

English 244: Introduction to Native American Literature Winter 2020, CRN 26547

Instructor: Alex Cavanaugh
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Class meetings:
T/R 10-11:20 a.m.
Lokey Education Building 116

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-1:00 and by appointment

Course description: The prolific White Earth Ojibwe writer Gerald Vizenor conceptualizes the cultural work of Indigenous literatures as “survivance,” wherein Indigenous writers and artists declare “an active sense of presence” in resistance to mainstream stereotypes of vanishing Native peoples. According to Vizenor, survivance also reflects Indigenous literature’s “renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry.” In this introductory course, we will engage with Indigenous texts from a variety of forms and genres, attending to issues of sovereignty, nationhood, and social and environmental justice to better understand, in part, Vizenor’s often-cited theory of survivance. Via thoughtful reading, discussion, and writing, we will learn about the lived implications of federal law, the historical legacy of settler colonialism, and media representation of Native peoples, and we will examine some of the ways Native literatures confront and transcend these contexts.

Learning Outcomes:

- Situate conventional literary texts alongside other cultural forms in which Native peoples exercise self-representation.
- Locate writers and texts within their appropriate historical, cultural, and literary contexts.
- Gain a more complicated understanding of and appreciation for the diversity and complexity of Native American intellectual and cultural productions.
- Develop a historically-nuanced grasp of some of the major issues, questions, and concerns that run throughout Native Country today, specifically the relationship between cultural production, federal policy, and sovereignty and self-determination movements.
- Develop capacities to engage in thoughtful, critical debate around questions of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, citizenship, and belonging.

From the University Catalog: “In addition to being Arts and Letters group-satisfying, this course also fulfills the UO multicultural requirement, category B: Identity, Pluralism, and Tolerance because of its engagement with the changing nature of Native identities and the historical and contemporary relationships between Native communities and the dominant U.S. society.”

Required Texts:

Thomas King (Cherokee), *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*
Tommy Orange (Cheyenne and Arapaho), *There There*
Winona LaDuke (White Earth Ojibwe), *Last Standing Woman*
Tommy Pico (Kumeyaay), *Nature Poem*

Additional texts will be provided via Canvas

GRADING, ASSESSMENT, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Grade breakdown:

15%: Attendance and Engagement
15%: Canvas Quizzes
20%: Midterm exam
30%: Final exam
20%: Reading responses

Attendance and Engagement: *15% of the overall course grade*

I will keep track of attendance throughout the term. Students may miss **three class sessions** without consequence; beyond that, **each absence will result in a 3% reduction in their overall course grade**. Students who observe religious holidays, who are involved in university sanctioned activities, or who have other commitments or circumstances that conflict with the academic requirements of the course **must inform me and make arrangements in person in advance of the conflict**.

Engagement will be tracked by my observing class discussions (large and small group), preparation for class activities including completing and bringing readings to class, and review of in-class writings. **As long as you complete the readings and make**

thoughtful engagement in some capacity, you will receive engagement credit. If you do not complete the readings, are not engaged during discussion (including using a cell phone or computer for activities unrelated to the class), or are otherwise not participating in the class session, you will not receive engagement credit or may only receive partial credit for that day. **Engagement grades and attendance records will be posted periodically to Canvas.**

Canvas Quizzes: *15% of the overall course grade*

Starting in Week 2, there will be a short Canvas quiz due 1 hour before each of our class meetings for which we have assigned readings—there will be 15 total quizzes over the course of the term. Essentially reading quizzes, they will be built from a bank of randomized multiple-choice and true/false questions and will cover the readings assigned for that class session (they will not be cumulative). **The lowest four quizzes will be dropped from your average quiz grade; these will include any missed quizzes.**

Midterm exam: *20% of the overall course grade*

The midterm exam will consist of short answer and essay questions. Details on the format of the midterm exam will be provided during the first part of the term.

Final exam: *30% of the overall course grade*

The final exam will be a longer, cumulative exam in a similar format to the midterm exam; details will be provided in the second half of the term.

