

## NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN – RECOVERY, REPRESENTATION, RESURGENCE ENG 361-22743

Professor Kirby Brown  
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Office Hours: T: 2-4pm (PLC 523), W: 5-6pm (KIH 114)  
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Class Meetings: T/R noon-1:20pm  
Location: CON 360

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Writing helped me give voice to turn around a terrible silence that was killing me. And on a larger level, if we, as Indian people, *Indian women*, keep silent, then we will disappear, at least at this level of reality.

Joy Harjo (Mvskoke-Creek)



La Malinche. Pocahontas. Sacagawea. These are likely the only Indigenous women with whom many are familiar. Though real historical figures, these Indigenous women are often depicted in popular literature along a rigid spectrum as race traitors or colonial sympathizers, virtuous princesses or lascivious squaws. As Mohawk writer, performer, poet, and critic Pauline Johnson noted over 120 years ago, such framings erase the enormous cultural specificity and political diversity of tribal experience. Disney's

*Pocahontas*, hypersexualized "Pocahottie" Halloween costumes, and ongoing instances of cultural appropriation across all sectors of US life suggest the ongoing pervasiveness of such issues. While problematic in their own right, representations such as these also work to sanitize histories of settler colonial conflict, dispossession, and violence that continue to impact contemporary tribal peoples, often with devastating outcomes for Indigenous women. Johnson's late-19<sup>th</sup> century demand for more complex depictions of Indigenous women, then, isn't simply an issue of *cultural* (mis)representation, but also of the effects such representations exert on the *lived experiences* of Indigenous women. Thus it is that, for Indigenous women like Harjo, to write, speak, or represent oneself *as an Indigenous woman* is not merely an exercise in self-help. It is, literally, a matter of life and death.

Taking Pauline Johnson as a literary ancestor to Harjo and the other contemporary writers we'll read this term, this course explores what happens, to paraphrase Laguna writer Paula Gunn Allen, when Indigenous women speak and write for themselves. Much to the dismay of settler colonial discourse, Indigenous women have not gone quietly into that good night of erasure and absence. On the contrary, they have actively and aggressively engaged in acts of subversion, resistance, refusal, and resurgence by asserting (and inserting) their voices, self-images, and narratives into the broader discourses that would silence them. In order to appreciate the role Indigenous women have played, and continue to play, in decolonization, cultural survivance, and efforts to protect, strengthen, and expand Indigenous sovereignty, we'll necessarily situate our work where questions of gender, sexuality, race, and class intersect those of settler colonialism, sovereignty, and self-determination.



### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension.
- Situate literary texts and writers within their appropriate historical, cultural, intellectual, and tribally-specific contexts.
- Develop a grasp of some of the major issues, questions, concerns, narrative strategies, and formal

- characteristics that organize contemporary Indigenous women’s writing.
- Develop capacities to engage in thoughtful, critical discussion around questions of Indigeneity, settler colonialism, identity, community, and belonging, as well as race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation.
- Hone close, critical reading skills applicable to a variety of forms and intellectual/ professional contexts.
- Write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose with proper acknowledgement and attribution.

**REQUIRED PRIMARY TEXTS** (Available at the UO Bookstore and multiple online vendors)

Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe), *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* (2014, travel narrative)

Joy Harjo (Mvskoke-Creek), *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* (2017, poetry)

Marie Clements (Metis), *The Edward Curtis Project* (2010, drama/visual art)

Deborah Miranda (Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen Nation), *Bad Indian* (2013, memoir/history)

Susan Power (Standing Rock Dakota), *Sacred Wilderness* (2014, novel)

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg), *The Accident of Being Lost* (2017, multi-generic)

**REQUIRED SECONDARY TEXTS** (Available on Canvas or through UO Libraries)

**COURSE CONTENT AND INTELLECTUAL DISCUSSION**

Due to the **ongoing** histories/experiences of settler-colonial violence, racism, dispossession, and genocide that frame both the colonization of the Americas and Indigenous responses to it, this course will openly engage these and related issues without censorship. If content makes attendance and participation difficult, please see me to make alternative arrangements.

