Engl/Indi/Wome 3819: Native Women’s Writing

Course Location: ATAC 2019
Class Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10am-11:30am
Prerequisites: One FCE in English at the first-year level including at least one of English 1111 or 1112, or permission of the Department.

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Instructor Information

- Instructor: Dr. Judith Leggatt
- Office: RB 3041
- Telephone: 343-8286
- Email: jleggatt@lakeheadu.ca
- Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 10am-11am

Teaching Assistant Information

- Teaching Assistant: Olivia Cleaver
- Office: RB3032
- Telephone: 807-343-8855
- Email: omcleave@lakeheadu.ca
- Office Hours: Thursdays 11:30am-12:30pm
**Course Description**

In this course, we will study literature written by Native American and First Nations women. Topics to be examined will include: constructions of gender and sexuality within a variety of Native North American cultures and texts; the representation of Indigenous women and of Indigenous gender roles under colonization; the ways in which Native women writers respond to and combat those representations, and reconstruct their own identities through literature; the potentials and problems of making connections between Native women and mainstream feminisms; and the role of two-spirits in the unsettling of binary gender identities. Literary texts by Native women writers will be studied in conjunction with literary and cultural theoretical texts.

**Learner Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- read Indigenous women’s texts critically, and assess their rhetorical, ideological and aesthetic strategies.
- write well (grammatically correct, clear, effective prose).
- communicate ideas effectively and coherently.
- explain the role of literature in articulating, resisting, and/or constructing understandings of Indigenous women’s (and other) identities.
- explain how Indigenous women’s texts are produced by, and produce, their historical and cultural contexts.
- adapt the tools of literary analysis to indigenous-based inquiry.
- identify and assess the social, environmental and other ethical themes presented in texts.
- contribute to class discussion effectively.

**Course Resources**

**Required Course Texts:**

*English/Indigenous Learning/Women’s Studies 3819 Course Reader*


**Course Website**

There is a Desire2Learn site for the course, on which you will find course resources such as an ecopy of this outline.

**Course Schedule**

You should **have the readings complete** for the first day that a text will be discussed in class.

January 6: Introduction
January 8: Jeanette Armstrong “Indian Woman”; Kim Anderson “Introduction” from A Recognition of Being

January 13: Janice Acoose “Literature, Image and Societal Values”; Duncan Campbell Scott “The Onondaga Madonna”

January 15: Pauline Johnson “The Corn Husker” and “A Cry from an Indian Wife”

January 20: Leslie Marmon Silko, Storyteller 54-76; 94-98

January 22: Leslie Marmon Silko, Storyteller 54-76; 94-98; “Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit”; Groupwork

January 27: Leslie Marmon Silko, Storyteller 54-76; 94-98; Paula Gunn Allen, “Kochinnenako in Academe”; Groupwork

January 29: Monique Mojica, Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots

February 3: Monique Mojica, Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots

February 5: Monique Mojica, Birdwoman and the Suffragettes; Short Essay Due

February 10: Beth Brant, “Grandmothers of a New World”; Groupwork

February 12: Beth Brant, “Coyote Learns a New Trick”

Reading Week

February 24: The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse

February 26: The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse

March 3: The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse; Deirdre Keenan “Unrestricted Territory”; Groupwork

March 5: The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse

March 10: The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse

March 12: Louise Halfe’s poetry

March 17: Louise Halfe’s poetry; Groupwork

March 19: Louise Halfe’s poetry

March 24: Will’s Garden; Major Paper Due

March 26: Will’s Garden

March 31: Will’s Garden; Groupwork

April 2: Catch-up, exam review, and wrap up

Tuesday April 7, 2015: Not a class day. All assignments must be handed in to Judith’s office by 4:30pm (date stamped if necessary). No assignments will be accepted after this date without a doctor’s note or other documentation.
Assignments and Evaluation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Length</th>
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<tr>
<td>Groupwork</td>
<td>Throughout term</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1-2 pages each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Essay</td>
<td>February 5, 2015</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3-5 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Paper</td>
<td>March 24, 2015</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>6-10 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Throughout term</td>
<td></td>
<td>Up to 3% bonus</td>
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Assignment Policies

- Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments are individual assignments and cannot be completed collaboratively.
- Assignments are due by **4:30pm** on the dates indicated. If you do not hand in your paper during regular office hours, have it date stamped by security and immediately submit it either to the English department office (RB3029), or the instructor’s office (RB3041). Assignments submitted more than 4 hours after they have been date stamped will be judged to have been submitted on the date they are received by the instructor, rather than the date they were date stamped.
- If you require an extension on an assignment, you must ask for one **BEFORE** the due date.
- Unless you ask for (and receive) an extension, late assignments will be penalized by 2% per day (to a maximum of 20%), and will not be accepted after 4:30pm on Tuesday April 7, 2015.
- All assignments must be in MLA format, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, and in 12-point font.

**Exceptions to these policies are allowed only with a doctor’s note or other appropriate documentation.**

Groupwork

**Value:** 10% (2% for each of the five groupwork sessions)

There will be regular groupwork sessions throughout the course. The dates of these sessions are indicated on the course schedule and below, and the questions are available on the course D2L site, and below. To prepare for the group discussion, students will come in with typed notes, with 2-3 points to contribute to discussion of each of the questions, written in complete sentences. These notes will be handed in at the end of class, and students will earn 2% for each appropriately completed groupwork session. Those who do not adequately prepare, or who do not contribute to their group’s discussion, may earn part marks. Students who miss groupwork for a legitimate reason (eg. illness) may submit more detailed written responses (about 200 words per question) to make up for the missed discussion portion of the assignment.

**Jan 27: Yellow Woman/Kochinnenako**

Using Paula Gunn Allen’s article as a framework, apply each of the three perspectives to the short story “Yellow Woman” by Leslie Marmon Silko:
1. How would you read the story through a Keres/tribal framework? (I know the difficulty in asking this; use Allen as a model to help you read through an unfamiliar lens)
2. How would you read the story through a mainstream feminist framework?
3. How would you combine the two to read the story from a “feminist-tribal” framework?
4. How does the lens change how you read the story?
5. Which lens is the best, and why?

Feb 10: “Grandmothers of a New World”
1. What do the historical stories of Pocahontas and Nanye’hi (Nancy Ward) have in common? Why does Brant look at them together?
2. How does Beth Brant’s portrayal of Pocahontas compare to Monique Mojica’s? What are the similarities and differences? What is each trying to say about Native women with her portrayal of the figure? Does the difference in genre (play or essay) have any effect on how you read the figure?
3. What does the essay suggest about the natures of legend, myth, history, fact, fiction and truth? How do these different forms interact in Brant’s writing?
4. How do Brant’s observations of her own family and relationships inform her reading of history?
5. What do you make of Brant’s vision, which she draws from her readings of Pocahontas and Nanye’hi, of a new world springing from the mixture of races? How does her vision differ from assimilative narratives, such as those put forward by Duncan Campbell Scott?

Mar 3: Deirdre Keenan “Unrestricted Territory”
Although these questions all focus on Keenan’s article, you will need a working knowledge of Erdrich’s novel to answer them.
1. What is the thesis of Deirdre Keenan’s paper? You can either pick a sentence that you think works as her thesis statement, or create your own sentence that you think encapsulates her argument.
2. Which parts of Keenan’s argument do you agree with? Are you agreeing with the point because it is the only possible reading, or because you think it is the best possible reading out of two or more possible interpretations? If the latter, what is/are the other interpretation(s), and why is this one better?
3. Which parts of Keenan’s argument do you disagree with? Is the problem with the logic of the argument or the facts on which it is based, or do you feel that there is a better reading than the one Keenan puts forward? If the argument is wrong, point out the flaws in the reasoning or facts. If you think there is a better reading, explain what it is.
4. Either take Keenan’s argument, and use it to read a passage in the primary text that she does not use, or give a more detailed/nuanced reading of one of the passages she does choose.
5. What is your overall assessment of the article?

