

**ENGLISH 244-23371**  
**INTRODUCTION TO NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURES: TEXTS AND CONTEXTS**

Professor Kirby Brown  
Office: 523 PLC  
Office Hours: M 2-4pm, T 11am-12pm, and by appointment  
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Class Meetings  
MW 8:30am-9:50am  
CON 260

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In 1968, Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for American literature. Momaday's award signaled for many the "arrival" of Native authors to the American literary scene, and ushered in an unprecedented era of Native literary production widely, if not erroneously, known as the Native American Renaissance. While the explosion of Native writing and the critical tradition that emerged from it carved out much needed cultural and institutional spaces for Native self-representation and Native Studies, it had the unintended effect of privileging contemporary Native novels over writing from other periods and across various forms of discourses. As a result, a large, diverse archive of Native writing went largely unexamined until recently.

This introductory survey of Native American literature widens the net to include an array of native self-representation across genres, regions, periods, forms and tribal nations. We will read cultural critiques and policy debates alongside short stories and novels, as well as juxtapose poetry and drama alongside short films, videos and academic histories. In addition to gaining a better understanding of and appreciation for the diversity and complexity of Native American intellectual and cultural production, you will also leave the course with a historically-nuanced grasp of some of the major issues, questions, and concerns that run throughout the cultural production of Indian Country today. More practically, we will throughout the term consistently work to hone close, critical reading skills applicable to a variety of textual forms and intellectual/professional contexts.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Thomas King (Cherokee), *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*.  
Leann Howe (Choctaw), *The Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*.  
Sherman Alexie (Coeur d'Alene), *The Toughest Indian in the World*.  
Devon Mihesuah (Choctaw), *American Indians: Stereotype and Realities*.  
Other readings, videos and music via Blackboard

**\*\*All course primary course texts on reserve in the Knight Library\*\***

**SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS ON RESERVE IN THE KNIGHT LIBRARY**

Colin Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, esp. chapters 5-8. This text is an accessible introduction to Native American history which will supplement the historical contexts discussed in class.

**PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE**

You are expected to attend class regularly, bring assigned texts to class and make substantial contributions to class discussions. This requires that you keep up with the reading assignments, make observations and take careful notes for each text, and bring thoughtful questions or concerns to class. **Always remain civil and on point in your discussion of texts and ideas.**

Missing class more than twice in the term will result in reduction of your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade for each absence beyond the two permitted. There is no distinction between excused and

unexcused absences. If you miss class, **it is your responsibility entirely** to get notes for that day and catch up on any material you missed.

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT**

This course offers a variety of assignments by which your performance is ultimately assessed so that your final grade is not dependent upon a single skill or performance. These include class participation and group work, weekly reading quizzes, online exercises, short writing assignments, and two exams. All assignments are due at the beginning of the class on which they are due. **Late assignments will be accepted under no circumstances.**

### Introductory Reflection Essay

“What I (think I) Know About Indians”: Instructions available on Blackboard

### Reading Journals

You are required to keep a daily reading journal (Exam Green Books @ Duckstore) for this course in which to take notes, ask questions, make observations, and sketch out preliminary and ongoing thoughts about the readings for the week. These journals will be evaluated after each unit on a credit/no credit basis. To receive full credit, you **must** demonstrate **legitimate engagement** of **at least a one full page** for each assigned text. For those using the “Strategies for Close Reading” handout, this will not pose a problem.

### Breakout Sessions and Exit Cards

On the first day of class you will be assigned to peer groups. In these “breakout sessions” you will: 1) briefly discuss some of the questions, ideas or problems that you encountered in the readings and journal entries for that day, and 2) submit a **3x5 notecard** with any questions, concerns, or interests that remain for next time signed by those group members present. These activities are designed to “prime” class discussions, afford consistent feedback through which to better address your questions and interests, and monitor attendance.

### Reading Quizzes

Plan on short, unannounced quizzes **at least once a week** to evaluate your engagement with and recall of course readings. Quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class. Under no circumstances will you be allowed to make them up. Additionally, if you come to class, take the quiz, and then leave, you will be counted absent and your quiz nullified.

### Course Blog

Each student is required to participate in the course blog available on Blackboard. Based upon your group assignments, you will contribute **one significant blog post** (minimum 500 words, or two double-spaced pages) on “post weeks” and respond to **at least two blog posts of your peers** on “response weeks.” Specific instructions available on Blackboard.

### Midterm and Final Exams

The midterm will be composed primarily of passage identification and short responses over assigned texts as well as lecture material class discussions. The final exam will be composed exclusively of essay questions, and will ask you to comprehensively synthesize information from across the term.

## GRADING

Reflection Essay	5% (cr/no cr)
Quizzes	5%
Participation & Group Work	10% (cr/no cr)
Reading Journal	10% (cr/.5 cr/no cr)
Course Blog	15% (cr./no cr.)
Midterm Examination	25%
Final Examination	30%

## CLASS COMMUNICATION

Get in the habit of checking your UO email account regularly as this will be our primary means of communication outside of class. **Please be aware that I will not respond to emails sent after 5pm or on the weekend until the next weekday.**

## INCLEMENT WEATHER

If inclement weather makes traveling to campus difficult, I will notify you by email and/or voice mail about whether we are holding class. If the weather is bad, check your email for a message from me, and check my voice mail (541-346-1314) if there are electrical outages around town that might prevent my emailing you. Whether or not I decide to hold class, you should use your own judgment about the safety of traveling to campus.

## DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon and request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability.

## TITLE IX POLICY AND REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. Additionally, all UO employees **are required to report** to appropriate authorities (supervisor or Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity) when they have reasonable cause to believe that any child with whom they come in contact has suffered abuse or any person with whom they come in contact has abused a child.

## ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University Student Conduct Code ([conduct.uoregon.edu](http://conduct.uoregon.edu)) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at [www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students](http://www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Texts</u>	<u>Assignment Due</u>
<b>Week 1</b>		
Jan. 6	<b>Introductions, Logistics, Framing the Course</b>	
Jan. 8	<b>Introduction: The Stories We Tell</b> TEXT: King, <i>The Truth About Stories</i> , Ch. 1 & 3  CONTEXTS: Mihesuah, "11. Indians are a Vanished Race," "1. Indians are all alike," & "22. Indians know all the histories"	
Jan. 10		<b>REFLECTION ESSAY</b>
<b>Week 2</b>		
Jan. 13	<b>Unit 1: Popular Culture, Representation and Gender</b> TEXT: Apess, "Eulogy On King Philip" (Blackboard)  CONTEXTS: Mihesuah, "Afterword: The Effects of Stereotyping"; 1491s and Ryan Red Corn, " <a href="#">Bad Indians</a> "	
Jan. 15	TEXT: Johnson, "A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction" and "A Red Girl's Reasoning" (Blackboard)  CONTEXTS: Mihesuah, "4. Indians had no civilization...";	
Jan. 17		<b>BLOG POST #1 (1,3,5,7)</b> <b>BLOG RESPONSE #1 (2,4,6,8)</b>
<b>Week 3</b>		
Jan. 20	<b>NO CLASS – MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY</b>	
Jan. 22	TEXT: Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex" (Blackboard); Mojica, <i>Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots</i> (Whole Play)  CONTEXTS: Mihesuah, "8. Indians did not value or empower women"	
<b>Week 4</b>		
Jan. 27	TEXT: Mojica, <i>Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots</i>  CONTEXTS: Smith, excerpts from "Sexual Violence as a Tool Of Genocide" (Blackboard)	
Jan. 29	TEXT: Mojica, <i>Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots</i>  CONTEXTS: Erdrich, " <a href="#">Rape on the Reservations</a> ";	

1491s, "To the Indigenous Woman" (Youtube); White Buffalo Calf Women's Society, "It Ends Where It Begins" (Youtube); Rebecca Belmore, "Fringe" (image)

Jan. 31

**BLOG POST #1 (2,4,6,8)**  
**BLOG RESPONSE #1 (1,3,5,7)**

**Week 5**

Feb. 3

**Assimilation and the Assault on Native Nations, Lands and Families**

TEXTS: King, Ch. 5; Zitkala Sa/Gertrude Bonnin, "School Days of an Indian Girl" (Blackboard)

CONTEXTS: "Debates in American Indian Education" (Blackboard); Mihesuah, "16. Indians are not capable of completing school"

Feb. 5

TEXT: Zitkala-Sa/Gertrude Bonnin, "School Days of an Indian Girl" (continued); Oskison, "The Problem of Old Harjo" (Blackboard)

CONTEXTS: Zitkala-Sa, "Why I Am a Pagan" (Blackboard)

Feb. 7

**BLOG POST #2 (1,3,5,7)**  
**BLOG RESPONSE #2 (4,6,8,2)**

**Week 6**

Feb. 10

TEXTS: Oskison, "The Problem of Old Harjo" (continued); Bronson, "The Serpent" (Blackboard)

CONTEXTS; Montezuma, "Let My People Go!" (Blackboard)

Feb. 12

**MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 7**

Feb. 17

TEXT: King, Ch. 2; Howe, *Miko Kings*, 1-67

CONTEXTS: *His Last Game* (silent film; in-class screening)

Feb. 19

TEXT: Howe, *Miko Kings*, 68-150

CONTEXTS: Howe, "The Story of America: A Tribalography" (Blackboard)

Feb. 21

**BLOG POST #2 (2,4,6,8)**  
**BLOG RESPONSE #2 (3,5,7,1)**

**Week 8**

Feb. 24 TEXT: Howe, *Miko Kings*, 151-188

CONTEXT: Howe, "Choctalking on Other Realities" (Blackboard)

Feb. 26 TEXT: Howe, *Miko Kings*, 188-221

Feb. 28

**BLOG POST #3 (1,3,5,7)**  
**BLOG RESPONSE #3 (6,8,4,2)**

**Week 9**

Mar. 3 **Writing Contemporary Native Lives**

TEXT: King, Ch. 4; Alexie 1-20

CONTEXT: King, "I'm Not the Indian You Had in Mind" (short film)

Mar. 5 TEXT: Alexie, 1-20 (continued), 35-56

Mar. 7

**BLOG POST #3 (2,4,6,8)**  
**BLOG RESPONSE #3 (5,7,3,1)**

**Week 10**

Mar. 11 TEXT: Alexie, 21-34, 121-149

CONTEXT: *As They Are: Two-Spirited People in the Modern World*  
(18 min., short film)

Mar. 13 TEXT: Alexie, 150-188, 209-238

CONTEXT: Writing Against Deficit and the Problem  
of "Poverty Porn"

**Week 11**

Mar. 20 **TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE VIA BLACKBOARD BY 5PM**