**EXPECTATIONS, PARTICIPATION, AND ATTENDANCE**

You are expected to attend class regularly, bring assigned texts to class, and make substantive contributions to class discussions. This requires that you keep up with the reading assignments (Don’t fall behind!), make observations and take careful notes for each text (Do this on the front end!), and bring thoughtful questions or concerns to class (Come ready to discuss!).

Because I’m not your parent and we’re all adults here, I don’t enforce an attendance policy. Be aware, however, that missing class regularly will severely impact your grade due to missed in-class group assignments, free writing assignments, daily/weekly quizzes, and class discussions. If you miss class, **it is your responsibility entirely** to approach your fellow classmates to get notes for that day and catch up on any material you missed. Please make these initial inquiries and develop specific questions/concerns about the material before emailing me or scheduling an appointment.

Students who observe religious holidays, who are involved in university sanctioned activities, or who have other commitments or circumstances that conflict with academic requirements must inform me and make compensatory arrangements **in person well in advance of the absence**.

**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 active class participation exercises, reading journals, unannounced quizzes, online discussion forums, short writing assignments, and a cumulative take-home final exam (identification & close reading, comparative analytic essay). Detailed instructions for each assignment are available on Canvas. All assignments are due at the beginning of the class on the date indicated on the syllabus. **Late assignments will be accepted under no circumstances.**

**GRADING**

In-class Activities/Participation	10%
Reading Journal (RJ)	10%
Discussion Posts/Responses (DP, DR)	15%
Short Close Reading (SCR, 4-5 pages)	15%

Longer Close Reading (LCR, 4-5 pages) 20%  
Final Essay Exam (Take Home) 30%

### GRADE POINT DISTRIBUTION

F <59.5	C- 69.6-73.5	B- 79.6-83.5	A- 89.6-93.5
D- 59.6-63.5	C 73.6-77.5	B 83.6-87.5	A 93.6-97.5
D 63.6-67.5	C+ 77.6-79.5	B+ 87.6-89.5	A+ 97.6-100+
D+ 67.6-69.5			

PLEASE NOTE: Meeting the **minimum requirements for the course** (attending consistently, regular participation, and meeting minimum assignment criteria) will typically result in an average grade, or a C on the college scale. Higher grades are awarded based upon exceeding (B) and greatly exceeding (A) minimum expectations.

### RESOURCES

I strongly encourage you to take advantage of every resource available to you to improve your research, writing, and critical thinking skills. Located in the “Sky Studio” on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Knight Library, the **Teaching and Learning Center Writing Tutors** offer “drop-in” sessions to discuss assignments and receive feedback on class writing before handing it in. They also periodically offer workshops in grammar, argument, and other popular forms/concerns. Stop by Sky Studio and work with a tutor beginning week two each term. Click [here](#) for more information.

### CLASS COMMUNICATION

Get in the habit of checking your UO email account regularly (**i.e. daily**) 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.**

### CONVENTIONS OF ADDRESS

Speaking to a professor, instructor, administrator, staff member, employer, manager, or colleague is different (at least initially) from speaking/texting with a friend, family member, or other familiar relation. In a professional, intellectual context like the University, it is conventional to refer to faculty, administrators, staff, GTFs and others by their titles (Doctor, Professor, Instructor, Coach, preferred gender pronouns/titles, etc.) unless explicitly instructed otherwise. You should also get into the habit of including greetings, salutations, and language appropriate to such contexts. I will always respectfully refer to you according to your stated preferences and the appropriate context; I expect that you’ll reciprocate in kind.

### INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the case of inclement weather, please check the UO homepage, UO Alerts Blog, and local weather stations for information on travel, closures and cancellations. If inclement weather makes traveling to campus difficult, I will notify you by email about whether we are holding class. Whether or not I decide to hold class, you should use your own judgment about the safety of traveling to campus. Regardless, you should remain current with reading and writing assignments.

### INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a documented need that necessitates accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible and request that a counselor at the [Accessible Education Center](#) send a letter verifying your requests.