Mar 17 Groupwork: “Body Politics” and “Stones”
1. In “Body Politics,” what is the effect of the repetition of the words “Real woman” at the beginning of every stanza except the first and final ones? Who does the speaker’s mother
define as “real,” and by implication who is “NOT real”? How does culture shape gender in the poem?

2. What is the speaker’s perspective? What is the effect of having her present her mother’s point of view, rather than her own? How do the first and final stanzas frame Mama’s ideas about gender?

3. How does Halfe use animal imagery to prove her point in “Body Politics”? What point is she proving with that imagery?

4. How do games and sex interact in “Stones”? Why would Halfe connect men’s relationships with their testicles with golf and pool/billiards? Why does she pick these two specific games? How does the intersection of sex and sports contribute to a construction of masculinity?

5. What is the effect of the poetic voice Halfe creates for “Stones”? Why does she create a voice that does not recognize the games of golf and pool and so has to describe them? Why does she write in non-standard English?

6. What is the view of masculinity created in “Stones”? Is it a racialized one in any way? How does it compare to the construction of femininity in “Body Politics”?

Mar 31 Groupwork: Will’s Garden

Explicate each of the following passages, explaining how its literary devices contribute both to the meaning of the passage and to the themes of the text as a whole:

1. “Cheam is splitting in two. There is a big crack in the mountain, a good earthquake will finish the split, so them white boys are up there day and night trying to pin it up.”

   “Like you can pin a mountain together,” Gramma snorts. We all look up. Sure enough, Cheam is all lit up. You can almost hear the giant machines. I can almost see them drilling holes in her.

   My Mom is on her feet, “Oh dear. Look-ee here. Thish here mountain is splitting in half. Ho, heck. I got me thish here old spare safety pin left over from my kid’s diaper days, let’s just take it and pin it all up.” The laughter pops the picture. (4-5)

2. One cape. One memory. One discovery. I hope my life journey is as easy as beading a garden. I am staring at the next garden. The barrette is a rose, just one big rose. It doesn’t look like a wild one. It looks like the kind my Momma grows in her trellis in the front yard, blood red and sweet smelling. Sarah’s using three colours of red to make it. The leaves are so detailed and the flower so real, I want to get scissors and clip it from the imaginary vine it is attached to. I image up Momma’s trellis and begin a new garden—a rose garden, blood red and beautiful. (48)

3. The road is coming through Hell’s Gate as I move onto the next cape. It is a dangerous road, but it is a road. She holds, even after the carts try her. They are behind schedule. Great Grandpa writes his first letter to his wife on the short workday—Sunday. He misses her. He doesn’t say much else. I see him with that clean white paper, praying over it . . . well, not the kind of praying white folks do when they kneel. He is just talking soft and sweet to it, like it is an old friend, asking it to be good to him, offering it his best thoughts,
thanking it for laying down its life and promising not to waste it. Then he writes. The letters look uneasy on the page, like they are hesitating to land just there. They stand up just barely, but the message is clear. (53)

4. “I am moving in the direction of my heritage. Sto:loh men made sure the land was safe. They made sure the territory was bountiful. They took care of this land. I am going to be a caretaker, but a different kind of caretaker than before. I practice my ways. I offer tobacco to the earth, but I think she wants something more. I am going to study to be an environmental scientist, but I plan to do it in a certain way. I want to learn our science first, to ground myself in the science of our holy knowledge, then tailor their science to fit mine. I am going to struggle in an activist way to detoxify this earth, to make this world more responsive to her, to treat her as the beautiful, flexible, fragile and deserving woman she is.” Drum roll. (121)

5. Hmm, that’s a new one. First time I ever argued with myself. What’s up with that? Don’t start giving yourself questions. Hey, do you think this is a new me surfacing?

