

# ENGLISH 202

## NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE

### DR. ERIC GARY ANDERSON

Robinson Hall A, Room 405B

Office Phone: (703) 993-3175

I'm in my office Tuesdays and Thursdays 3 to 4 p.m. No appointment needed.

In this introduction to Native American literature and cultures, we'll investigate the ways American Indian writers reflect their cultural histories and thought systems through their writing. Focusing most of our attention on contemporary writers and writings, we will discuss how Native traditions have been translated into literature. We'll also listen to the voices of Native intellectuals as we work to develop a Native-centered understanding of both Native history and Indian-white relations. Texts for this course will include several novels and stories, one book of poetry, the occasional piece of non-fiction, and some film and video. We'll have the pleasure and privilege of learning how Raven, Feather Woman, carnal knowledge, a "Brady Bunch Indian," a dog named Custer, various powerful elders, John Wayne's teeth, and much, much more all help map Indian Country in all its vitality, complexity, and power.

### BOOKS

James Welch (Blackfeet/Gros Ventre)

Louise Erdrich (Anishinaabe)

Susan Power (Standing Rock Sioux)

Wendy Rose (Hopi/Miwok)

Louis Owens (Cherokee/Choctaw)

Leanne Howe (Choctaw)

Clifford Trafzer (Wyandot), editor

Peter Nabokov, editor

*FOOLS CROW*

*TRACKS*

*THE GRASS DANCER*

*BONE DANCE*

*BONE GAME*

*SHELL SHAKER*

*RED EARTH, BLUE DAWN*

*NATIVE AMERICAN TESTIMONY*

### SPRING 2005 SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND WRITINGS

Jan 25	<i>INTRODUCTIONS</i>
Jan 27	<i>FOOLS CROW</i>
Feb 1	<i>FOOLS CROW</i>
Feb 3	<i>FOOLS CROW</i>
Feb 8	<i>FOOLS CROW</i>
Feb 10	<i>FOOLS CROW</i>
Feb 15	<i>FOOLS CROW</i>
Feb 17	<i>TRACKS</i>
Feb 22	<i>TRACKS</i>
Feb 24	<i>TRACKS</i>
Mar 1	<i>TRACKS</i>
Mar 3	<i>RED EARTH, BLUE DAWN</i>
Mar 8	<i>RED EARTH, BLUE DAWN</i>
Mar 10	<i>MIDTERM EXAMINATION</i>
Mar 15	<i>SPRING</i>
Mar 17	<i>BREAK</i>
Mar 22	<i>THE GRASS DANCER</i>
Mar 24	<i>THE GRASS DANCER</i>
Mar 29	<i>THE GRASS DANCER</i>
Mar 31	<i>THE GRASS DANCER</i>
Apr 5	<i>BONE DANCE</i>
Apr 7	<i>BONE DANCE</i>
Apr 12	<i>BONE GAME</i>
Apr 14	<i>BONE GAME</i>
Apr 19	<i>BONE GAME</i>
Apr 21	<i>BONE GAME</i>
Apr 26	<i>SHELL SHAKER</i>
Apr 28	<i>SHELL SHAKER</i>
May 3	<i>SHELL SHAKER</i>
May 5	<i>SHELL SHAKER</i>

*FINAL EXAMINATION: THURSDAY, MAY 12TH, FROM 1:30 TO 4:15.*

### WRITTEN WORK: ESSAYS, EXAMINATIONS, READING QUIZZES

**Essays:** The three formal essays you'll write for this class are designed to help you practice and develop your skills at imaginative,

persuasive critical writing about topics and texts that interest you. You can incorporate materials from class discussions if you want, including comments made by your classmates. In fact, our class discussions are designed to give you ideas for your own writing, as well as a good sense of how to approach literary texts critically. *Please take notes as you read, and also during class or after class*, and use your notes to help you prepare your papers (and to prepare for the examinations).

For each essay assignment, I will give you a choice of topics. Each of the three essays you'll write for me will be 3-4 pages long, and we'll talk in class about how to go about writing them.

**Examinations:** You will also write two examinations in this course. For the **midterm examination**, expect short-answer questions as well as one or more essays, all on topics and texts we've discussed in class. I'll give you -- in advance -- examples of the kinds of questions and topics you'll be writing about on the midterm. The **final examination** will be like the midterm, only longer; it will consist of both short answers and longer essays. On both the midterm and the final, you will choose from a menu of questions and topics; that is, you will have the option of answering or not answering particular questions, depending on your strengths and interests. I will ask you to demonstrate your knowledge of concepts, issues, themes, and texts discussed this semester.

**Reading Quizzes:** Brief, multiple-question quizzes, given at the very start of most if not all class meetings. At the end of the semester, I will erase the three lowest quiz scores from your record. 20% of course grade.

### GRADING

Three Essays -- 15% each  
Reading Quizzes -- 20%

Midterm Examination -- 15%  
Final Examination -- 20%

#### For the Three Essays

A+ (100), A (96), A- (92)  
B+ (88), B (85), B- (82)  
C+ (78), C (75), C- (72)  
D+ (68), D (65), D- (62)  
F (50), No essay (0)

#### For the Reading Quizzes

Each quiz will be worth five points.  
Partial Credit will be given when appropriate.  
20 out of 23 Quizzes will be counted.  
(Your three lowest scores will be dropped.)