### 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.

### ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The [University Student Conduct Code](#) defines [academic misconduct](#). Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available [here](#).

### COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Reading	Assignment Due
<b>Week 1</b>		
Jan. 9	Introductions, Logistics, Protocols, & Framing the Course	
Jan. 11	Rayna Green (Cherokee), “The Pocahontas Perplex” (Canvas) Harjo (Mvskoke) & Bird (Spokane), Introduction to <i>Reinventing the Enemy’s Language</i> (Canvas) Leanne Simpson (Anishinaabe), “This Place Where We Live and Work Together” (Canvas)	
Jan. 10		<b>DP 1 (Group A), by 5pm</b>
<b>Week 2</b>		
Jan. 15		<b>DR 1 (Group B), by 5pm</b>
Jan. 16	Erdrich, <i>Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country</i> (BAI) (pp. 1-76)	
Jan. 18	Erdrich, BAI (77-127)	
Jan. 19		<b>DP 1 (Group B), by 5pm</b>
<b>Week 3</b>		
Jan. 22		<b>DR 1 (Group A), by 5pm</b>
Jan. 23	Harjo, <i>Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings</i> (CRFHB), Part I (1-28)	
Jan. 25	Harjo, CRFHB, Part II (29-56)	
<b>Week 4</b>		
Jan. 30	Harjo, CRFHB, Part III (57-98)	

Jan. 31	<b>EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY:</b> <a href="#">“A Lens on Contemporary Indigenous Art and Culture,” with Ka’ila Farrell-Smith (Klamath-Modoc)</a>	
Feb. 1	Harjo, <i>CRFHB</i> , Part IV (99-139)	
Feb. 2		<b>SCR, by midnight</b>
	<b>EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY:</b> <a href="#">“An Afternoon with Joy Harjo (Mvskoke/Creek): Poetry Reading and Q&amp;A”</a>	
<b>Week 5</b>		
Feb. 6	King, “Not the Indian You Had In Mind” (Canvas)	<b>JOURNALS</b>
	**MEET IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, KNIGHT LIBRARY, 2 <sup>ND</sup> FLOOR**	
Feb. 8	Clements, <i>Edward Curtis Project (ECP)</i> (1-26)	
	<b>EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY:</b> <a href="#">Wendy Red Star, “A Collection of Works”</a>	
Feb. 9		<b>DP 2 (Group A), by 5pm</b>
<b>Week 6</b>		
Feb. 12		<b>DR2 (Group B), by 5pm</b>
Feb. 13	Clements, <i>ECP</i> (26-56)	
	<b>EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY:</b> <a href="#">Annual Winter Storytelling Night @ the Many Nations Longhouse</a>	
Feb. 15	Clements, <i>ECP</i> (56-67 & Photos)	
Feb. 16		<b>DP2 (Group B), by 5pm</b>
<b>Week 7</b>		
Feb. 19		<b>DR2 (Group A), by 5pm</b>
Feb. 20	Tuhiwai-Smith, “Imperialism, History, Writing, Theory” (Canvas) Miranda, <i>Bad Indians (BA)</i> (1-74)	
Feb. 22	Miranda, <i>BA</i> (74-122)	
Feb. 23		<b>DP3 (Group A), by 5pm</b>
<b>Week 8</b>		
Feb. 26		<b>DR3 (Group B), by 5pm</b>
Feb. 27	Miranda, <i>BA</i> (123-208)	
Mar. 1	Laduke, TBD (Canvas)	

Power, *Sacred Wilderness* (SW) (1-80)

Mar. 2

**DP3 (Group B), by 5pm**

**Week 9**

Mar. 5

**DR3 (Group A), by 5pm**

Mar. 6

Power, *SW* (83-173)

Mar. 8

Power, *SW* (173-237)

Mar. 9

**LCR, by midnight**

**Week 10**

Mar. 13

Simpson, *This Accident of Being Lost* (TABL) (1-70)

**JOURNALS**

Mar. 15

Simpson, *TABL* (71-116)

**Week 11**

Mar. 20

Final Exam Due on Canvas by 5pm