

Literature of Native America

ENGL 156.001

Spring 2022

TR 4-5:15

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. . .when one is telling a story and one is using words to tell the story, each word that one is speaking has a story of its own, too. Often the speakers, or tellers, will go into these words' stories, creating an elaborate structure of stories within stories...This perspective on narrative—of story within story, the idea that one story is only the beginning of many stories and the sense that stories never end—represents an important contribution of Native American cultures to the English language.

-Leslie Marmon Silko, "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective"

*I am the one whose death was intended
and didn't die*

-Connie Fife, "Dear Webster"

In this course we will read Native American literature from origin stories, which continue to be told today, to contemporary poetry and prose. We will also examine art work, music, and film in order to approach this literature with the dynamic spirit it deserves. In considering the various stories that Native Americans tell, we will address a number of questions: how is the unique legal relationship between American Indians and the United States government represented in Native literature? How do these authors contest and revise stereotypes of Indians? How should Native American literature be taught and read, given its diversity and its roots in the oral tradition? How do these texts challenge what we think of as storytelling, "America," and even ourselves? Students will be expected to keep up with current events via newspapers and the Internet and to become more acquainted with issues affecting Indigenous people. This semester we will also have the rare opportunity to meet Joy Harjo, former US Poet Laureate and much-renowned Native writer.

Note This course fulfills the GEF Requirement F6 (The Arts and Creativity) and the GEC Requirements 5 and 9

COURSE GOALS

By the end of the semester, you should demonstrate:

- An understanding of and appreciation for the diverse oral and written literatures and histories of Native America;
- A sharpened ability to compare, contrast, and draw connections between Native American literary texts;

- Enhanced close reading, writing, and speaking skills.

COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS

The following texts are available at the Book Exchange and the WVU Bookstore. If at all possible, please purchase these editions so that we are all on the same page.

Required:

Purdy and Ruppert, *Nothing But the Truth* (Prentice 2000)

Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (New Mexico 1976)

Glancy, *Pushing the Bear* (Harvest 1996)

Erdrich, *The Round House* (Harper 2012)

Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Little Brown 2007)

One notebook for journal

REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation** (20% of final grade). Poor attendance will lower your final grade. **More than four unexcused absences will result in a zero for attendance and participation.**

Your participation grade will be based on the following:

- Your overall engagement in our discussions and writing activities.** We don't often think of listening as an element of participation, but a productive learning environment is characterized by participants who hear and respect others' words even if they don't agree with them. I welcome debate that is balanced with mutual respect.

- Your completion of assigned readings before coming to class.** Our discussions and writing assignments require your familiarity and engagement with these readings. If you don't come prepared, you do a disservice to yourself and to the other students. Since several assigned readings will be sent to you via e-mail, you need to check your e-mail account frequently. Unannounced pop quizzes will be given periodically in order to encourage the completion of reading assignments. They cannot be made up in the case of absence. The lowest score will be dropped when final grades are calculated.

2. **“The First Word” report on an *Indian Country Today (ICT)* article** (5% of final grade). In the first five minutes of most class days, a student will comment on an article from *ICT*. Don't merely summarize the article; discuss how it relates to our class, raise related questions, and/or offer your own take on the issue. You do not need to turn in anything for your First Word, although it would be helpful to pass around a copy of the article. You will be evaluated on your clarity and engagement with the material. For articles, see www.indiancountrytoday.com.

3. **Journal** (15% of final grade). In addition to responding to various prompts throughout the semester, you will need to respond to one Native American Studies event. Your response should not be a mere summary of the event; rather, it should connect the event to the issues and materials you have encountered in class. Your journal entries may be typed or handwritten; if the latter, please make sure they are legible. Each should be a minimum of one page. The journal will be due twice over the course of the semester.
4. **Three Exams** (each is 20% of final course grade). These exams ask you to analyze texts and integrate the information that we have discussed, sharpening your ability to engage in the literary analysis that is the hallmark of the discipline. The first exam will take place in class, the second is a take-home test, and the third constitutes the final exam.

CLASS POLICIES

COURSE POLICIES

*Statement regarding Covid.** Although infections have decreased with the availability of vaccines, we are still in the midst of a complex, rapidly-changing event that might require small or significant changes in the syllabus or class procedures. My first concern is of course health and safety, so I will defer to medical officials in making decisions about the class. If you (or a close friend or family member) happen to fall ill with Covid, be sure to notify your professors; we can then make a plan with you for classwork. Our classes will be in person. If you are not comfortable with this format, please replace this with another class. **Please make sure I have the email address you check frequently and stay in constant contact with me throughout the semester.** We will get through this!

For the safety of you and your peers, please get vaccinated, wear a mask, and observe social distancing during class.