#### For Final Grades

94-100=A	86-89=B+	76-79=C+	60-69=D
90-93=A-	83-85=B	73-75=C	0-59=F
	80-82=B-	70-72=C-	

### POLICIES: REVISIONS, LATE WORK, ATTENDANCE

**Revisions:** The critical essays you write in this course can be revised and resubmitted. In some cases, I will invite or require you to revise; you are also welcome to approach me about working on a revision. To be eligible for revision, the original paper must have been carefully proofread and handed in on time. Please keep in mind that revisions should be substantive rather than simply cosmetic; that is, you should overhaul rather than touch up your essay. Expand, delete, and rearrange; respond thoughtfully to my questions and comments. Merely correcting your spelling and grammar or adding a few words here and there does not constitute a revision.

Here are my expectations for revisions:

1. Please make an appointment with me at some point after you've begun to plan your revision. I'll be happy to work with you at any point in the process of revising your paper, but I do require that you sit down with me and discuss your revision plans in specific detail before you actually rewrite your paper.
2. Please hand in your revised paper within two weeks after you get the graded paper back from me.
3. Attach that original, graded version of the paper -- the one with my comments on it -- to your revised paper, so that I can compare them and get a clear sense of the changes you've made.
4. Finally, please write a cover letter in which you specifically explain what you've changed and how you've improved the paper.

**Late Work:** First of all, the three out-of-class essays will be due in class when I ask for them (not after class, and not anytime that day). As we all know, computers and printers can be moody. Nothing is more frustrating than a last-minute technological meltdown or an unexpected long line at the computer lab; please be sure to set aside extra time for all this and more.

If you have been taken seriously ill, sucked into a vortex, and/or abducted by bug-eyed aliens, you may arrange with me to hand in your paper after the due date without penalty.

I will accept late papers up to four calendar days (not class meetings) after the due date, but will dock late work one full letter grade for each day the paper is late. For example, a "B" paper turned in two calendar days late will receive a "D". Even so, keep in mind that an "F" paper still counts for 50 points; better to hand in the paper anyway than to take a zero. I reserve the right to make exceptions to this rule, at my discretion, for students facing serious difficulties.

**Attendance** is expected and strongly encouraged. Especially in small classes such as this one, your participation in the day-to-day work of the class is crucial. As you can see, a full 20% of your grade for this course hinges on work you will do in class. **This work cannot be made up.** *Attendance problems can and probably will lower your course grade significantly.* I don't anticipate any such problems, but if you do run into difficulties that I should know about, please let me know in advance (if possible) or contact me by e-mail or telephone during, and we'll do our best to work something out. The rule of thumb here is that you should try to communicate with me as problems arise. I also suggest that you get to know at least a few other people in this class, gather their email addresses and phone numbers, and contact them (or me) if you need to miss a class.

### ACADEMIC HONESTY AND THE GMU HONOR CODE

All work done for this class must be your own. Period. Please keep in mind that plagiarism is a violation of the GMU Honor Code. *Plagiarism means using words, ideas, opinions, or factual information from another person or source without giving due credit.* In other

words, plagiarism is a form of fraudulently claiming someone else's work as your own, and as such is the equivalent of cheating on an exam -- a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is grounds for failing at least the assignment, if not the course. If you are not 100% clear about what you should document, consult with me. When in doubt, document. (Adapted from the English Department Statement on Plagiarism)

Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles consulted is not sufficient. Nor does rearrangement of another person's phrasing (paraphrase) release one from the obligation to document one's sources. Please bear in mind, though, that the written work I'm asking you to do in this course does not involve research.

To review the English Department Statement on Plagiarism, please go to the Writing Center website:

[writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

Like you, I am bound by the honor code to report suspected plagiarism to the Honor Committee. For a description of the code and the committee, please consult the GMU Catalog. The relevant section is available online at:

[www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12)

## GMU INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITY POLICY

Students with documented disabilities are legally entitled to certain accommodations in the classroom. Please contact me as soon as possible so that we may make sure your needs are met. The Disability Resource Center is located in Student Union Building I, Room 222. Phone: 703-993-2474.

Native American literature is literature, both oral and written, produced by Native Americans in what is now the United States (as distinct from First Nations writers in Canada), from pre-Columbian times through to today. Famous authors include N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Simon Ortiz, Louise Erdrich, Gerald Vizenor, Joy Harjo, Sherman Alexie, D'Arcy McNickle, James Welch, Charles Eastman, Mourning Dove, Zitkala-Sa, John Rollin Ridge, Lynn Riggs, Diane Glancy, Hanay Geiogamah

The primary questions are as follows: Should Native American Literature be defined, categorized, and analysed in the same way as other literature? Are there linguistic and cultural differences which influence interpretation? I will begin with yet another question: What does the term Native American Literature mean? Literature, according to standard definition, refers to "Written works collectively, especially those of enduring importance, exhibiting imagination and artistic skill." Nineteenth-century Native American literature is a literature of transition, the bridge between an oral tradition that flourished for centuries before the arrival of Europeans and the emergence of contemporary fiction in the 1960s, known as the Native American Renaissance. Unlike the preceding oral tradition, nineteenth-century Native American literature was increasingly text-based and composed in English, the result of missionary schools that taught Indians the skills believed necessary to assimilate into white society. also called Indian literature or American Indian literature. the traditional oral and written literatures of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. The Native Americans of New Mexico and Arizona, along with a few small tribes related to them in southern California, have cultural traditions with some features in common. In the folklore of the Southwest, the emergence and migration myths show the indigenous peoples (Hopi) emerging from an unpleasant underworld at the time when the Earth is not yet completely formed. Early Native American Literature In the earlier novels the authors were chiefly concerned with depicting the Indian ethnic experience, the texture of tribal life. Although certainly there are many middle-class Indians, statistically most Indians on and off the reservation are working-class. The U.S. Census Bureau