ENGLISH 129, SECITON 007

NATIVE AMERICANS IN LITERATURE/NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE

SPRING 2017

Dr. Margaret O’Shaughnessey Class Time: MWF 9:05-9:55

Office: Greenlaw 501 Classroom: Genome Science 1374

Department Phone: 962-4039 Email: meo@email.unc.edu

Office Hours: MWF 10-11:10; 12:15-2:15



From Benitez, Cynthia. “Pop Culture: Native Satire.” *National Museum of the American Indian.* (Winter 2016): 18-23.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Mary Rowlandson*, The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (Bedford)

James Welch, *Fools Crow* (Penguin)

D’Arcy McNickle, *The Surrounded* (University of New Mexico Press)

Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (HarperPerennial)

Josephine Humphries, *Nowhere Else on Earth* (Penguin)

Sherman Alexie, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (HarperPerennial)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is largely a study of perceptions and perspectives. It will examine first the well-documented European views of Native Americans presented in historical accounts and on artists’ canvases, views which tell us as much about Europeans as they do about Natives. Then it will sample the explosion of perspectives presented by Native American novelists, poets, short story writers, and film makers whose voices, having been ignored for centuries, eloquently provide alternative views of themselves and of America. Because art is not produced in a vacuum, the course will also explore political, social, and cultural issues which have influenced each group’s perception of the other.

**ATTENDANCE**

Class discussion is important in this course, so your attendance is vital. More than three unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade. If you have to miss class because of illness, family emergency, or athletic competition, please let me know. If you miss ten classes, you will receive an F for the course.

**EVALUATION**

In-class writing 20% Assignment Discussions 20%

Research Paper 20% Participation 10%

Presentation 15% Final Exam 15%

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Readings**: In addition to the six texts for this class, shorter readings are posted on Sakai in a folder titled **Course Readings** (**CR**) under the **RESOURCES** tab.

**In Class Writing**: Ten times during the semester you will write on a question about the reading for the first ten minutes of class. You will be evaluated on how well you address the question and how well you provide support for your view. At the end of the semester, I will drop your two lowest scores, leaving you with a total of eight. You must be in class to do the writings, and you must stay the length ofthe class.***You may not make up these writings****.* If you are absent on one of the days we write, the 0 can count as one of the dropped grades.

**ASSIGNMENT TAB QUESTIONS**: Because writing facilitates thinking, you will record your thought-filled responses to prompts about the course material in two-page (500-word) entries posted on the Assignments tab in Sakai. Length is important. Make sure your entry is a full two pages (note: 2 double-spaced typed pages equals 500 words). You are not writing a mini-paper here. You do not have to create a beginning, middle, and end to the journal entry. There is no need to propose a thesis and support it. You are not writing a summary of what you have read. Instead, you should write your responses or thoughts about the question or statement in the prompt. Back up general statements with specific examples. Although you are not being graded on your writing style, grammar, or punctuation, you should write in standard English rather than text-message style.

I will supply a prompt for each forum discussion. Your response must be posted by class time (9:05 am) on the date due. Late postings will incur a penalty. If they are submitted during class time or more than a day late, they will receive no credit.

I will read all of these postings and grade them according to the following scale:

**5**: reflects a careful reading and thoughtful, interesting engagement with the topic or

material; shows a willingness to grapple with issues in the text.

**4**: makes some strong points connected with the reading, issue, or topic, but may not take

ideas out of a comfort zone.

**3**: satisfies the length requirement, but does not actually say much

**2**: may have some good ideas, but does not satisfy length requirement

**1**: does not reflect engagement or understanding of the material; may not meet the length

requirement

**Research paper:** The topic for this paper is one of your own devising, although I will offer plenty of suggestions. It can be related to your presentation topic if you wish, but it must not be simply a typed version of your presentation. Take an issue from the presentation in a new direction. Or you may research more deeply any of the topics we discuss, investigate a historical figure, examine a specific event, assess the significance of specific art works or movies. The main criterion for the paper is that it has a clear point, rather than merely report facts. For example, rather than simply report how Cherokees were removed from North Carolina to Oklahoma, you could address a question. What kind of tensions and strife within the Cherokee community were created by the US government’s pressure to evict them from their land? How much public outcry was there against the policy? Are there any parallels between the Cherokee removal and the US government’s internment of Japanese during World War II? By adopting a particular stand, you will invest the paper with a strong thesis and insightful perspective. The paper should be 5-7 pages long and should use a **minimum of four sources**. Do not base your paper purely on web sites. Be sure that some of your sources are published works. **Use MLA citations** **and bibliographic style.**

**If you are uncertain about the rules for proper documentation of sources and formatting for MLA style, please read the UNC Writing Center’s handout on Plagiarism (available at** [**www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html**](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html) **) and on Citation Resources (available at** [**www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/index.html**](http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/index.html) **) which offer a Citation Tutorial and a Citation Builder. These resources are also available on our Sakai cite—Under Resources in a folder titled Writing Center Handouts.**

Papers must be typed and double-spaced using a 12 point font and standard margins. The pages should be stapled or paper-clipped.