   The snakes unravel. On their backs are written all kinds of craziness: there is a diamond back with ‘Wit the Homo’ written on it, a common gardener with Buster-Jesus-Christ-second-coming, a cobra with Residential School, a boa constrictor with ‘healing and sobriety’ on it, and an anaconda with ‘environmental science’ on it. My muscles feel quivery; my leg is twitching mid-thigh. I look under the covers. It is visible, this twitch. My breath is getting short. The snakes crawl about, some slow, some fast, over each other, under, around, and about. I can’t breathe. (178)

Short Essay
Due: Feb 5, 2015
Length: 3-5 pages
Value: 20%

Apply Kim Anderson’s four steps in the process Indigenous women’s self-definition—Resist, Reclaim, Construct, and Act—to any one text studied in the first half of the course. You can deal with all four steps in the process, or focus on just one. The topic is deliberately broad; narrow it so that you are proving a precise, focused and analytic thesis.

You may write on any text from the first half of the course, up to and including “Coyote Learns a New Trick” by Beth Brant, which we will be discussing February 12th.

If you write on “Indian Woman” by Jeanette Armstrong, make sure you are going beyond class discussion.

You are not required to use secondary sources beyond Kim Anderson, but if you do be sure to cite them.
Major Paper
Due: March 24, 2015
Length: 6-10 pages
Value: 35%
Write a detailed, well-structured, paper on one of the following topics. Make sure you narrow the topic so you are proving a precise, analytic, debatable thesis. Use at least three secondary sources to support your reading of the literary texts, at least two of which are scholarly sources (books or journal articles). Secondary sources that are required course reading do count.

1. Nature in “Indian Woman” and Will’s Garden
2. Poetic structure in Pauline Johnson’s poetry.
3. Sexuality and community in Yellow Woman/Kochininako stories.
4. Competing oppressions in Monique Mojica’s plays.
5. Constructions of history in Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots and/or “Grandmothers of a New World.”
6. Performance in one of Monique Mojica’s plays.
8. Catholicism in Louise Halfe’s poetry and The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse.
9. Gothic elements in Louise Halfe’s poetry.
10. Constructions of masculinity in Will’s Garden.
11. A topic of your own choosing. You must check your topic with Judith before beginning.
12. A creative assignment (poetry, fiction, visual art, web design, etc.) that responds to material on the course. Such responses must be accompanied by a 3-4 page analysis that explains how your response operates as literary criticism. In your analysis, you should include discussion of the significance not only of the content of your creation, but also of its form (the rhyme and meter of poetry, the media, colour and layout of art, etc); the analytic portion of your assignment is likely where you will use the three required secondary sources. Examples of such assignments are on display in Judith’s office; drop by if you want some inspiration. You must check your project with Judith before beginning.
Final Exam
Length: Three Hours
Value: 35%
There will be a three-hour final exam in the exam period (April 12th to 24th, 2013). The exam will consist of two parts. In the first part, you will identify and analyze 5 short quotations (you will have a choice of eight passages). In the second part, you will write a comparative essay (you will have a choice of three questions). The final exam must be written at the scheduled time. Do not make arrangements to leave campus for the year until the exam schedule is posted and you know when your exams will be.

Participation:
Weight: up to 3% bonus.
Class participation is a necessary and important part of university courses, in which we all learn by exchanging ideas and information. Participation bonus marks will be awarded for exceptional contributions to the discussion, which can include asking questions, answering questions, making suggestions, providing information, and friendly debates. While disagreement over ideas is encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Make sure you leave room for your classmates to participate too. Students who miss more than 20% of classes will not usually be eligible for participation bonus marks.

Marking Standards
All assignments will be marked in accordance with the English Department Marking Standards: https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english/markings-standards.

Collaboration/Plagiarism Rules
Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student's work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you've submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty. All plagiarized work (in whole or in part) and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean, who is responsible for judging academic misconduct and imposing penalties. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a 0 on the assignment in question. It might also be subject to more severe academic penalties. See the Code of Student Behaviour.

University Policies
• Students in this course are expected to conform to the Code of Student Behaviour: https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/policies/student-related/code-of-student-behaviour-and-disciplinary-procedures
• Lakehead University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible
learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the course.

This course outline is available online through the English Department homepage and the Desire2Learn site for the course.