

**ENGLISH 299 Contemporary Native American Literature    Fall 2010**  
**Tuesday and Thursday 2:35-3:45    Zinzendorf 103**

**Instructor: Dr. Nicole Tabor, [ntabor@moravian.edu](mailto:ntabor@moravian.edu)**

**Office Hours: Mon 10:15-11:30, Wed 10:15-11:30, Thu 10:00-11:30 and by appointment**

**Office Location and Phone: 302 Zinzendorf Hall, (610) 625-7842**

*The colonial, hence racial and ethical, context moves the discussion of ways of reading Native American literatures toward issues of epistemology. If how we know the world begins with how we know the nexus of self and other, then our view of that nexus structures our ethical relations ... The ways in which readers and writers conceive of culture, self, and other, knowledge and experience, past and present, determine different relations between reader and text as well as different readings of literary elements.*

*- David Moore, *Decolonizing Criticism: Reading Dialectics and Dialogics in Native American Literatures**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will provide students with an opportunity to closely read poetry, fiction, drama, and essays written by and about Native Americans. To truly understand these literary texts, we will need to learn about native peoples' history, cultural contexts, oral traditions, and identity. Developing and interrogating questions regarding Native American identity will complicate our understanding of fixed literary genres and the power relations they encode. Our readings, discussions, and writing assignments will offer the opportunity to develop questions at issue for our discourse community. Writing especially will provide the chance to develop your own line of inquiry regarding specific texts.

**COURSE GOALS:**

- Develop a sophisticated vocabulary of key terms to closely read, discuss, and write about contemporary Native American literature
- Enrich our textual experience of Native American literature by critically engaging with its historical tradition(s)
- Deepen our understanding and appreciation of multicultural contributions to American literature
- Work collaboratively to generate challenging questions at issue for our discourse community
- Design and implement an intellectually engaging research project drawing on original argumentation, writing, and research that substantiates claims utilizing contemporary Native American literature as textual evidence
- Utilize life experiences to make connections between contemporary Native American literature and personal identity

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

*Ceremony*, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition by Leslie Marmon Silko

*The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* by Sherman Alexie

*The Cambridge Guide to Native American Literature* edited by Porter and Roemer

*Nothing But the Truth* edited by Purdy and Ruppert

*The Rez Sisters* by Tomson Highway

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**PERCENT OF FINAL GRADE:**

First Essay	20
Second Essay	20
Third Essay	20
Reading Journal	20
Oral Presentations	10
Class Participation	10

**ESSAYS:** You are required to compose three argumentative essays. The first essay will be 3-4 pages, essay two will be 4-6 pages and the final essay will be 10-12 pages in length. You will develop the final essay from an abstract and rough draft. These essays will be thesis-driven and follow MLA guidelines. Essays will be evaluated primarily on the quality of your ideas and the thoroughness of your critical argument (including appropriate citations of the text). Organizational, grammatical, and other writing

matters will, however, also affect your grade. We will discuss these essays in further detail throughout the term.

**READING JOURNAL:** You will write a one-page journal entry for each date's assigned readings. This entry will consist of two parts. In part one you will briefly summarize the day's literary text(s). For poems: please write a two or three sentence paraphrase of each poem and for fiction and drama texts provide a paragraph-long summary. Part two will consist of a discussion question. These questions are useful in generating class discussion and essays from our readings. Please refer to the handout "Discussion Questions as Post-reading." You may be asked to read from your response in class. These journals will be checked each class period and collected twice during the term.

**ORAL PRESENTATION:** You will be required to give a group presentation. Your group will summarize, historicize, and ask the class significant discussion questions related to your assigned topic as well as create/photocopy/distribute a handout. The presentation will also provide in-depth analysis of the day's assigned reading(s) from our syllabus. A sign-up sheet will be circulated in class.

**PARTICIPATION:** Our classroom comprises a *discourse community*, in which we gain knowledge and insight through mutual inquiry as a result of both verbal and written interaction with others in the class. This interaction will take the form of co-operation as well as respectful disagreement. As a member of this discourse community, you will be expected to contribute intelligently and frequently to the discussion. Along with speaking, effective participation requires active and open-minded listening to others. Respond to and interact with your peers, not just with me. The more you participate, the more interesting, exciting, and rewarding this class will be. Always bring your textbook and notes to class. Expect to read passages aloud and closely investigate details of the texts we are studying. There will be unannounced quizzes and in-class writings throughout the term. I highly encourage you to visit me during office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss your paper ideas or any other questions or concerns related to the course. There will be an extra-credit option related to the Multicultural Reading Group.

#### **POLICIES:**

**Grades.** It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for any assignments and for the final course grade.

**Format.** All written work should include your name, the course number and instructor (Tabor), the date, and the assignment in the upper right-hand corner. Any pages after the first should be numbered and stapled. All work must be typed using a reasonable 12-point font, double-spaced, and conventional margins (one inch). No electronic assignments accepted without special arrangement.

**Deadlines.** Reading responses, quizzes, and other daily assignments will not be accepted late, including assignments due to absence. Assignments are due during the class period of the due date. Extensions may be given on essays, provided that a student asks for the extension at least one week in advance. Unless an extension is given, late essays will be reduced by one letter grade for each day that passes after the due date, e.g. an A becomes a B if one day late.

**Access for Students with Disabilities.** Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

**Plagiarism.** All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please see the Student Handbook if you have any questions about your use of sources.