When you turn in your paper, please keep your identity anonymous. Create a title page with your name, the title of the paper, and the relevant course information. You will submit that separately. On your paper, write only the title. When the papers are graded, I will match the title pages and papers and then record your grade

**Presentation**: Working in groups of four or five, you will investigate and present to the class specific topics of artistic, social, and historical importance. You will have the entire class period to present your research and expertise, but you should try to leave some time for questions and discussion. All members of the group should participate equally. Each person will receive a grade for the group and a grade for his or her individual presentation. Those two grades will be averaged to determine the final presentation grade.

In order to facilitate a lively discussion, **the group will send an article about the topic to the class two days before the presentation. By 9 pm on the day before the presentation, each student in the class should post at least one question or comment/reaction to the topic**. The question should be posted on the **FORUMS** tab on Sakai. I will also ask that everyone send me feedback on the presentation, which I will then offer to the presenters. Below is a list of the presentation topics:

1. Hollywood’s presentation of Native Americans

2. Native Americans and Health Issues

3. The importance of Native languages

4. Native Americans and politics (American Indian Movement, White House Tribal Conference)

5. Native Americans and sacred places

6. Genealogy and Native Americans

7. Native American humor

8. Significant Events in Native American history: the Ghost Dance Movement, Little Big Horn

After each presentation, all students in the audience will send me their feedback on the presentation. I will then forward my comments and those of the class to the group members who gave the presentation.

**Participation**: Participation includes not only coming to class and participating in class discussions, but also responding to the articles sent by the presentation groups and providing presentation feedback.

THE HONOR CODE

The Honor Code is always in effect in this course; please review *The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance* for details.

English 129: Assignments

January 10 W Introduction to course

12 F Introduction to America in 1492

15 M Martin Luther King Day: No class

17 W Christopher Columbus, Journal of the First Voyage, Oct. 11, 1492-

Jan. 15, 1493 (CR)

Think about . . . the tone of the Journal. Would you describe it as dramatic? Exciting? Is Columbus writing it mainly for himself? For an audience? What sense do you get of the man and the enterprise through the Journal?

19 F Bartolomé de las Casas, from *A Short Account of the*

*Destruction of the Indies* (Preface and Hispanola) (CR)

“Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Belittle the Indians” (CR)

“Bartolomé de las Casas Defends the Indians, 1552” (CR)

Think about . . .the changes to Caribbean culture wrought by the Spanish in just a few years. How do

Las Casas and Sepulveda, both important and influential men, represent different perspectives

regarding treatment of the original inhabitants of the Americas? What perspectives do they have

in common?

22 M Captain John Smith, “Of the Natural Inhabitants of Virginia” (CR)

Captain John Smith and Pocahontas (CR)

Think about . . . the type of information Smith and Columbus are providing to the people funding their

ventures. How does this information suit the purpose of the explorer and the financial backers?

Do you notice any differences in content and style between Smith’s two accounts?

24 W The Pocahontas Story: Ralph Hamor, "A True Discourse of the present

State of Virginia and the success of affairs there" (CR)

Rolfe's Letter (CR)

18th -century historians and the importance of the Pocahontas story (CR)

Paula Gunn Allen, "Pocahontas to her English husband, John Rolfe" (CR)

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| **Discussion 1: Address any or all of the following questions about the readings: Pocahontas left no account of her life, though Paula Gunn Allen’s poem is an attempt to speak in her voice. What does the poem suggest that Pocahontas’ view of the English settlers might have been?**  **What does Rolfe’s letter suggest about the relationship between whites and Natives in Jamestown?**  **How are details in these historical accounts either reflected or ignored in popular narratives of Pocahontas’ life—for example, in Disney movies?** |

26 F Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God (Preface-*10th Remove, pp. 63-85.)

Think about … what might have precipitated the bloody and brutal raid that Rowlandson describes.

What specific details stand out for you about this very troubled time just a few decades past the

English arrival in “New England”? Why do you think the work bears the title it does?

29 M Rowlandson*, Sovereignty and Goodness of God (11th Remove to End* pp.

85-end)

Louise Erdrich, “Captivity” (CR)

Think about . . .details in the narration where Rowlandson seems to be quite a part of Indian village life, despite the group’s being constantly on the run. How do individual natives come into focus the longer she is with them? Was her experience totally negative? In her poem “Captivity,” what aspects of Rowlandson’s experience does contemporary writer Louise Erdrich find significant?

