quizzes, there will be fewer quizzes; if it becomes evident that class members are not keeping up with the reading, be prepared for more frequent quizzes. Unless you have a documented, legitimate excuse for your absence, missed quizzes cannot be made up (see also Attendance). If you are late to class you will *not* be allowed extra time.

**Papers:** These will be persuasive research papers; you will be expected to have an arguable topic and use outside, scholarly sources to support your claim. You must have an approved topic proposal in order to write your paper, which you will generally turn in via e-mail; papers without approved topic proposals will *not* be considered and you will receive a zero on the assignment. We will go over papers in more detail later in the semester, and I will provide detailed assignments for each essay.

**Response papers:** Papers where you reflect on the reading you are doing. These are primarily idea papers, so transition and structure aren't vitally important, but you must use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

**Exams:** Exams are cumulative and test your reading and comprehension of the course texts. If the *cumulative* course grade (*everyone's* grades on *every* quiz) on the pop quizzes is above 85%, **there will be no final exam**. If everyone keeps up with the reading, no one needs to take the exam; if the class does not keep up with the reading, everyone takes the exam. If no exam is given, quiz grades and participation will count for more.

**Regular attendance is expected and required.** You are expected to be punctual, to attend class daily, and to participate in all in-class discussions and other activities. You are allowed four absences for any reason (so you may want to save them for when you really need them); after that, your final course grade will drop by 1/3 letter for each absence - for example, from a B+ to a B, or a B- to a C+. If you find that an emergency prevents you from attending class, please discuss the problem with me as soon as possible.

Should you miss a class, it is *your responsibility* to contact me or another student in the class to see what you have missed, including any announcements or assignments. Absence is not an excuse for not having work done. If you are absent the day an essay is due, give it to a friend or fellow student to turn in; if you check with me in advance you may send it to me as an attachment.

**Tardiness** disrupts the class and is disrespectful to your instructor and your fellow students. If you are not present when class begins, you are tardy. If you are more than 10 minutes late for class, you will be marked as absent. Two tardies of less than 10 minutes also constitute an absence. (The same rules govern leaving class early.)

**Preparedness:** You are expected to come to class with the day's assignments read and ready to discuss. If you are unable to participate in discussion because you are unprepared, you may be marked absent.

**All out of class assignments must be typed and double-spaced.** I will not accept handwritten work. No, not even topic proposals. Some assignments, like discussion questions and topic proposals, will be turned in via e-mail, generally so that I can get back to you quickly.

**All out of class work is due at the beginning of class unless otherwise specified.** I do not accept late work. If you must be absent on a day an assignment is due, turn it in beforehand or make arrangements to have someone else drop it off at the beginning of class.

**Syllabus:** We will follow the assignments on the syllabus unless I announce a change in class or on the course listserv. While we will discuss most of the assignments in advance, I expect you to complete the assignments on the syllabus regardless of whether I reminded you about them in class or not.

**Cell Phones, Headphones, ipods, et cetera:** The use of cell phones, ipods, etc. is not permitted in class. Turn them off when you walk in the classroom door. You are also not

permitted to wear headphones or other earpieces during class time, regardless of whether or not you've turned them off.

### **Scholastic Honesty and Plagiarism**

Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will not be tolerated. We will go over scholastic honesty in more detail during the semester, but if you have any questions about anything in your work, contact me *before you turn it in*. Plagiarism or any other form of scholastic dishonesty will result in a major course penalty, usually failure of the course.

### **Communication**

The best way to get in touch with me is via e-mail at [schachtm@uwosh.edu](mailto:schachtm@uwosh.edu). While I will usually get back to you more quickly, it may take me a day to get back to you. This means that it's a good idea to get started on assignments early so I have time to respond to questions you might have. If you're e-mailing me for an appointment outside of office hours, keep in mind I may not be on campus every day, so again: plan ahead.

Out-of-class communications like changes in assignments will be sent to your UWO e-mail account, so be sure to check your e-mail daily.

### **Office Hours**

You are welcome and encouraged to drop by my office during my office hours. If you know in advance that you'll be coming to my office hours, it is helpful to let me know that in class or via e-mail ahead of time. Particularly when a number of people want to stop by, this will help ensure that I am available when you come by. (If you set up an appointment in advance, I will meet with you at that time, regardless of whether there are other people who have dropped in.) However, feel free to drop by on the spur of the moment. If you cannot make it to my office hours, feel free to contact me to set up a meeting at a different time.

## **Syllabus: September**

### **Wed Sep. 5**

Introductions.

### **Fri Sep 7**

What is Native American Literature? Who are you and where are you coming from? Begin introduction to Native American history. Sign up for presentations.

**For Monday:** Read William Apess, "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man," online at <http://faculty.tamu-commerce.edu/kroggenkamp/IndiansLookingGlass.htm>; e-mail two discussion questions to Miriam at [schachtm@uwosh.edu](mailto:schachtm@uwosh.edu) by class time on Monday. (Remember to type in that second "h"; the most common misspelling is "schact," and that won't get you anywhere!)

### **Mon Sep 10**

Continue introduction to Native American history and literature.

### **Wed Sep 12**

Continue introduction to Native American history and literature, and discussion of Apess.

### **Fri Sep 14**

Continue introduction to Native American history and literature, Apess.

**For Mon:** Read Louis Owens, "Other Destinies, Other Plots: An Introduction to Indian Novels," from *Other Destinies*. (On reserve.)

### **Mon Sep 17**

Discuss Owens; Native American literature and history.

**For Wed:** Read first essay in *The Truth About Stories*.

### **Wed Sep 19**

Creation stories; *The Truth About Stories* and "Other Destinies..." How does the reader's perspective matter?

### **Fri Sep 21**

Continue *Truth*

For Mon: Read essays 2 and 3 in *The Truth...*

### **Mon Sep 24**

Continue *Truth...*

For Wed: Read essay 4 in *The Truth*

### **Wed Sep 26**

For Fri: Finish *Truth...*

### **Fri Sep 28**

First student presentation

## **Presentation Dates**

### **Sep. 28: Presentation group one**

**220-003:** N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

**220-004:** Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), *The People Named the Chippewa*;

### **Oct. 15: Presentation group two**

**220-003:** Sherman Alexie (Spokane), *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*;

**220-004:** Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), *Ceremony*;

### **Oct. 24: Presentation group three**

**220-003:** Joy Harjo (Creek), *A Map to the Next World*

**220-004:** Luci Tapahonso (Diné), *Blue Horses Rush In*

### **Nov. 2: Presentation group four**

**220-003:** James Welch (Blackfoot), *Winter in the Blood*

**220-004:** LeAnne Howe (Choctaw), *Shell Shaker*

### **Nov. 14: Presentation group five**

**220-003:** Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), *Kynship*

**220-004:** Craig Womack (Creek), *Drowning in Fire*

### **Dec. 3: Presentation group six**

**220-003:** Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), *Storyteller*

**220-004:** Eden Robinson (Haisla), *Monkey Beach*

**This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and/or on the course listserve.**