

586
Spring Quarter 2002

English 586: Special Topics in ~~US Ethnic Literatures~~ ^{American Indian Literature and Culture}
Professor C. Allen

Office: Denney 520

Office hours: T R 3:30 - 5:00

& by appointment

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Topic: American Indian Literature and the "Problem" of History

My aunt always started the story saying, "You are here because of what happened to your great-grandmother long ago."
--Luci Tapahonso (Navajo), "In 1864"

COURSE POLICIES & SYLLABUS

In this course we will read contemporary American Indian works that re-create the significant past, what is sometimes called "historical" fiction. More specifically, we will investigate the strategies Native writers use to represent historical events in three different rhetorical and literary situations: 1) in "classic" historical fiction, which is set entirely in the past and is based on various types of historical "evidence"; 2) in fiction that represents the highly speculative period of so-called "pre-history" before the arrival of Europeans in North America; and 3) in fiction that alternates its setting between the past and contemporary times and suggests that these periods are significantly related.

Required Texts

Course packet, available from COP-EZ, Tuttle Park Place (292-2219)

Welch, *Fools Crow* (Penguin)

Glancy, *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears* (Harcourt)

McNickle, *Runner in the Sun: A Story of Indian Maize* (U of New Mexico P)

Bruchac, *Dawn Land* (Fulcrum)

Power, *The Grass Dancer* (Berkley Books)

Howe, *Shell Shaker* (Aunt Lute Books)

Recommended Texts

Calloway, ed., *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indian Views of How the West Was Lost* (Bedford)

Perdue and Green, eds., *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford)

Books available from SBX, 1806 N. High Street (291-9528)

Course Policies

Attendance. Regular attendance is required, and I will take attendance every class period. Students who miss more than two class meetings without providing an excuse recognized by the university as legitimate (such as documented proof of a serious illness, or participation in a university-sponsored event) will have their final course grades lowered by one third of a letter grade for each unexcused absence over two. **Five or more unexcused absences are grounds for failure of the course.**

Late Assignments. Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Plan accordingly, especially if you are prone to computer problems. Late assignments will lose a letter grade for every day late. Please speak to me ahead of time if you anticipate problems meeting assignment deadlines.

Preparing Assignments. When you turn in assignments you are required to 1) type or word process your essay; 2) double-space your text and provide one-inch margins; 3) place your name and the course number on the first page; 4) number your pages after page one and place your last name next to the number on each page; 5) follow MLA guidelines for all citations; 6) title your essay; and 7) proofread.

Academic Integrity. The basic idea of academic integrity is that the university holds you accountable for the work you hand in for assessment. All work is expected to be your own. When quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing the work of others, you are expected to cite your sources. The university considers plagiarism--using someone else's words or ideas as if they were your own--a serious and punishable act of academic misconduct. It is also an act of academic misconduct to hand in recycled or revised work originally produced for another course without the permission of the instructor. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Students With Disabilities. The Office for Disability Services, 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact ODS at 292-3307.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to minor adjustments over the course of the quarter. It is each student's responsibility to keep up with changes announced in class.

Assignments**1. Class Participation. 20%**

Students will be rewarded for actively contributing to class discussions and for listening attentively, as well as for coming to class on time, well prepared, and with a positive attitude.

2. Discussion Leader. 20%

Each student will serve as a designated discussion leader once during the quarter. Discussion leaders should 1) conduct relevant research on at least one significant "element" from the assigned reading--a place, a person, an historical event, a document or law, an organization, a cultural item, practice, or tradition, an indigenous language, and so forth--to present to the class; 2) prepare several specific observations about and/or analyses of the assigned reading; and 3) prepare several questions about the assigned reading to help generate class discussion. Students will be graded individually, but those designated as discussion leaders on the same day may choose to work together outside of class to coordinate their efforts.

3. Short Essays (4). 2 - 3 pages each. due regularly. 60%

Four times during the quarter you will write a short, tightly focused, well argued, and well supported essay that responds to a given prompt. See daily syllabus for due dates and specific prompts. We will use these essays as the basis for our class discussion on the days they are due.

Daily Syllabus**Week 1**

Tu 4/2 Introduction to course policies and daily syllabus.
In-class reading of Luci Tapahonso, "In 1864."