**Attendance.** It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet at each class. Your final course grade will be dropped by 10% for each unexcused absence after the third. Arriving to class more than 10 minutes late will count as 1/3 of an absence. A note from a doctor's office is required for an excused absence.

**Tentative Reading Schedule.** Readings are to be completed on the day assigned. The schedule is subject to change.

**Week One**

Tue Aug 31 Introduction

**POETRY**

Thu Sep 2 Anthology: Blue Cloud's *Rattle* pp. 446-449, Erdrich's *Dear John Wayne* pp. 471-472, Momaday's *The Bear* p. 511, TallMountain's *There Is No Word for Goodbye* pp. 554-555, Tapahonso's *In Praise of Texas* pp. 557-558  
Cambridge: "Historical and Cultural Contexts to Native American Literature" pp. 39-68  
Cambridge: "America's Indigenous Poetry" pp. 145-160

**Week Two**

Tue Sep 7 Anthology: Joy Harjo poems pp. 474-486:  
*She Had Some Horses, Transformations, I Give You Back, Call It Fear, Eagle Poem, The Woman Hanging from the Thirteenth Floor Window, Grace, The Woman Who Fell from the Sky*  
Cambridge: "Joy Harjo's Poetry" pp. 283-295  
**Essay One Due**

Thu Sep 9 No Class: Rosh Hashanah

**Week Three**

Tue Sep 14 Anthology: Simon Ortiz poems pp. 515-520:  
*Bend in the River, The Creation, According to Coyote, Dry Root in a Wash, My Father's Song, A Story of How a Wall Stands, The Boy and Coyote*  
Cambridge: "Simon Ortiz: Writing Home" pp. 221-232

Thu Sep 16 Anthology: N. Scott Momaday poems pp. 510-515:  
*Angle of Geese, At Risk, December 29, 1980: Wounded Knee Creek, The Colors of Night, The Eagle Feather Fan*  
Cambridge: "N. Scott Momaday: Becoming the Bear" pp. 207-220

**Week Four**

**FICTION**

Tue Sep 21 Cambridge: "Translation and Mediation" pp. 69-84  
Special Visit: Sam Tso

Thu Sep 23 Silko's *Ceremony*, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition  
Cambridge: "Fiction: 1968 to the Present" pp. 173-188  
Cambridge: "Leslie Marmon Silko: Storyteller" pp. 245-256

**Week Five**

Tue Sep 28 Silko's *Ceremony*, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition  
Anthology: "The Silko-Erdrich Controversy" pp. 15-22  
Anthology: "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective" pp. 159-165  
**Thesis Workshop: Thesis Statement Due**

Thu Sep 30 Anthology, Erdrich's *The Red Convertible*, pp. 232-239  
Cambridge: "Louise Erdrich's Storied Universe" pp. 271-282

**Week Six**

Tue Oct 5 Library Visit: Primary and Secondary Sources

Thu Oct 7 Anthology, Revard's *Report to the Nation*, pp. 333-344  
Anthology, Deloria's *Indian Humor*, pp. 39-53  
**Essay Two Due**

**Week Seven**

Tue Oct 12 Fall Recess: No Class

Thu Oct 14 Cambridge: "Sherman Alexie: Irony, Intimacy, and Agency" pp. 297-310  
 Alexie's *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, pp. xi-xxii, pp. 1-242  
**Reading Journal Due**

**Week Eight**

Tue Oct 19 Alexie's *This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona*, pp. 59-75  
 Alexie's *Smoke Signals*

Thu Oct 21 Alexie's *Smoke Signals*  
**Abstract Due**

**NONFICTION****Week Nine**

Tue Oct 26 Anthology: Ohiyesa's *The Ghost Dance War*, pp. 54-61  
 Cambridge: "Non-fiction Prose" pp. 105-124

Thu Oct 28 Anthology: Revard's *History, Myth, and Identity*, pp. 126-140  
 Cambridge: "Native American Life Writing" pp. 125-144

**Week Ten**

Tue Nov 2 Anthology: Sarris's *The Woman Who Loved a Snake*, pp. 141-158  
 Cambridge: "Women Writers and Gender Issues" pp. 85-104

Thu Nov 4 **Draft Workshop: Two Copies of Rough Draft Due**

**Week Eleven**

Tue Nov 9 **Conferences**  
 Wed Nov 10 *Multicultural Reading Group 4:00-5:15P (Extra Credit Option)*  
 Thu Nov 11 **Conferences**

**DRAMA****Week Twelve**

Tue Nov 16 Cambridge: "American Indian Theatre" pp. 189-206  
 Highway's *The Rez Sisters*, pp.vi-118

Thu Nov 18 Highway's *The Rez Sisters*, pp.vi-118  
 Geiogamah's 49

**Week Thirteen**

Tue Nov 23 Glancy's *The Woman Who was a Red Deer Dressed for the Deer Dance*

Thu Nov 25 Thanksgiving Recess – No Class

**Week Fourteen**

Tue Nov 30 Anthology, Vizenor's *Harold of Orange*, pp. 591-619  
 Cambridge: "Gerald Vizenor: Postindian Liberation" pp. 257-270

Thu Dec 2 Anthology, Vizenor's *Harold of Orange*, pp. 591-619  
 Anthology, Moore's *Decolonializing Criticism*, pp. 94-119  
**Reading Journal Due**

**Week Fifteen**

Tue Dec 7 Conclusions and Evaluations  
**Essay Three Due**