University statement: WVU is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Should campus operations change because of health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic or other campus-wide emergency, it is possible that this course will move to a fully online delivery format. If that occurs, students will be advised of technical and/or equipment requirements, including remote proctoring software.

Updated WVU Attendance Policy In a face-to-face environment, our commitment to safety requires students, staff, and instructors to observe the social distancing and personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines set by the University at all times. While in class, students will sit in assigned seats when required and will wear PPE

according to current University guidelines. Students who fail to comply may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for sanctions.

As detailed in the WVU Attendance policy, a student who becomes sick or is required to quarantine during the semester should notify the instructor. The student should then work with the instructor to develop a plan to complete the course learning outcomes while he or she is absent.

Punctual attendance is required. Tardiness or poor attendance will adversely affect your final grade (**more than four unexcused absences will result in a zero for attendance and participation**). Please make every effort to arrive to class on time; important announcements will often be made in the first few minutes of class.

Late work is not acceptable. Any assignment handed in after the class period in which it is due will be penalized for lateness (**reduced 1/2 letter grade each day it is late, including the day it is due**). No assignment will be accepted more than five days after the due date. If a personal emergency arises and you need an extension, speak to me as soon as possible about your situation. Plan ahead for computer mishaps: always keep a back-up file of your work, and give yourself plenty of time to print.

Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Your classmates and instructors deserve your respect and support just as you deserve theirs. Try not to dominate the discussion or get us off track; be patient with classmates who may need to ask a question that seems obvious to you. Likewise, avoid actions that are distracting or that prevent you from getting the most out of the class (e.g. text messaging, holding side conversations, reading the newspaper, etc.). Laptops are not acceptable for classroom use without prior permission. You want to signal that you are paying attention and that you respect others. Any day on which a cell phone is used during class time (without prior instructor permission) will result in a one-point subtraction from your final grade.

I do not discuss grades over e-mail.

Plagiarism, a form of theft, is prohibited

Plagiarism is defined as the submission of work that contains ideas not fully your own: ideas taken from publications, other students, your professors, the Internet, etc. Remember that you are required to cite a source if you include a direct quotation *or* if you borrow an idea and put it in your own words. If you have questions about the fine line between being influenced by a text or person and plagiarizing its/his/her ideas, cite the source. For a more detailed description of plagiarism, as well as the correct form for citation of sources, see a writing handbook or ask me. The consequences of a proven case of plagiarism may result in an unforgivable “F” in the course.

Student Success, Basic Needs, and Inclusivity

Any student who faces challenges securing their food, housing, mental health, or other elements of wellbeing, and believes these situations may affect their

performance in the course is urged to contact the Student Advocacy Center for support. Furthermore, if you are comfortable in doing so, please notify me so I can assist you. Your reaching out will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess and to try and connect you to others who can help, too.

Academic Integrity Statement

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, instructors will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of their courses. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University Academic Standards Policy:

(<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification>). Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see your instructor before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Adverse Weather Statement

In the event of inclement or threatening weather, everyone should use his or her best judgment regarding travel to and from campus. Safety should be the main concern. If you cannot get to class because of adverse weather conditions, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible. Similarly, if your instructor(s) are unable to reach the class location, they will notify you of any cancellation or change as soon as possible, using agreed upon methods to prevent students from embarking on any unnecessary travel. If you cannot get to class because of weather conditions, instructors will make allowances relative to required attendance policies, as well as any scheduled tests, quizzes, or other assessments. [adopted 9-8-2014]

Sexual Misconduct Statement

West Virginia University does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence [BOG Rule 1.6]. It is important for you to know that there are resources available if you or someone you know needs assistance. You may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff; keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator. (<https://titleix.wvu.edu/staff>)

If you want to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from the **Carruth Center, 304-293-9355 or 304-293-4431** (24-hour hotline), and locally within the community at the **Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center (RDVIC), 304-292-5100 or 304-292-4431** (24-hour hotline).

For students at WVU-Beckley, contact the Women's Resource Center at 304-255-1585 (toll free at 1-888-825-7836) or REACH at 304-340-3676. For students at WVU-Keyser, contact the WVU-Keyser Psychological Counseling Services Office at 304-788-6976,

and locally in Keyser, the Family Crisis Center, 304-788-6061 or 1-800-698-1240 (24-hour hotline).

For more information, please consult WVU's Title IX Office (<https://titleix.wvu.edu/resources-offices>).

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. In accordance with that commitment I maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and nondiscrimination. WVU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, disability, age, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestion as how to promote such a positive and open environment in this class is appreciated and given serious attention.

