

IDIS 191 CG
Special Topic: The Navajo: Facing Modernity
Fall 2015, Session I
Classroom: PPHAC 103 on Tuesdays, 6-9 p.m., plus online component

G. Clarke Chapman
cachapman2@kirklandvillage.org

Textbooks for the Course:

Hillerman, Tony. *The Dark Wind*. New York: Harper Paperbacks, 1982.

Hillerman, Tony. *Skinwalkers*. New York: Harper Paperbacks, 1986.

Hillerman, Tony, and Bulow, Ernie. *Talking Mysteries: A Conversation with Tony Hillerman*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004.

Nez, Chester, with Judith Schiess Avila. *Code Talker*. New York: Berkley Books/Penguin, 2011.

Purpose of This M5 Course:

1. To undertake an understanding of the Navajo people, their world view, traditions, spirituality, ethos.
2. To study the pressures of modernity upon this subgroup of traditional native people, and how they cope with the expectations of white society.
3. To note particular problems now faced by the Navajo, such as poverty, crime, environmental pollution, and a legacy of coercive assimilation.
4. To recognize and learn from some writing techniques of a skilled fiction writer. And what are the difficulties in transferring a novel's written narrative into another medium, such as a feature film?
5. To reexamine our own world view(s), in light of the insights of Navajo heritage.

Course Outline and Assignments:

Calendar:		Assigned reading & viewing:	Responses:
Week 1 Sept. 1	<i>In class:</i> introduction <i>Online:</i> Navajo origins	--- --Wikipedia A Navajo people@ (on line); <i>Navajo Means People</i> (on reserve); A Navajo Religion@ (handout from Encyclopedia of Religion); the 2 Chapman offprints on Hillerman=s crime fiction (handouts).	C Weekly posts; Essay # 1
Week 2 Sept. 8	<i>In Class:</i> Tony Hillerman <i>Online:</i> Novel + film <i>Dark Wind</i>	B Prior to class: view YouTube interviews of Hillerman; read <i>Dark Wind</i> , chapter 1-17. B Off-site: Finish <i>Dark Wind</i> ; view the film <i>Dark Wind</i> (on reserve) & compare it to the novel!	C Weekly posts; Essay # 2
Week 3 Sept 15	<i>In Class:</i> What is Justice? <i>Online:</i> Hillerman=s life, writing style	B Prepare 6 questions on the novel vs. the film. B Research the Hillerman portal for at least 2 hours: http://ehillerman.unm.edu/#sthash.8MWARlA8.VPHNAqWg.dpbs	C Weekly posts; Essay # 3
Week 4 Sept 22	<i>In Class:</i> Review; mid-term exam <i>Online:</i> the problem of evil	B review course so far B Read <i>Skinwalkers</i> . [compare it to the PBS movie version <i>Skinwalkers</i> (on reserve). Continue your research in the Hillerman portal tabs	C Weekly posts; Essay # 4
Week 5 Sept 29	<i>In Class:</i> Hillerman=s life <i>Online:</i> Techniques of a famed writer	B <i>Talking Mysteries</i> , pp. 12-43, 93-119 B <i>Talking Mysteries</i> , pp. 46-91	Weekly posts; Essay # 5
Week 6 Oct. 6	<i>In Class:</i> Growing up as a Navajo <i>Online:</i> War experiences	B <i>Code Talkers</i> , pp. 23-115 B <i>Code Talkers</i> , pp. 117-204; Nez interview on his website: http://navajocodetalkers.org/chester-nez-real-code-talker-interview	C Weekly posts' Essay # 6...
Week 7 Oct. 20	<i>In Class:</i> Code talkers in World War II <i>Online:</i> Return to A normalcy@ (!)	B <i>Code Talkers</i> , pp. 211-66 B View at least 2 other code talkers on Nez website; view A Return of Navajo Boy@ documentary	C Weekly posts; Essay # 7
Week 8 Oct. 27	<i>In Class:</i> review; Final Exam part 1 <i>Online:</i> Exam part 2	B Review entire course B Final Exam, part 2; including rewriting of Essay # 1 and of one other (your choice) Essay, and a final post about the course.	C

Course Requirements:

1. *Preparation*: It is important to prepare carefully for each session, whether in-class or off-site. The assignments are to be completed before that session begins, and discussion or written work will presuppose that. If there are problems, you may contact me at cachapman2@kirklandvillage.org

2. *Examinations*: a mid-term quiz (15 % of the course grade), and a two-part final exam (20 %).

3. *Essays*: Each of the 7 essays should be about 3-5 pages long, due online by 10 a.m. of the Monday before the next in-class meeting (Tuesday evenings). Together they are worth 42% of the course grade.

Essay # 1: Summarize what seems to be the essence of the traditional Navajo world view. Then, from what you have learned so far about Navajo life, what seems to be the most important issue nowadays of cultural conflict with modernity? Can you describe similar examples in your own life or in current society?

Essay # 2: On *Dark Wind*: a) overall, what seems to be the main theme of the novel? b) compare his implied definition of **Ajustice@** with your own best definition, c) describe how well (or not) the film may follow the novel, and why do you think so? d) What comments or questions have you??

Essay # 3: Summarize Hillerman=s life and moral values. Why do you think his fiction dealing with Navajo life has become so popular today? Then name several of the clever writing techniques he uses to keep the reader=s interest & eagerness to turn to the next page.

Essay # 4: Why does evil happens in lifeCthat mystery is profound, ever a problem for humanity! Describe several ways you=ve learned that it has been explained throughout human history. Then describe what is the Navajo view (according to *Skinwalkers*) of how and why evil happens. Compare it then to your own best view.

Essay # 5: What are several of the ways in which the writing style in *Skinwalkers* gives the reader a sense of foreboding? Then discuss at least 5 of Hillerman=s tips to an author that you consider the best. Ask yourself: what writing techniques serve to hold the reader=s keen interest. Compare this to the ways a horror movie might create a similar foreboding and tension.

Essay # 6: Compare the traditional Navajo childhood of Chester Nez with the experiences of you and your generation in growing up . How may this illustrate the ongoing tensions between traditional societies and modernity? In what ways did his Navajo upbringing leave Nez unprepared for serving in the US military? CAnd in what ways did it help him?

Essay # 7: Compare Nez=s view of his military service with that of several other of the **Acode talkers@** interviewed. What were Nez=s experiences as a veteran returning to the civilian life of our **Amodernity@**? Then, in the documentary **AReturn of Navajo Boy,@** what other issues of cultural tension are found? Use this as an opportunity to show your understanding of both sides of the moral argument of tradition vs. modernity.

4. *BlackBoard Discussion posts*: each week, no later than noon on the Sunday before the next in-class meeting. 13% of the course grade. The posts are to comment on the readings done for that week, & in addition you should show: a) what you have learned about Navajo folkways and world view, b) what issues of conflict you may find with modernity (mainstream **AWhite@** society), and then c) your comments.

5. *Class participation and attendance*: (10% of course grade)

Students who wish to request accommodations in the class for a disability should contact the Academic Support Ctr, located on 1st floor of Monocacy Hall (ext. 1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.