31 W The Cherokee Removal (CR)

Petition of the Ross Landing Prisoners (CR)

Rebecca Neugin Interview (CR)

Think about . . . how the Cherokees set forth their case against removal. How well does Andrew Jackon’s Inaugural Address deal with these arguments? What details about the removal process were especially striking?

February 2 F Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, from *The Song of Hiawatha* (CR)

Think about . . .Hiawatha as a hero. How is he both similar to and different from heroes in Western literature? What seems to be Longfellow’s view of Native American culture? What is especially significant about his handling of Hiawatha’s death and departure at the end of the poem?

February 5 M Images of Native Americans in art

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| **Discussion 2: Most of the readings thus far in the course have been historical documents related to people and incidents at least somewhat familiar to you: Columbus, John Smith, the Trail of Tears, for example. How have these documents and records enriched/complicated/improved/detracted from your understanding of the characters and events associated with these historical moments? What details or aspects of the tones of the works seem most compelling, problematic, and/or memorable to you? Please refer to specific details in your response.** |

7 W Barry Lopez, Coyote Stories: “Coyote Keeps His Name,” “Coyote and

Buffalo,” “Coyote and Beaver Exchange Wives,” “Coyote Visits the

Land of the Dead”(CR)

William Bright, ed. A Coyote Reader: “Coyote Lays Down the Law”

Gerald Vizenor, Stories of Naanabozho (“Birth of Naanabozho,” “Naanabozho Obtains Fire,” “Naanabozho and Nookomis,” “Naanabozho and Missameg,” “Return of Naanabozho,” “Naanabozho and the Gambler”)

Think about . . .the audience for these stories. Are they told for children? A wider audience? What

relationship do they suggest between humans and animals? What sort of worldview do they

suggest, especially when compared to the Western worldview? What similarities and

differences do you see between the Naanabozho stories and Longfellow’s *Hiawatha*?

9 F James Welch, *Fools Crow*, Part 1

Think about . . .the way that Welch puts the reader immediately into the perspective of another culture.

How does he create a world that is singularly that of the Blackfeet of 1870 yet also universal?

How does he create a sense of the Blackfeet culture, value, and challenges? How is he playing

with conventions of “the Western” most familiar to us through movies?

12 M *Fools Crow*, Part 2

Think about . . . how a clash of cultures is developing between the Blackfeet and white worlds. How does Welch use his characters to show complicated forces at work?

14 W *Fools Crow*, Part 3

Think about . . .how the meeting with General Sully is rife with misperceptions and miscommunications.

16 F *Fools Crow*, Parts 4 and 5

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| **Discussion 3: In the last part of *Fools Crow,* James Welch merges myth and reality. The meeting between Fools Crow and Feather Woman has a mythic dimension, while the massacre Fools Crow encounters is known in history books as the Baker Massacre. How do the meeting with Feather Woman and Fools Crow’s return to the tribe further some of the themes and motifs of the novel? On what sort of note does the book end: hopeful? despairing? something else?** |

**Reading for presentation due from presentation group**

19 M **PRESENTATION ON NATIVE AMERICANS AND SACRED**

**PLACES**

21 W Carroll Arnett, “Death Song” (CR)

Joy Harjo, “Remember” (CR)

Simon Ortiz, “A Pretty Woman” (CR)

Sherman Alexie, “Grandmother, Porcupine, Traffic” (CR)

Geary Hobson, “Deer Hunting” (CR)

Sherman Alexie, “The Place Where the Ghosts of Salmon Jump” (CR)

Think about . . the worldview or cultural values reflected in these poems. What images or aspects of tone or phrasing help convey these values?

**Reading for presentation due from presentation group**

23 F **PRESENTATION ON THE GHOST DANCE MOVEMENT AND**

**THE BATTLE OF LITTLE BIG HORN**

26 M Sherman Alexie, “Sonnet, Without Salmon”

Gerald Haslam, “Hawk’s Flight” (CR)

Sherman Alexie, “The Game Between the Indians and the Jews is Tied

Going into the Bottom of the Ninth Inning”

Joseph Bruchac, “A Friend of the Indians” (CR)

Sherman Alexie, “Another Proclamation”

“On the Amtrack Train from Boston to New York

City”

“On Airplanes”

Cheryl Savageau, ”After Listening to a Reading of Romantic Poems

About Columbus: One More Thought” (CR)

Simon Ortiz, “What I Mean”

Think about . . the tones of these works. In what ways do they offer another perspective on textbook

American history?

28 W D’Arcy McNickle, *The Surrounded* (Chapters 1-12)

Think about . . .why Archilde returns home. How does he seem to represent a blend of cultural values?

What types of strife does he encounter upon his return home?

