

English 361-27542
NATIVE AMERICAN WRITERS: NOVEL

Professor Kirby Brown
Office: 523 PLC Hall
Office Hours: M 2-4pm, T 11am-12pm, and by appointment
kbrown@uoregon.edu

Class Meetings
MW: 12pm-1:20pm
Allen 101

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Cherokee/Choctaw scholar Louis Owens declared that all Native novels are centrally occupied with recovering and (re)articulating an Indigenous sense of identity from within the discursive and linguistic contexts of colonialism. For Owens, this inherently dialogic process draws heavily on elements of the oral tradition and finds its most powerful articulation in the mixed-blood protagonist. Often depicted as a mongrel degradation of both Indian and non-Indian peoples, Owens argues that the mixedblood becomes in the work of Native writers a figure of possibility and transformation whose return home signals not a loss of authenticity but an attempt by Native writers to write themselves into "other destinies and other plots."

Though important for its attention to the intersections between Native, narrative and postcolonial studies, some indict Owens' work for unnecessarily privileging the mixedblood experience and foregrounding mediation and negotiation with the colonial center at the expense of local and diasporic Indigenous experiences and histories. Still others question the practical efficacy of postcolonial theory to address the politics of Native writing. Informed by the questions organizing this debate, this reading-intensive course examines the Native novel/novella from its emergence to the present day, paying particular attention to the ways in which critical methodologies define and delimit understandings of the politics of Native writing.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Zitkala-Sa/Gertrude Bonnin (Dakota), *American Indian Stories* (1902)
John Joseph Mathews (Osage), *Sundown* (1934)
N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1967)
Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), *Ceremony* (1976)
D'Arcy McNickle (Salish & Kootenai), *Wind from an Enemy Sky* (1978)
Gerald Vizenor (White Earth Anishinaabe), *Heirs of Columbus* (1992)
LeAnne Howe (Choctaw), *The Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story* (2007)
Other readings available on Blackboard
**All primary texts are available 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, informal online blog discussions, group facilitations, and two formal essay exams. All assignments are due at the beginning of the class. **Late assignments will be accepted under no circumstances.**

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 credit, you **must** demonstrate **legitimate engagement** of **at least a one full page** for each assigned text.

Class Blog (Blackboard)

Blog Discussions and Responses are your opportunity to engage critically with a primary text, essay or critical concept as well as respond thoughtfully to the thoughts, arguments and analyses of your peers. Each student will be required to submit one original post and reply to two others **at least four times** throughout the term. **Blog posts** should synthesize ideas from your reading journal, class discussions, group work and course notes, and critically explore an issue, problem or question of form that the texts bring up (i.e. I want to see you wrestling with the text). **Responses** should substantively engage the issues, problems or questions posed in blog posts in an informal yet respectful and sophisticated way (i.e. I want to see you wrestling with the ideas and arguments of your peers).

Group Facilitation

In groups, you will be asked to facilitate a discussion of how historical or other documents inform our understanding of the week's readings. Facilitations should be between **15-20 minutes** in length and should eventually guide our attention to **three or four** problems, questions, or critical issues to guide discussion. You should print out a 1-2 page handout for the class that outlines your main ideas/claims on the text and lists 3-4 discussion questions. **I encourage you to use A/V technology and to consult with me ahead of time.** You will be evaluated based upon your understanding and communication of the material, the clarity and creativity of your presentations, and your ability to field questions from your colleagues and guide discussion.

Close Readings

These formal written exercises will ask you to focus on a formal, thematic, or narrative element of the text and explicate its function and significance to the rest of the work. Readings should be driven by a **clearly articulated thesis statement** that makes an **interpretive claim on the text**. You will support this thesis with **evidence from the text** followed by your own **interpretive explanation**. Papers should be double-spaced with 1" margins and composed in Times New Roman 12-point font (see example on Blackboard). You will have the opportunity to revise both papers for a ½ grade point bump. Revisions should include a cover page with a one paragraph reflection on the revision process.

Final Exam (option 1)

The final exam will be comprehensive, composed exclusively of essay questions, and will ask you to synthesize information from throughout the term.

