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## NASX 340.01B: Native American Literature

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**LIT 305/NAS 340 NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURES  
SYLLABUS & SCHEDULE – SPRING 2014**

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That dream  
shall have a name  
after all,  
and it will not be vengeful  
but wealthy with love  
and compassion  
and knowledge.  
And it will rise  
in this heart  
which is our America.  
~Simon Ortiz (1941- )

Please be sure to read this syllabus carefully, bring it to each class, and refer to it throughout the semester.

**Office hours, LA 120:** Tues. 3:45-5:00pm & Wed. 3-4pm and many other times by appointment. (Please note: be sure to confirm an appointment time with me even during posted office hours. Otherwise I might be with another student or at the copy machine.)

**DESCRIPTION:**

The course looks at works by American Indian writers across two-plus centuries, listening to what they say to their Indian and non-Indian readers and paying attention to how they write of key interwoven issues: tribal sovereignty, community, identity, authenticity, and humor. Further questions within these directions include aesthetics of orality and literacy; cultural change and survival; colonial identity politics; mythic histories; ironic strategies; world views and ideologies. Each writer and each tribal group approaches such issues from unique cultural and historical perspectives.

**REQUIREMENTS, OUTCOMES, ASSESSMENTS:**

Please note: the following list of activities tries to quantify your expected work. Ultimately, no one can “quantify the quality” of your writing or discussion. Grading in arts and humanities courses inevitably entails subjective criteria. Because of that subjectivity, more dialogue between student and faculty can be part of the process of creating and grading humanities “performance.” Literature is a conversation. Literary criticism grows out of conversation. I hope you come to feel that I am open for you to get to know me in the classroom and in my office. Please come see me to talk through assignments or anything else. On written work, both

form (bibliographic form as well as grammar & spelling) and content (clear thesis with supporting discussion and evidence) will be graded, and explicit writing standards will be part of each assignment.

Grades are based on a combination of 1) 75% written work (content & form); 2) 15% discussion questions, participation, pop quizzes, other in-class writing; and 3) 10% attendance. If you have any certifiable disability that makes meeting the course requirements difficult, I will be glad to work with you on a strategy for success.

**OUTCOME CRITERIA:** 1) Beginning-level recognition of the diversity of issues in American Indian writing. 2) Recognition of key historical and literary issues of the literature as they are addressed by those diverse voices. 3) Recognition of different methods -- literary and historical, hermeneutical and structural, aesthetic and ethical, textual and contextual -- for considering texts. 4) Engagement with themes of the course as they apply to 21<sup>st</sup>-century lives.

### **OUTCOME ASSESSMENTS:**

**1) Discussion and Attendance:** I'm strict on attendance. You are grownups, and can make your own decisions about your commitment to your education, yet the class runs on a combination of readings, discussions, and lectures, so we need you here. Lectures and discussions both are founded on your attendance; so more than two unexcused absences (totals one week of class) can drop the final grade. An excused absence generally requires a medical crisis, but avoid scheduling visits to doctor, dentist, optometrist, advisors, etc., during class time. Notice of any absence should be given in advance when we can pre-arrange for your make-up work. Late arrivals and early departures can mean an absence. Thus the point here is to participate as both a listener and speaker in class discussions. NB: Do not be absent on due dates for papers. "I stayed in the computer lab to finish my essay" is not an excuse for missing that class day's further study and exchange. Attendance will be taken by the TA via sign-up sheet for each class period.

**High-Tech Update on Attendance Policy:** "Putting down your smartphone and paying attention to the person talking with you? There's an app for that. It's called Respect."

Attendance means mind as well as body. Because the course encourages engaged discussion, open laptops and tablets (unless that's your "notebook" for class notes) or smartphone screens are not acceptable in this classroom. Turn them off and stow them. Breaking this courtesy of respect will equal an unexcused absence, which can drop your grade.

(Verbal assessments of Criteria 1-4:)

**a. Discussion Questions:** On Moodle, there will be a Forum for each required reading and an extra credit Forum for recommended readings. Discussion questions are due online by *11pm the night before the reading is listed on the class schedule*. Each student will be responsible for *generating at least two questions* on each required reading. Good idea: link readings via the questions; for example, how do themes in lectures and discussion relate to themes in the literature? If possible, each question should be anchored to a passage with a page number in the text. Each student is also responsible for *responding to at least two questions, also by 11pm the night before class*. If you miss those deadlines, still jump into the Moodle Forum later anyway.