March 2 F *The Surrounded* (Chapters 13-24)

Think about . . . how religion, laws, and stereotypes influence and affect various characters in the book:

Catherine, Mike and Narcisse, Sheriff Quigley, Moser, for example.

5 M *The Surrounded* (Chapters 25-end)

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| **Discussion 4: Archilde enters the novel as the ostensibly perfectly assimilated Native American. How does D’Arcy McNickle show through the novel, and especially in the final chapters, that assimilation is rife with conflict, misperceptions, misunderstandings, and diminished life expectations?** |

7 W Mary Crow Dog, “Civilize Them With a Stick” (CR)

Simon Ortiz, “ Pennstuwehiyaahste: Quinti’s Story” (CR)

Medicine Grizzlybear Lake, “An Indian Father’s Plea” (CR)

Think about . . .the long-term effect of separating children from their families and their culture.

**Reading for presentation due from presentation group**

9 F **PRESENTATION ON NATIVE LANGUAGES**

**12-16 Spring Break**

19 M Louise Erdrich, *Tracks*, (Chapters 1-3)

Think about . . the two perspectives we have on the central character, Fleur: one perspective from

Nanapush and one from Pauline. How are they similar? How are they different?

21 W Louise Erdrich *Tracks* (Chapters 4-6)

Think about . . .the ways in which the community is becoming divided. What seem to be the reasons for

the animosities?

23 F *Tracks* , cont’d

26 M Louise Erdrich, *Tracks,* (Chapters 7-9)

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| **Discussion 5: In Tracks, Louise Erdrich makes much use of water imagery to unite the stories of Fleur, Nanapush, and Pauline. For example, there are several scenes where characters cross the lake in a boat. What is similar and/or different about these scenes? Provide examples of her use of water in many different forms and ways. How does the use of this imagery help further the understanding of themes and characters?** |

R**eading for presentation due from presentation group**

28 W **PRESENTATION ON NATIVE GENEAOLOGY**

30 F GOOD FRIDAY, no class

April 2 M Josephine Humphries, *Nowhere Else on Earth* (Chapters 1-5)

Think about . . .the difficulties the Civil War brings to people who have no personal stake in the conflict.

How is the social order disrupted?

*Nowhere Else on Earth* (Chapters 6-10)

Think about . . .how the characters such as Rhoda, Miss McCabe, Henry, Margaret, face the future in a

time of prejudice and social upheaval.

4 W *Nowhere Else on Earth* (Chapters 6-10)

Think about . . .how the characters such as Rhoda, Miss McCabe, Henry, Margaret, face the future in a

time of prejudice and social upheaval.

6 F *Nowhere Else on Earth*  (Chapters 11-end)

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| **Discussion 6: Do you think Rhoda made the right decision to stay in Scuffletown? Do you think “her- story” reflects the “his-story” of this area of eastern North Carolina? Does the book raise any questions about how history gets recorded and told?** |

**Reading for presentation due from presentation group**

9 M **PRESENTATION ON NATIVE AMERICANS AND HEALTH**

**Reading for presentation due from presentation group**

11 W **PRESENTATION ON NATIVE AMERCIANS AND POLITICS**

**Reading for presentation due from presentation group**

13 F **PRESENTATION ON NATIVE AMERICANS AND HOLLYWOOD**

16 M Sherman Alexie*, The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*

(“Every Little Hurricane,” “A Drug Called Tradition, “ “Because My Father . . .,” “The Only Traffic Signal . . .,” “Amusements,” “This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona”)

Think about . . .how Alexie keeps the reader off balance through his blend of

humor and pain, poetry and grit.

18 W *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* “The Trial of Thomas

Builds-the-Fire,” “A Train is an Order . . .,” “A Good Story,”

”Imagining the Reservation” *“*The Approximate Size of My Favorite

Tumor,” The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven” “Somebody Kept Saying Powwow,””)

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| **Discussion 7: Sherman Alexie differs from many other Native American writers in his focus on the present rather than the past and in his use of popular culture. Which of these stories did you find particularly meaningful, interesting, humorous, disturbing, etc, thanks to this focus on references meaningful even to non-Native readers? What point do you think Alexie is trying to convey to his readers?** |

**Reading for presentation due from presentation group**

20 F **PRESENTATION ON NATIVE AMERICAN HUMOR**

23 M Sherman Alexie*, Smoke Signals* (movie)

**RESEARCH PAPER DUE**

25 W *Smoke Signals*

27 F Joseph Bruchac, “Understanding the Great Mystery” (CR)

Thomas King, “’You’ll Never Believe What Happened’ Is Always a Good Way to Start”

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| **Discussion 8: Both Bruchac and King offer critiques of the biblical creation story and the values it generates. Are they being heretical? Offering constructive criticism? How do they keep readers interested in the topic?** |

**Final Examination: Monday, May 7 at 8:00 am**