Inclusivity Statement

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in your classes, please advise your instructors and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services. (<https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>). More information is available at the Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (<https://diversity.wvu.edu/>). [adopted 2-11-2013]

SCHEDULE

Each piece should be read by the date on which it is listed. This schedule is subject to change. If a reading is available via handout (H), it will be provided the class period before it is due. E-mailed readings (E) will be sent before the class in which they are assigned. Be sure I have the address for the e-mail account you use regularly.

NBT=*Nothing But the Truth* (anthology)

E=eCampus reading

H=handout

Native American Literature Research: <https://libguides.wvu.edu/nas>

Beth Toren, WVU librarian (beth.toren@mail.wvu.edu)

T Jan. 11 Introduction

Stereotypes and Realities

R Jan. 13 Mihesuah, excerpts from *American Indians: Stereotypes and Realities* (E); Loewen, excerpt from *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (E); Alexie, "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel" (NBT 425); Dunn, "I Am the Real Hollywood Indian" (H)

T Jan. 18 Allen, “The Sacred Hoop” (NBT 62); Momaday, “The Man Made of Words” (NBT 82); Sample origin stories (E)

R Jan. 20 Silko, “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective” (NBT 159); Silko, “Storytelling” (NBT 544); King, excerpt from *The Truth About Stories* (E)

T Jan. 25 Blaeser, “Trickster: The Compendium” (E); Silko, “Toe’osh: A Laguna Coyote Story” (NBT 548); “Iktomi Takes Back a Gift” (E); Sellers, “The New Coyote” (E)

R Jan. 27 Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (Prologue-XII)

T Feb. 1 *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (to end)

R Feb. 3 Exam One (in class)

Native Identity

T Feb. 8 Weaver, “Indigenous Identity” (E); Turcotte, “Back When” poems (E); Hogan, “The Truth Is” (NBT 492); Allen, “Dear World” (NBT 430); Rendon, “What’s an Indian Woman to Do?” (E)

Last day to drop a class or withdraw from university

R Feb. 10 Ortiz, “Towards a National Indian Literature” (NBT 120); Zepeda, “Pulling Down the Clouds” and “Cewagi” (E); Tapahanso, “This Is How They Were Placed For Us” (E); Sanchez, “Tribal Chant” (E)

T Feb. 15 Deloria, “Indian Humor” (NBT 39); Alexie, “The Approximate Size of my Favorite Tumor” (NBT 194); Excerpt from *Me Pretty* (E)

R Feb. 17 King, “Borders” (NBT 289); Vizenor, “Almost Browne” (E)

T Feb. 22 Qwo-Li Driskill, “Stolen from Our Bodies” (E); Miranda, “Dildos, Hummingbirds, and Driving Her Crazy” (E); Belcourt, “Colonialism: A Love Story” (E)
Journal 1 Due

R Feb. 24 Riding In, “Repatriation: A Pawnee’s Perspective” (E); Hedge Coke, “Burial Mound” (H); H. Erdrich, “Guidelines for the Treatment of Native Objects” and “Kennewick Man Tells All” (H); Rose, “I expected My Skin and My Blood to Ripen” (NBT 531)

Telling History

T March 1 No Class

R March 3 Johnson, “As It Was in the Beginning” (NBT 282); Zitkala-Ša, “The Soft-Hearted Sioux” (NBT 406) and excerpt from *American Indian Stories* (E)

T March 8 Apress, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (E); Boudinot, “Address to the Whites” (E); Excerpt from *The Cherokee Removal* (E)

R March 10 Glancy, *Pushing the Bear* (“North Carolina”-“The Stockade”)

R Mar. 12-20 SPRING BREAK

March 21-25 Edit-a-thon (extra credit)

T March 22 Glancy, *Pushing the Bear* (“Tennessee”)

R March 24 Glancy, *Pushing the Bear* (“Kentucky”-“Illinois”)

T March 29 Glancy, *Pushing the Bear* (to end)

R March 31 Harjo, “An American Sunrise”; “She Had Some Horses”; “Perhaps the World Ends Here” (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/search?query=Joy+Harjo>); “Fear Poem” (<https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/eng190/files/2012/11/Joy-Harjo.fearpoem.pdf>)

T April 5 Erdrich, *The Round House* (Chapters 1-3); Erdrich, *New York Times* editorial (E)

Harjo Reading

Exam Two Distributed (take-home test)

R April 7 Erdrich, *The Round House* (Chapters 4-7)

T April 12 Erdrich, *The Round House* (Chapter 8)

Exam Two Due (take-home test)

R April 14 Erdrich, *The Round House* (Chapters 9-end)

Journal 2 due

T April 19 Alexie, *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (1-66)

R April 21 Alexie, *Absolutely True Diary* (67-129)

T April 26 Alexie, *Absolutely True Diary* (to end)

R April 28 CONCLUSION

Final due: to eCampus by W May 4, 10 a.m.