1. "Classic" American Indian Historical Fiction

Th 4/4 Read Welch, *Fools Crow*, through Part One.
Recommended reading: Calloway, Introduction.
Sign up for discussion leaders.

Week 2

Tu 4/9 Read Welch through Part Three.

Th 4/11 Read Welch through end, and essays on documentary film (course pack).
In-class screening of documentary films on Plains Indian wars.

Week 3

Tu 4/16

Review Welch and essays on documentary film.

Th 4/18

Review Welch, begin reading Glancy, *Pushing the Bear*.

Short essay #1 due in class. Prompt: Compare Welch's narrative and rhetorical strategies to the strategies employed by the documentary filmmakers, and argue which you think are more effective.

Week 4

Tu 4/23

Read Glancy, *Pushing the Bear*, through "Tennessee."

Recommended reading: Perdue and Green, Introduction.

Discussion leaders: _____

Th 4/25

Read Glancy through end.

Discussion leaders: _____

Week 5

Tu 4/30

Review Glancy.

Short essay #2 due in class. Prompt: Compare Glancy's narrative strategies to Welch's. Is the overall effect of Glancy's novel similar to or different from Welch's?

2. The "Pre-Historic" American Indian Novel

Th 5/2

Read Mann, "1491" (course pack) and McNickle, *Runner in the Sun*, through chapter 10.

Discussion leaders: _____

Week 6

Tu 5/7

Read McNickle through end.

Discussion leaders: _____

Th 5/9

Read Bruchac, *Dawn Land*, through Part Two.

Discussion leaders: _____

Week 7

Tu 5/14

Read Bruchac through end.

Discussion leaders: _____

Th 5/16

Review McNickle and Bruchac.

Short essay #3 due in class. Prompt: In their dramatization of "pre-history," do McNickle and Bruchac also offer commentary on contemporary times? Support your argument with specific examples from each novel.

3. The Past in the Present

Week 8

Tu 5/21

Read Power, *The Grass Dancer*, through chapter 1.

Discussion leaders: _____

Th 5/23

Read Power through chapter 7.

Discussion leaders: _____

Week 9

Tu 5/28

Read Power through end.

Discussion leaders: _____

Th 5/30

Read Howe, *Shell Shaker*, through chapter 5.

Discussion leaders: _____

Week 10

Tu 6/4

Read Howe through end.

Discussion leaders: _____

Th 6/6

Review Power and Howe.

Short essay #4 due in class. Prompt: What specific relationship(s) do Power and Howe argue exist between the past and the present? Do Power and Howe make the same argument?

~~Spring Quarter 2004~~
~~English 581: Special Topics in U.S. Ethnic Literatures~~
Professor C. Allen
English 586

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Fri 10:30 a.m. – noon
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SPECIAL TOPICS IN AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

~~Title:~~ "American Indian Poetry"

COURSE POLICIES & SYLLABUS

At the spring
we hear the great seas traveling
underground,
giving themselves up
with tongues of water
that sing the earth open.
They have journeyed through the graveyards
of our loved ones,
turning in the graves
to carry the stories of life to air.
Even the trees with their rings
have kept track
of the crimes that live within
and against us.
We remember it all.
We remember, though we are just skeletons
whose organs and flesh
hold us in.
We have stories
as old as the great seas
breaking through the chest,
flying out the mouth,
noisy tongues that once were silenced
all the oceans we contain
coming to light.
--Linda Hogan (Chickasaw), "To Light" (1985)

In this course we will investigate the work of six contemporary American Indian poets: Joy Harjo (Creek), Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna/Sioux), Carter Revard (Osage), Wendy Rose (Hopi/Miwok), Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Couer d'Alene), and Luci Tapahonso (Navajo). In addition to studying the poems themselves, we will watch and discuss Alexie's new film *The Business of Fancydancing*, and we will read selections from the new anthology of criticism *Speak to Me Words: Essays on Contemporary American Indian Poetry*. Students will help lead class discussion, write frequently, and develop a major research project.