Final Research Project (option 2)

In lieu of a final exam, you may elect to perform a final research project. The project can be an extension of one of your close readings, or a new project entirely. Regardless, it must in some way engage one or more of the texts, critical issues, or historical contexts we've discussed in class. It can take the form of a traditional research paper, or can employ various technologies and forms (visual culture, material culture, new media; film, music, television, graphic novels, comics, gaming). If you choose this path, you need to work out the logistics directly with me well ahead of time (generally by week 5). A draft presentation should be prepared by week 8 or 9 for discussion and feedback. Final drafts will be due on the day of the final exam, posted to the final exam assignment on Blackboard.

GRADING

Reading Journal	5%
Group Facilitation	10%
Course Blog	15%
Close Reading #1 (2-3pp)	15%
Close Reading #2 (5-7pp)	25%
Final Exam/Research Project	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. I highly recommend trying to contact me via email rather than telephone as I check it regularly and am thus able to respond more quickly, generally within two working days. **Also 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) 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Reading	Assignment Due
Week 1		
Jan. 6	Introductions, Logistics, Framing the Course	
	Unit 1: “Kill the Indian, Save the Man”: Education, Allotment and Family	
Jan. 8	Zitkala Sa/Gertrude Bonnin, <i>American Indian Stories</i> , “Impressions of an Indian Childhood”	
	<i>**Model Facilitation: “Ethnography, auto-Ethnography”</i>	
Jan. 10		BLOG POST/RESPONSE #1
Week 2		
Jan. 13	Zitkala Sa/Gertrude Bonnin, <i>American Indian Stories</i> , “The School Days of an Indian Girl” and “An Indian Teacher Among Indians”	
	<i>**Model Facilitation: “Indian Education Policy and the Indigenous Politics of Sentimental Fiction”</i>	
Jan. 15	Mathews, <i>Sundown</i> 1-86	
Jan. 17		BLOG POST/RESPONSE #2
Week 3		
Jan. 20	NO CLASS – MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY Mathews, <i>Sundown</i> , 87-186	
Jan. 22	Mathews, <i>Sundown</i> , 187-244 <i>Facilitation: Stremmlau, “Allotment, Gender and the Native Family”</i>	
Week 4		
Jan. 27	Mathews, <i>Sundown</i> 245-312; Begin McNickle, <i>Wind from an Enemy Sky</i> , 1-100	CLOSE READING #1
Jan. 29	McNickle, <i>Wind from an Enemy Sky</i> , 101-173 <i>Facilitation: “Termination and Relocation”</i>	
Jan. 31		BLOG POST/RESPONSE #3
Week 5		
Feb. 3	McNickle, <i>Wind from an Enemy Sky</i> , 174-256 Unit 2: Contesting the Archive: Reclaiming Experience, Re-Writing/Righting Histories	
Feb. 5	Finish <i>Wind from an Enemy Sky</i> ; Begin Momaday, <i>Way to Rainy Mountain</i> , 1-41	

Facilitation: King, "A Million Porcupines Crying in the Dark"
(Blackboard)

Feb. 7

BLOG POST/RESPONSE #4

Week 6

Feb. 10

Momaday, *Way to Rainy Mountain*, 42-89

Facilitation: Momaday's "Man Made of Words" (Blackboard)

Feb. 12

Vizenor, *Heirs of Columbus*, 1-62

Feb. 14

BLOG POST/RESPONSE #5

Week 7

Feb. 17

Vizenor, *Heirs of Columbus*, 63-129

Feb. 19

Vizenor, *Heirs of Columbus*, 130-189

Facilitation: "Trickster Hermeneutics and Postindian Warriors of Survivance"

Feb. 21

BLOG POST/RESPONSE #6

Week 8

Unit 3: Historical Trauma and Healing Through Story

Feb. 24

Silko, *Ceremony*, 1-139

Feb. 26

Silko, *Ceremony*, 139-188

Facilitation: TBD

Feb. 28

BLOG POST/RESPONSE #7

Week 9

Mar. 3

Silko, *Ceremony*, 188-262

Facilitation: TBD

Mar. 5

Howe, *Miko Kings*, map-47

CLOSE READING #2

Week 10

Mar. 10

Howe, *Miko Kings*, 48-152

Mar. 12

Howe, *Miko Kings*; 153-221; Course Wrap-up

Facilitation: Howe, "The Story of America: A Tribalography" and "Choctalking On Other Realities"

Week 11

Mar. 19

**TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM OR FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT
DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 5PM**