

English 156

Ellesa C. High, ENGL 156, Fall 2003, Literature of Native America

ENGL 156

LITERATURE OF NATIVE AMERICA

Professor: Dr. Ellesa C. High

Office: 333 Stansbury Hall

Office Hours: 3:00 - 4:00 TTh

and by appointment

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Description and overview

This class will begin by studying tribal oral traditions and their continued existence in prose poetry, myths, and stories. The works of contemporary American Indian writers will be studied and discussed as an outgrowth of these traditions. Some of the distinctive features to be explored include the continuation and survival of Native values and beliefs, the roles of women, and resistance against cultural and physical annihilation. American Indian literature also will be seen in terms of its contributions to a more broadly defined mainstream American literary tradition.

Through much reading, thought, lively discussion, and "hands-on" activities, students should gain a deeper understanding of indigenous peoples, their cultures, and students' own relationship to these peoples. Through researching and completing a substantial research paper on some aspect of American Indian cultures, students also should strengthen their skills in writing, thinking critically, and using the library, the World Wide Web, and oral sources of information

Course goals

--To gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Native American cultures

--To question some of the sources of received information Western culture/education is based upon and to explore differing Native paradigms, in other words, to develop new tools for critical analysis

--To explore different modes of understanding a culture through reading its literature, talking to regional Native people (oral testimony), constructing artifacts through traditional means (optional)

--To become familiar with major genres, themes, and topics of Native American literature

--To investigate the ways in which Native American literature both shaped and has been shaped by economic, political, social, religious, and other cultural forces

--To communicate effectively, both in writing and in oral presentations

Expected learning outcomes

--Students will demonstrate their knowledge of Native American writers and their works, including what this material suggests about Native cultures in general and their relationship to mainstream culture

--Students will be able to evaluate how Western traditions limit our understanding of global culture

--Students will be able to analyze the representation of cultural identity and the processes of its formation

--Students will demonstrate their critical mastery of the major genres, themes, and topics of Native American literature

--Students will master principles of critical thinking

--Students will be able to analyze differences between cultures, including other perspectives concerning historical sources, gender issues, traditional values, etc.

--Students will successfully practice their writing and research skills through the semester project

Required texts and materials

Native American Literature: An Anthology by Lawana Trout

The Way to Rainy Mountain by N. Scott Momaday

Black Elk Speaks by Black Elk and John G. Niehardt

Selu: *Seeking the Corn Mother's Wisdom* by Marilou Awiakta

Requirements

1. ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. More than three (3) absences may lower your final grade (generally I will lower the final grade a letter for every absence beyond the three absences mentioned above).
2. Reading of assigned texts, hand-outs, etc.
3. Written assignments of varying lengths, including a substantial research paper (approx 10 typed pages) due toward the end of the semester. All papers must be typed or word processed unless otherwise stated by the professor. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. If a serious problem arises, please see or call me BEFORE the deadline that work is due.
4. An oral presentation, given during the second half of the semester.
5. Quizzes, a mid-term exam, and a second exam (subject to revision).

Graded assignments and percentage of semester points (subject to revision)

Students will be graded on the following assignments, based on the quality of their writing and their understanding of issues raised, the depth of analysis of literature and the subjects it raises; and the mastery of information presented throughout the class. In other words, how well students have met the expected learning outcomes of the course will be reflected in their grades.

Project proposal 10

Mid-term exam 20

Project progress report 10

Second exam 20

Oral presentation on project 10

Semester project 30

100

Grading scale

A = 90- 100 points

B = 80-89 points

C = 70-79 points

D = 60-69 points

F= below 60 points

Note

If you are disabled in any way and feel that there is anything I need to know that might improve your learning environment in our class, please contact me by phone (293-3107, ext. 415) or in person during my office hours or by appointment.

If I inadvertently have overlooked your days of special concern or religious holidays, please do not hesitate to bring this to my attention.

Social justice statement

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with WVU's commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment, based upon open communication and mutual respect. If you have any suggestions how to further such an environment, I would appreciate them and give them serious consideration.

Course Schedule

(subject to revision)

1. August 19 - 21

Tues.: introduction to class

map of "Indian Country"

article, "Those First Americans"

share material from *Lies My Teacher Told Me*

Thurs.: video, "More than Bows & Arrows"

begin to discuss some of the many contributions of Native peoples

more from *Lies My Teacher Told Me* and *Native Americans*, Archeologists,

and the *Mounds*

2. August 26 - 28

Tues.: begin Trout, *Native American Literature*

introduction, historical overview, story-telling traditions, oral sources vs. literary ones,

sacred vs. the secular, etc.

