Course Objectives
This course is designed to develop appreciation and understanding of contemporary Native American literature by practicing both in-class close reading and individual, written analysis of novels by Native Americans authors from the late 1960s to the present, a period commonly referred to as the Native American Literary Renaissance. From the publication of Momaday’s Pulitzer-Prize-winning House Made of Dawn in 1968 to Louise Erdrich’s The Painted Drum in 2006, the Native American works examined in this course exemplify both the shared concerns of Native American authors and debates regarding Native American identity and experience. Given the differing cultural beliefs of the numerous and distinct Native American peoples and the traumas of near-genocide, like the loss of homeland and culture they have endured in their separate communities, literature by Native American authors invites complex considerations of identity, including investment in tribal, Pan-Native American, and gender allegiances, as well as interrogations of humans’ relationship with the land. The combination of Native American oral traditions and contemporary American literary traditions to which these authors respond, also calls for particular attention to the authors’ formal innovations. For example, although this course focuses largely on Native American “novels,” challenging the boundaries of literary genre is one of the characteristics shared by many Native American authors; among the assigned texts, poetry may be included within fiction, multiple storylines and “protagonists” may compete for attention, organization may be cyclical rather than linear, and several disparate threads of narration may be used to represent, paradoxically, oral stories within written fiction. In an effort to improve your literary analytical skills and better inform your understanding of the assigned texts, we will discuss Native American literature in relation to relevant techniques and historical contexts. Brief lectures and supplementary in-class readings will be used to provide background about each author’s work and a sense of the central concerns and controversies surrounding Native American literature, while our class discussions will be geared to develop confidence in your ability to analyze each novel and convincingly support your interpretations.

Required Texts
House Made of Dawn by N. Scott Momaday (Harper Perennial, 2010)
Ceremony by Leslie Marmon Silko (Penguin Classics, 2006)
Reservation Blues by Sherman Alexie (Warner Books, 1996)
The Painted Drum by Louise Erdrich (Harper Perennial, 2006)

Note: Access to the internet and a University of Oregon web account are requirements of this course because announcements and assignments will be distributed periodically through email and/or the blackboard class site, which requires an email account for access.
Course Requirements and Grading

1. Participation in Discussion & In-Class Activities: Since this class relies heavily on close-reading discussions, the active engagement of everyone is crucial. For the purposes of this course, active engagement has three main components: respectful and attentive listening to the comments and ideas of others, significant contribution to in-class discussions, and productive participation in the various in-class activities, such as group work or writing exercises, assigned over the course of the term. If you feel you may have a problem meeting these criteria, please come see me during the first week of the term. Active participation in discussions and class activities, combined with any quizzes which may be given, will represent 20% of your course grade.

2. Midterm Exam: The midterm will require both identifications and close reading of brief passages from the first two novels. (10%)

3. Final Exam: The final exam will be cumulative and will require both identifications and close reading of brief passages from all four assigned novels. (20%)

4. Short Essay (3-4 pages): The short essay will require a clear thesis supported by careful close reading of assigned passages from one of the first two assigned novels. (20%)

5. Final Essay (5-6 pages): The final essay will require a clear thesis supported by careful close reading of assigned passages from any two of the assigned novels. (30%)

Policies

1. Attendance: More than four absences will result in the lowering of your final course grade by one grade step (from a B to a B-, for instance) per absence regardless of the cause; therefore, it will be your responsibility to budget your absences in case of illness. In addition, please note that class will start promptly, and if you arrive after class begins, you will be considered late. Four late appearances equal one absence and will affect your grade accordingly. If you arrive more than fifteen minutes late, you will be marked as absent. When you miss a class or are late, it is your responsibility to check with your classmates or myself to find out what you have missed, such as mandatory class activities or announcements regarding schedule changes.

2. Honesty: Plagiarism is unacceptable in this class under any circumstances and the University policies regarding plagiarism will be strictly enforced. All work submitted for this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented using MLA format. Please refer to the “Format and Documentation” handout and the summary of the Code of Student Conduct in the Schedule of Classes. In cases where plagiarism has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course grade is the standard practice of the University of Oregon. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

3. Class Environment: Because your primary opportunity to practice your close reading skills will be during our class discussions, your participation and attentiveness in class are crucial to your learning, and will affect your grade. Remember to bring the assigned readings and
relevant materials to class. The use of cell phones, mp3 players, iPods, or any other distracting electronic devices during class will significantly lower your participation grade, and the user of any such device may be asked to leave and receive an absence for the day. Likewise, carrying on private conversations, reading the newspaper, or working on assignments for other courses do not contribute to attentive participation and will affect your grade accordingly.