Required Texts

Dean Rader and Janice Gould, eds., *Speak to Me Words: Essays on Contemporary American Indian Poetry* (University of Arizona Press)
Joy Harjo, *She Had Some Horses* (Thunder's Mouth Press)
Simon Ortiz, *From Sand Creek* (University of Arizona Press)
Paula Gunn Allen, *Skins and Bones: Poems 1979-87* (West End Press)
Carter Revard, *An Eagle Nation* (University of Arizona Press)
Wendy Rose, *Bone Dance: New and Selected Poems, 1965-1993* (University of Arizona Press)
Sherman Alexie, *The Business of Fancydancing* (Hanging Loose Press)
Luci Tapahonso, *Sáanii Dahataał The Women Are Singing* (University of Arizona Press)

Books available from SBX, 1806 N. High Street (291-9528)

Course Policies

Attendance. You should plan to attend every meeting of this class. Regular attendance is required, and I will take attendance every class period. Students who miss more than two class meetings without providing an excuse recognized by the university as legitimate (such as documented proof of a serious illness, or participation in a university-sponsored event) will have their final course grades lowered by one third of a letter grade for each unexcused absence over two. **Five or more unexcused absences are grounds for failure of the course.**

Preparing Essays. When you turn in your final essay project (described below) you are required to 1) type or word process your essay in a readable, 12 point font, 2) double-space your text and provide one-inch margins, 3) place your name and the course number on the first page, 4) number your pages after page one and place your last name next to the number on each page, 5) title your essay, and 6) edit and proofread the final version.

Academic Integrity. The basic idea of academic integrity is that the university holds you accountable for the work you hand in for assessment. All work is expected to be your own. When quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing the work of others, you are expected to cite your sources. The university considers plagiarism—using someone else's words or ideas as if they were your own—a serious and punishable act of academic misconduct. It is also an act of academic misconduct to hand in recycled or revised work originally produced for another course without the permission of both instructors. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Students With Disabilities. The Office for Disability Services, 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact ODS at 292-3307.

Writing Center. 475 Mendenhall, 292-5607, 688-4291.

Assignments

1. **Class Participation. 15%**

Students will be rewarded for actively contributing to class discussions and for listening attentively, as well as for coming to class on time, well prepared, and with a positive attitude.

2. **Discussion Teams. 25%**

Each student will sign up to be part of a Discussion Team. With the exception of Team 6, who lead discussion for only one class period, each Team will help lead discussion over the course of the week devoted to a particular poet. Teams can choose how to allocate their time over the two days of the week, but they should plan to have enough material, discussion questions, etc. for about half of each class period. Discussion Teams are responsible for 1) Meeting outside of class to coordinate their research efforts and to discuss their plans for leading class discussion; 2) Conducting relevant research on the poet and text they are responsible for, including reviews and scholarship/criticism, and articles or web sites that provide background information about the poet, as well as any other relevant scholarship from books, articles, or web sites; 3) Presenting relevant information to the class; 4) Preparing a prompt for a writing assignment, which can be either an in-class assignment or an out-of-class assignment; 5) Directing the class's attention to specific passages in the assigned texts and posing useful questions for class discussion. NOTE: the majority of your class "presentation" time should be devoted to close reading and analysis of specific poems—and should invite class participation—rather than simply reciting information or lecturing. In addition, 1) each Team should prepare a 1 - 2 page handout to give to the class that includes a bibliography of relevant sources and the Team's major observations, arguments, and/or questions about the poet and the text, and 2) each Team member should turn in a 1 page account of her or his participation in the Discussion Team. Team members will be graded individually.

3. **Imitation Exercise. Due Thursday, 6 May. 10%**

Choose a poem from one of the assigned texts to imitate. An imitation means creating your own poem, about your own topic or theme, that follows the format, specific structure, specific punctuation and grammar, and so forth of the source poem. The purpose of this exercise is to learn to pay very close attention to *how* poets structure their works and *how* poets manipulate language, syntax, and rhetorical and grammatical forms in order to produce meaning. In addition to the imitation itself, I would like you to write a 1-2 page essay explaining what you learned from this exercise.

