

Instructor: Katie Ferrell
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Office Hours: TBD

Native American Literature Fall 2010

“Do you know why the Indian rain dances always worked? Because the Indians would keep dancing until it rained.” – Sherman Alexie

“A very great vision is needed and the man who has it must follow it as the eagle seeks the deepest blue of the sky.” – Tashunka Witko (Chief Crazy Horse)

Course Description:

In this course, we will explore Native American Literature from early folklore and oral tradition to contemporary novels and poetry. After studying the myths and coyote tales central to the culture of many tribes, we will move to works from the Native American Renaissance (late 1960s-early 1970s) which reflect the dramatic changes and struggles faced by Native Americans post-colonization. The course will conclude with works from contemporary authors, and we will continue to examine the effects of a changing cultural landscape as reflected in the literature. We will examine the issues surrounding forced relocation and assimilation while also looking at aspects of Native American culture that have survived.

Main Texts:

Giving Birth to Thunder, Sleeping with His Daughter, by Barry Lopez
House Made of Dawn, by N. Scott Momaday
Love Medicine, by Louise Erdrich
Reservation Blues, by Sherman Alexie

* We will also read a selection of short stories, poetry, and plays. In addition, we will watch several films and documentaries to supplement our reading.

Course Expectations:

Participation is a crucial component of this seminar style class. Please come to each class having read the assigned materials. Also be prepared to discuss your ideas and/or questions. In order to foster a classroom atmosphere where all participants feel safe to voice their ideas, we will maintain a high level of respect for the opinions and feelings of others. Coursework will include three formal essays (with mandatory revisions), a final exam, in-class writing assignments, pop quizzes on the reading, and a group presentation on Native American culture (potential topics will be discussed in class).

Grade Breakdown:

50%: Essays:

 15%: Essay #1

 15%: Essay #2

 20%: Essay #3

20%: Final Exam

25%: Class Participation & Homework (attendance, discussion, in-class writing, essay drafts, quizzes on assigned reading, behavior, etc.)

5%: Presentation

Policy on Late Work:

1. Late work will be accepted, but will be penalized by half a letter grade (5%) per class day after the due date, capped at three days (total deduction may not exceed 15%). However, extenuating circumstances will be taken into account.
2. If you are absent the day an assignment is due, you can email me the assignment before class to avoid losing points. You will still need to bring a hard copy of the assignment when you return to class.
3. If you are absent during a pop quiz, you will have the option of completing an alternate assignment of equal point value.
4. If you are absent, please email me or talk to a classmate to find out what you missed.

* **NOTE:** I will give you a reading schedule for each novel or play we read. I look forward to working with all of you!