I will incorporate some of your perspectives into the next day's lecture, so take the time to write thoughtful, critically driven discussion questions focused around a close reading of one or more of the texts. (See Moodle resource on How to Write Discussion Questions.) Plus we will project some of the Forum questions for use during the in-class discussions. This means you need to schedule your study time carefully to meet those 11pm deadlines. We will discuss and do close readings in class on some of the required primary readings (poetry, fiction, prose, etc.) and on some of the required secondary material (scholarly commentary).

**c. Pop quizzes** as well as other in-class exercises on daily readings loom on the horizon of time, suggested by students on evaluations. Sad to say, students sometimes don't get the reading done, and in turn the discussion falters. This helps fix that.

**2) Writing skills and critical thinking** in using various methods to analyze diverse literary texts by Native American writers. (Written assessment of Criteria 1-4) Writing assignments will be a combination of reading journals, microthemes, thesis exercises, and take-home essays with library references and bibliography. Note that final drafts of all written work will be handed in electronically by email as Word.doc attachments, with hard copies or cyber copies of earlier drafts handed in at the same time as the final email. My written responses to your papers will be on the electronic copy which I will email back to you, so keep a clean electronic copy on file in case you want to revise it. NB: When you email me, be sure to put the exact spelling of the class number 305 or 340, at the front of your email's subject line.

**a. Reading Journal:** Use a separate, dedicated spiral journal, or do this electronically. For each reading, on one side of a page, record the author's ideas, facts, quotes, or note other important info; on the other side, record your questions, impressions, responses, and feelings as you read. (These responses might develop into discussion questions, but they may go in any other directions as well.) I will collect the journals once or twice in the semester. The reading journal will be graded on how seriously you take it, i.e., how thoroughly you respond to the readings.

**b. Take-home Microthemes:** two-to-three-page essay answers to a question or questions on the readings.

**c. Take-home Essays:** two take-home short-essays (three-to-four pages) that combine personal response and critical analysis, graded on content and form. Skills in thesis development and in integrating quoted citations into your argument are crucial in written work. In addition, those skills require an understanding of how to avoid plagiarism.

**d. Thesis Exercises:** Depending on the needs of the class in focusing on literary analysis, we will work on three elements of a workable thesis statement that goes beyond summarizing or retelling a piece of literature: 1) narrow topic 2) assertion (not description) 3) preview. Generally, a thesis is preceded (in drafts if not in the final essay) by a focused question. The goal of literary analysis is to (gently) take apart and put back together some dynamic aspect of a text, so that the reader may understand it more fully and deeply and acutely, with more insight into form and/or content. Literary criticism looks beyond *what* is said to ask *how*, *why*, or *so what?* Writing about literature is one of the best ways to read it, and it indeed can intensify the pleasure of reading. Too often, students write about a piece of literature without coming to a thesis, i.e., without really knowing what they have to say about it. We may do focused work on thesis development apart from the labor of essay writing, and then bring this skill to the essays.

**e. Research Essay:** (Optional, to be discussed.) One 8-10pg. essay, revising and expanding an earlier essay using library resources and again emphasizing thesis development and integrated citations, due near the end of term; working thesis due approx. one month prior; specific dates TBA.

**f. Peer Editing:** study groups of 3 students will meet outside of class during some of the writing assignments. Editing each others' work can be one of the best ways to develop yourself as a writer.

**NB: The Writing Center** is available to students of all abilities: LA 144, phone 243-2266, with on-site tutoring; paper coaching; plus writing and test-taking workshops, etc. Note that they, like all good writers, require lead-time for revising your paper before it's due. They will turn you away if you come in so close to your deadline that you don't have time to revise. Also online tutoring via <http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/>

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

This Syllabus: Read it thoroughly in hard copy or on Moodle. Bring it to each class.

Moodle Course Supplement: accessible at <http://umonline.umt.edu/> You will need to be able to access and work on Moodle to complete this class. If you are registered for this class, UMOonline automatically opens your access to this supplement on Moodle.

Marijo Moore, *Unraveling the Spreading Cloth of Time*

Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories*

William Apess, *Son of the Forest and Other Writings*

Sarah Winnemucca, *Life Among the Piutes*

D'Arcy McNickle, *Wind from an Enemy Sky*

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues*

Debra Earling (selections on Moodle)

Heather Cahoon (selections on Moodle)

Sherwin Bitsui (selections on Moodle)

[On Reserve:] David L. Moore, *That Dream Shall Have a Name*

**LIT 305/NASX 340 NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE  
SPRING 2014 SEMESTER SCHEDULE/draft**

As we move through the semester discussions, we may add other readings, handouts, etc., as well as thesis exercises, take-home essays, and other writing tasks. In addition, potential class visits by writers who will be in Missoula during the semester might rearrange some of our schedule as well (Heather Cahoon, Sherwin Bitsui, and any others).