Reading responses: *20% of the overall course grade*

Over the course of the term you will write three short reading response essays, which will provide you an opportunity to explore your ideas in an extended process of thinking, drafting, and revising and will enable me to provide feedback on your writing as you prepare for the midterm and final exams. Details on these assignments will be provided in Week 1.

COURSE POLICIES

Course content, potential triggers, and intellectual discussion

The readings for this course take on challenging topics related to historic and ongoing settler-colonial violence, institutional and individual racism, sexual and gender-based violence, dispossession, and trauma. I expect that our class will address these topics with respect and compassion, but we will inevitably engage with these difficult issues

. If you feel the content might make completing readings, attending class, and engaging with the course difficult, please contact me or meet with me to discuss options and accommodation.

Inclusion and Accessibility Accommodations

If you have a documented need that necessitates accommodations in this course, please arrange to meet with me as soon as possible and request that a counselor at the Accessible Education Center send a letter verifying your requests and outlining an accommodation plan.

Plagiarism:

This course will not require outside research to complete written assignments or exams. Students who hand in written material that is not their own will receive an F for the course and a report will be submitted to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.

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. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, know that help and support are available. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that 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 discrimination, harassment, or abuse of any kind has taken, or is taking, place. Employees are NOT required to reveal the names of survivors, however. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially—i.e. those not required to report—you can call 541- 346-SAFE, UO’s 24-hour hotline to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options, as confidential counselors are not required reporters. You can also visit the SAFE website at <https://safe.uoregon.edu/services> for more information. Each resource is clearly labeled as either “required reporter,” “confidential UO employee,” or “off-campus,” to allow you to select your desired level of confidentiality.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to adjustment; changes will be posted on Canvas and announced via Canvas email

Readings from print texts include page numbers and chapter information; supplementary texts can be found in the Files folder on Canvas

* denotes a class session when there will be a Canvas quiz due one hour before we meet

Week 1

Tuesday, January 7

Course introduction

Thursday, January 9

Read King’s *The Truth About Stories*: chapter 1 (pp. 1-29) and Justice’s introduction to *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Canvas)

Week 2

Tuesday, January 14*

Assignment due: Reading Response 1 (submit on Canvas)
Read King: Chapter 2 (pp. 31-60) and early 20th century literature selections (Canvas)

Thursday, January 16*

Read Orange's *There There*: Prologue-Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield (pp. 1-61) and Moisa, "Relocation: The Promise and the Lie" (Canvas)

Week 3

Tuesday, January 21*

Read Orange: Edwin Black-Orvil Red Feather (pp. 62-133)

Thursday, January 23*

Read Orange: Interlude-Daniel Gonzales (pp. 134-196)

Week 4

Tuesday, January 28*

Read Orange: Blue-Calvin Johnson (197-250)

Thursday, January 30*

Assignment due: Reading Response 2 (submit on Canvas)
Read Orange: Daniel Gonzales-end (251-290) and King: Chapter 4 (91-119)

Week 5

Tuesday, February 4*

Read poetry selection (Canvas)

Thursday, February 6*

Read contemporary fiction selection (Canvas)

Week 6

Tuesday, February 11

Midterm

Thursday, February 13

No assigned reading (In-class screening of TV and web series)

Week 7

Tuesday, February 18*

Read Pico, *Nature Poem* 1-36

Thursday, February 20*

Read Pico, *Nature Poem* 37-end

Week 8

Tuesday, February 25*

Read King: Chapter 5 (pp. 121-167) and LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman: The Storyteller-The Drum* (pp. 17-43)

Thursday, February 27*

Read LaDuke: Wemitigoozhi-Gaajigewin (pp. 44-103)

Week 9

Tuesday, March 3*

Read LaDuke: The Passing-Denver (pp. 107-167)

Thursday, March 5*

Assignment due: Reading Response 3 (submit on Canvas)
Read LaDuke: Giiwedahn-Niimiidiwin 168-220

Week 10

Tuesday, March 10*

Read LaDuke: Leeching Capital of the World-Journal of Ishkwegaabawiikwe (pp. 225-299)

Thursday, March 12

Final exam review

Finals week

Final Exam TBD