4. Late Work: If you are ill or unable to attend class, I will accept course work delivered by a peer or by email only if it is delivered before the end of class time on the due date. Because the course is cumulative, I will not be able to accept late essays! Therefore, it is better to turn in incomplete work on time rather than nothing at all, as you may at least be eligible for partial credit. Likewise, exams must be taken on the scheduled date and cannot be made up, except in the event that I am promptly notified of a documented medical emergency. In addition, please note that I will not be accepting any computer based excuses. It is your responsibility to start your work early enough so that even if computer problems arise you will still be able to get your work done on time.

5. Format: All assignments for this course must be typed, double-spaced, and have standard font and size (Arial or Times New Roman in 11 or 12 point) and one-inch margins all around. Please see the “Format and Documentation” handout for complete instructions. Failure to follow any of the formatting guidelines, as specified in the “Format and Documentation” handout, may lower your grade for the assignment at least one full grade (from an A to a B, for instance) or more.

6. Incompletes: No incompletes will be granted except in the case of documented emergency. In the event an undergraduate student is forced to take an Incomplete, she or he will have one calendar year to make up the incomplete mark assigned by a UO faculty member. Failure to make up the Incomplete at the end of one calendar year will result in the mark of “I” automatically changing to a grade of “F” or “N.”

7. Accommodation: If you have a disability (physical or learning) which you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so that we can discuss whatever accommodation(s) may be necessary.

8. Registration: The only way to add this class is through DuckWeb.

9. Syllabus: Be sure to read the syllabus carefully, if you have any questions or concerns after reading it please contact me during the first week of class. Your continued enrollment in this class indicates that you understand and accept the expectations and requirements as detailed in this syllabus.
Schedule of Events & Due Dates (subject to change at Instructor’s discretion)
Note: All articles are to be read before the class period for which they are assigned.

Week 1
Monday (3/28) – Discuss Syllabus and Schedule of Events
Wednesday (3/30) – Class Discussion of House Made of Dawn (1-33)
Friday (4/1) – Class Discussion of House Made of Dawn (34-76)

Week 2
Monday (4/4) – Class Discussion of House Made of Dawn (79-120)
Wednesday (4/6) – Class Discussion of House Made of Dawn (123-166)
Friday (4/8) – Class Discussion of House Made of Dawn (169-185)

Week 3
Monday (4/11) – Class Discussion of Ceremony (1-45)
Wednesday (4/13) – Class Discussion of Ceremony (45-78)
Friday (4/15) – Class Discussion of Ceremony (78-120)

Week 4
Monday (4/18) – Class Discussion of Ceremony (121-168)
Wednesday (4/20) – Class Discussion of Ceremony (168-198)
Friday (4/22) – Class Discussion of Ceremony (199-243)

Week 5
Monday (4/25) – Midterm Exam
Wednesday (4/27) – Class Discussion of Reservation Blues (1-52)
Friday (4/29) – Class Discussion of Reservation Blues (53-91)

Week 6
Monday (5/2) – Class Discussion of Reservation Blues (92-169)
Wednesday (5/4) – Class Discussion of Reservation Blues (170-195)
Friday (5/6) – Class Discussion of Reservation Blues (196-244)

Week 7
Monday (5/9) – Class Discussion of Reservation Blues (245-306)
Wednesday (5/11) – View Smoke Signals
Friday (5/13) – View & Discuss Smoke Signals

Week 8
Monday (5/16) – Class Discussion of The Painted Drum (1-94)
Wednesday (5/18) – Class Discussion of The Painted Drum (97-147)
Friday (5/20) – Class Discussion of The Painted Drum (148-186)

Week 9
Monday (5/23) – Class Discussion of The Painted Drum (189-221)
Wednesday (5/25) – Class Discussion of The Painted Drum (222-254)
Friday (5/27) – Class Discussion of The Painted Drum (257-276)
Week 10
Monday (5/30) – Memorial Holiday
Wednesday (6/1) – Workshop for Final Essay
Friday (6/3) – Final Exam

Finals’ Week: Final Essay is due Wednesday (6/8) before 5 pm in PLC 343