"The Coming of Stories" (Seneca)

Thurs.: continue Trout, *Native American Literature*

more creation stories (hand-outs), including Navajo, Ojibwa, Cherokee, Washo,

Iroquois

discussion of connecting points, images, etc.

divide class into discussion groups

informal video response papers due (check grade only)

3. September 2- 4

Tues. continue Trout, *Native American Literature*

Thurs.: continue Trout, *Native American Literature*

short discussion of background and traditions

guest speakers and performers: Jane and John Dailey, Middle Island Creek Shawnee

4. September 9-11

Tues.: continue Trout, *Native American Literature*

initial discussion of semester projects

project proposal hand-out

Thurs.: continue Trout, *Native American Literature*

more discussion of project proposals

5. September 16 - 18

Tues.: continue Trout, *Native American Literature*

Thurs.: video from "The Winds of Change" series, "A Matter of Promises," hosted by N.

Scott Momaday (Kiowa)

three tribes discussed: Onondaga, Navajo, and Lumbee

issues of culture, history, sovereignty

project proposals due

6. September 23 - 25

Tues.: continue Trout, *Native American Literature*

Thurs.: finish Trout, *Native American Literature*

review for mid-term exam

7. September 30 - October 2

Tues.: **mid-term exam**

Thurs. video: "Spirit of Crazy Horse" (Lakota) narrated by Milo Yellow Hair

importance of the Black Hills to the Lakota, history, massacre at Wounded Knee, 2nd battle at Wounded Knee, development of AIM, goon squad, traditional vs. "hang around the forts," reemergence of cultural pride

8. October 7 - 9

Tues.: begin Black Elk and Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* (Lakota)

Thurs.: continue *Black Elk Speaks*

discuss his "Great Vision," including hand-out by Kenneth Lincoln

problems and critical issues raised by "as told to" books

literary license Vs ethnographical transcription

9. October 14-16

Tues.: class meets at the Center for Literary Computing in 201 Armstrong Hall to

explore *Black Elk* software program developed by High and Attfield

group work to develop ideas on Lakota people history, treaties, culture, geography of the Black Hills, time lines, the Lakota people today, biographical material about Black Elk

and Neihardt, traditional healers and holy people, visions and dreams, critical reception

of book, maps, etc.

Thurs: finish *Black Elk Speaks*

Book's relationship to *The Sixth Grandfather* by Raymond DeMalie, especially omitted

material and created passages by Neihardt

Role of the writer/speaker to the translator/editor

project progress reports due

10. October 21-23

Tues. begin Momaday, *Way to Rainy Mountain* (Kiowa)

video, "Interview with N. Scott Momaday"

Thurs.: continue *Way to Rainy Mountain*

biographical material, including selections from *The Names* by Momaday

critical importance of work and its significance to Native literature

brief background of the Kiowa people

brief discussion of mixed bloods" and their contribution to Native literature

11. October 28 - 30

Tues.: finish *Way to Rainy Mountain*

Significance of its three narrative voices and styles

Underlying purpose of its organization

Relationship of the text to the opening and closing poems

Major ideas and themes presented by book, beauty of its literary images and motifs

Thurs. begin *Awiakta, Selu: Seeking the Corn Mother's Wisdom* (Cherokee)

video "Cherokee: "The Principal People," narrated by Wes Studi (Cherokee Nation) and Freeman Owle (Eastern Band Cherokee)

12. November 4 - 6

Tues.: continue *Selu*

traditional stories of *Selu*, the corn Mother, and *Awi Usdi*, Little Deer

Oak Ridge, the atom, and their relationship to women

the TVA, Tellico Dam, issues of imminent domain vs. sovereignty

extractive industries in Appalachia vs. environmental concerns

Thurs.: continue *Selu*

Role and image of women in Cherokee culture

Matrilineal culture vs. patrilineal one

The Iroquois Great Law of Peace and the Peace Tree at WVU

Iroquois contribution to the Constitution

Literary form as a double woven basket, mixed genre motif of book

13. November 11-13

Tues.: finish *Selu*

"seed" ideas to keep from book

meet in groups to finish work on exam

Thurs.: **second exam due**

14. November 18 - 20

Tues.: student oral presentations on semester projects

Thurs.: student oral presentations on semester projects

(Thanksgiving recess: Nov. 22 - 30)

15. December 2 - 4

Tues.: student oral presentations on semester projects

Thurs.: student oral presentations on semester projects

semester projects due

closure to class

Note: If not all student presentations are covered by the end of this week, all students

will be required to attend our scheduled final exam time, so that all presentations can be made.

Our final time is Wednesday, December 10, at 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.