Note: Readings are listed by author or editor. *Unraveling the Spreading Cloth of Time* is edited by Marijo Moore and Trace Demeyer. To avoid confusion with reading assignments from my own book, theirs will be referenced in the semester schedule as "Moore & Demeyer," while mine will be referenced as "DL Moore." & also note in Moore & Demeyer, look up page numbers in the Table of Contents for listed authors, and if there is more than one entry, read them all.

**UNIT 1            OVERVIEWS**

**Week 1**

- 1/28 -- Questionnaire; introductions; syllabus; logistics; talking points  
1/30 -- Moore & Demeyer to p. 36; DL Moore Introduction, pp. 1-35.

**Week 2**

- 2/4 -- King, "You'll Never Believe What Happened" **1<sup>st</sup> Microtheme 1 posted on Moodle.**  
2/6 -- Moore & Demeyer to p. 65

**UNIT 2            19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY & THE RHETORIC OF HUMANITY**

**Week 3**

- 2/11 -- Apess, *Eulogy on King Philip*; Moore & Demeyer **Microtheme 1 due.**  
2/13 -- Apess, *Experiences of Five Christian Indians & An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man*

**Week 4**

- 2/18 -- Apess, *Son of the Forest* selections: at least Chaps. 1, 3, 4, 7, 9 & Appendix **Microtheme 2 posted on Moodle**  
2/20 -- Apess, *Indian Nullification* selections pp. 163-214.; Moore & Demeyer

**Week 5**

- 2/25 -- Moore & Demeyer  
2/27 -- Winnemucca, *Life Among the Piutes* to p. 65

**Week 6**

- 3/4 -- Winnemucca, *Life Among the Piutes* cont. to p. 104 **Microtheme 2 due.**  
3/6 -- Winnemucca, *Life Among the Piutes* cont. to p. 202; Moore & Demeyer

**Week 7**

- 3/11 -- Winnemucca, *Life Among the Piutes* cont. to end; Moore & Demeyer  
3/13 -- Winnemucca, discussion cont.; Moore & Demeyer

### UNIT 3 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY & THE RHETORICS OF LOSS & HEALING

#### Week 8

3/18 -- McNickle, *Wind from an Enemy Sky* to p. 65; Moore & Demeyer

3/20 -- McNickle, *Wind from an Enemy Sky* cont. to p. 119

**Required: Sherwin Bitsui Poetry Reading, Friday, March 21, 7 pm**, Dell Brown Room of Turner Hall. Bitsui is teaching poetry and the lyrical essay as the Hugo Visiting Writer in UM's Creative Writing Program in the English Department.

#### Week 9

3/25 -- McNickle, *Wind from an Enemy Sky* cont. to p. 173 **Thesis Essay 1 handed out**

3/27 -- McNickle, *Wind from an Enemy Sky* cont. to end, incl. Afterword by Owens; Moore & Demeyer  
**Reading Journal pages totalled. [Sue Samson visit YES—in Student Learning Center of Mansfield Library]**

#### Week 10

4/1 -- Spring Vacation

4/3 -- Spring Vacation

#### Week 11

4/8 -- Silko, *Ceremony* to p. 49; Moore & Demeyer

4/10 -- Silko, *Ceremony* to p. 100; Moore & Demeyer **Essay 1 due**

#### Week 12

4/15 -- Silko, *Ceremony* to p. 153; Moore & Demeyer

4/17 -- Silko, *Ceremony* to p. 204; Moore & Demeyer

#### Week 13

4/22 -- Silko, *Ceremony* to end; Moore & Demeyer

4/24 -- Moore & Demeyer

### UNIT 4 HUMOR & SURVIVANCE

#### Week 14

4/29 -- Alexie, *Reservation Blues* to p. ; Moore & Demeyer

5/1 -- Alexie, *Reservation Blues* to p. ; Moore & Demeyer

**Optional Research Paper prospectus due.**

#### Week 15

5/6 -- Alexie, *Reservation Blues* to p. ; Moore & Demeyer

5/8 -- Alexie, *Reservation Blues* to end; Moore & Demeyer

**Reading Journal pages totalled. Essay 2 due.**

#### Finals Week

5/13 --

5/15 -- **Optional Research Paper due.**