4. **Final Project Proposal. 1 page. Due Thursday, 20 May. 10%**

4. **Final Project. 5 – 7 pages. Due Monday, 7 June. 40%**

Option A: Choose one of the poets we are reading for 581. Find and read additional works by this poet (e.g., another book of poetry, a memoir, an article or essay, short stories, a novel, a film, a CD), and conduct relevant biographical, cultural, and critical research. Develop an interpretive and critical project that involves both the assigned text and an additional text or texts you have read. For example, you might analyze how a

particular idea, image, or theme is developed across a number of different poems or across genres and media. Or you might analyze how the poet's style, tone, interests, themes, or politics develops over time. Include a full list of Works Cited that follows MLA style guidelines.

Option B: Develop an interpretive and critical project that compares the work of two of the poets we have read this quarter. Conduct relevant biographical, cultural, and critical research. Here, too, you might focus on ideas, imagery, or themes, or you might focus on style, tone, interests, and politics, and so forth. Include a full list of Works Cited that follows MLA style guidelines.

Option C: Find and read the work of a contemporary American Indian poet that was not assigned for class (the lists at the back of *Speak to Me Words* is a good place to begin looking for ideas). Develop an interpretive and critical project that either focuses exclusively on this poet or that compares the work of this poet to one of the poets we read in class. Include a full list of Works Cited that follows MLA style guidelines.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to minor adjustments over the course of the quarter. It is each student's responsibility to keep up with changes announced in class.

Daily Syllabus

Week 1

Tues 3/30

Introduction to course and syllabus.

Thurs 4/1

Read Rader and Gould, "Introduction: Generations and Emanations," and Revard, "Herbs of Healing: American Values in American Indian Literature," in *Speak to Me Words*.

Turn in ranked list of top five choices for Discussion Teams.

Week 2

Tues 4/6

Read Anderson, "Situating American Indian Poetry: Place, Community, and the Question of Genre," and Rader, "The Epic Lyric: Genre and Contemporary American Indian Poetry," in *Speak to Me Words*.

Thurs 4/8

Read Harjo, *She Had Some Horses*.

Week 3

Tues 4/13

Review *She Had Some Horses*.

Also, read Allen, "Answering the Deer: Genocide and Continuance in the Poetry of American Indian Women," and Gould, "Poems as Maps in American Indian Women's Writing," in *Speak to Me Words*.

Thurs 4/15

In-class screening of film about Joy Harjo.

In-class writing assignment.

Week 4

Tues 4/20

Read Ortiz, *From Sand Creek*.

Discussion Team #1: _____

Thurs 4/22

Review *From Sand Creek*.Also, read Ortiz, "Song/Poetry and Language—Expression and Perception," in *Speak to Me Words*.**Week 5**

Tues 4/27

Read Allen, *Skins and Bones*.

Discussion Team #2: _____

Thurs 4/29

Review *Skins and Bones*.Also, read Jahner, "The Style of the Times in Paula Gunn Allen's Poetry," in *Speak to Me Words*.**Week 6**

Tues 5/4

Read Revard, *An Eagle Nation*.

Discussion Team #3: _____

Thurs 5/6

Review *An Eagle Nation*.Also, read McAdams, "Carter Revard's Angled Mirrors," in *Speak to Me Words*.**Imitation Exercise due in class.****Week 7**

Tues 5/11

Read Rose, *Bone Dance*.

Discussion Team #4: _____

Thurs 5/13

Review *Bone Dance*.**Week 8**

Tues 5/18

Read Alexie, *The Business of Fancydancing*.

Discussion Team #5: _____

Thurs 5/20

Review *The Business of Fancydancing*.Also, visit and explore Alexie's web site at www.fallsapart.com.**Final Project Proposal due in class.****Week 9**

Tues 5/25

In-class screening of film *The Business of Fancydancing*.

Thurs 5/27

Read Driskill, "Two-Spiritness, the Erotic, and Mixedblood Identity as Sites of Sovereignty and Resistance in Gregory Scofield's Poetry," in *Speak to Me Words*.

Discussion Team #6: _____

Week 10

Tues 6/1

Read Tapahonso, *Sáanii Dahataa! The Women Are Singing*.

Discussion Team #7: _____

Thurs 6/3

Review *Sáanii Dahataa!*. Also read Nelson, "'Dawn/ Is a Good Word': Naming an Emergent Motif of Contemporary Native American Poetry," in *Speak to Me Words*.

Mon 6/7

Final Projects due in my mailbox, Denney 421, by 3:00 p.m.