Course Outline: On Being Indigenous: Native Americans in Literature & Film

In this course we will examine a range of contemporary Native American authors and filmmakers to discover the ways in which they raise compelling issues which affect the diverse tribes across the nation in the post World War II period. We will focus upon recurrent issues in their narrative history such as identity, the politics of representation, colonial and postcolonial encounters, the definition and practice of resistance, the influence of oral traditions on written and filmed texts, and indigenous strategies for re-imagining identity and cultural icons of legitimacy and power.

I. Introduction to Native American literature and its ties to national and world literature / Ethno-criticism: problems of reading Native American fiction.

Readings (see Reserved Readings or Bibliography below and Calendar for details)
- S. Alexie, “A Drug Called Tradition”; “Every Little Hurricane”
- S. Momaday, “The Way to Rainy Mountain”
- G. Vizenor, “The Last Lecture on the Edge”
- Selection of poems by Alexie, Hogan, Harjo, Hill
- Testimonies of Conquest: Bartolomé de las Casas, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Samson Occom

Literary criticism, theory:
- Louis Owens, “Other Destinies, Other Plots: An Introduction to Indian Novels” / “Columbus Had It Coming” / “Beads and Buckskin” / “As If an Indian Were Really an Indian”
- Gerald Vizenor, “Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance”
- Fanon, Frantz. “From The Wretched of the Earth”

II. Remembering It All: From Oral, Spiritual, and Cultural Tradition to Colonial Ventriloquism (or Mediating the Indigenous Voice)

Readings (see Reserved Readings or Bibliography below and Calendar for details)
- Selections of Native American Orality (Chief Joseph, Cochise, Crazy Horse, Speckled Snake, Seattle, Wokova among others).
- Selections from The Mythology of Native North America
- Selections from Wild Majesty, Ed. Hulmes, P. & N. Whitehead

III. Noisy Tongues, Recovery and Imagination—Native American Strategies for Webbing Tales of Identity, Encounters, and “Survivance”

Required Texts
- Alexie, Sherman. The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven
- Hogan, Linda. Mean Spirit
- Marmon Silko, Leslie. Ceremony
- Momaday, Scott. The Ancient Child
- Welch, James. Fools Crow
IV. The “Real” vs the “Reel” Indian: Re-kindling the Power of Story-Telling

Readings (see Reserved Readings or Bibliography below and Calendar for details)

- Ella Shohat, “Ethnicities-in-Relation: Toward a Multicultural Reading of American Cinema”
- Louis Owens, “The Invention of John Wayne” / “Apocalypse at the Two-Socks Hop”
- O’Connor, John. “The White Man’s Indian”

Films (at least 5; see Filmography for details and required viewings)

Teaching Strategies*: Class time will be devoted to lectures, group discussion, and oral reports.

[“Los estudiantes que reciban servicios de Rehabilitación Vocacional pueden recibir acomodo razonable y equipo asistivo necesario conforme a las recomendaciones de la Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con Impedimento (OAPI) del Decanato de Estudiantes.”]

Required texts:

A. Ordered for purchase at BORDERS [Plaza las Americas]

- J. Welch, Fools Crow
- N.S. Momaday, The Ancient Child
- L. Marmon Silko, Ceremony
- L. Hogan, Mean Spirit
- S. Alexie, The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven

B. Reserved Readings at Richardson Seminar Room (PED 105) under course number: Theory / Criticism:

- Fanon, Frantz. “From The Wretched of the Earth”
- Owens, Louis. [6 essays] “Other Destinies, Other Plots” / “Beads and Buckskin” / “Columbus Had It Coming” / “As if an Indian Were Really an Indian” / “The Invention of John Wayne” / “Apocalypse at the Two-Socks Hop: Dancing with the Vanishing American”
- O’Connor, John. “The White Man’s Indian”
- Vizenor, Gerald. “Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance”
- S. Momaday, “The Way to Rainy Mountain”
- G. Vizenor, “The Last Lecture on the Edge”
- Selection of Native American Myths: From The Mythology of Native North America “Introduction” (p. 3-14); “The Great Goddess” (p. 22-23): Cherokee:

• Testimonies, Oratory (Bartolomé de las Casas, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, Samson Occom, Chief Joseph, Cochise, Crazy Horse, Speckled Snake, Seattle, Wokova)
• Faulkner, William. “The Bear” (excerpt)

Methods of Evaluation*:
Mid term Exam and Oral Reports (60 %)
Proposal, Annotated Bibliography and Research Paper (40 %)

[*Evaluación diferenciada disponible para estudiantes con necesidades especiales.]

Grading System: A, B, C, D, F.

Selected Bibliography: Criticism / Theory (*required reading: some of the texts these selections come from are available at our Richardson Seminar Room; these all will be especially useful for oral reports, your exams, or Research Paper)


***. “Columbus Had It Coming: Crossbloods, Crossreading, and Cultural Survival.” “Beads and


Velez, Alan R. “The Indian Historical Novel.” In Native American Perspectives. 77-92.


Electronic resources:
- http://www.centrelink.org/Review.html
- http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/project/arl.

Skins (part 1 of 8): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88TLQ5FQf8k&feature=related

Smoke Signals (part 1 of 9): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdEzw5o3Rno&p=F4A6699A27D4DF81&playnext=1&index=30

Filmography (*required viewing; **required and available in our Resource Center—“The Lab”)

- *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (2007)
- **Dances with Wolves (1990) Director: Kevin Cosner
- **El Norte (1983)
- **House Made of Dawn (1972) Directed Richardson Morse
- **The Last of the Mohicans (1992);
- *Legend of the Fall
- Little Big Man (1970) Director: Arthur Penn
- **Powwow Highway (1989)
- *Pochohontas (1995)
- **Smoke Signals (1998) Director: Chris Eyre [Cheyenne]
- **The Searchers (1956) Director: John Ford
- Stagecoach (1939)
- **Thunderheart (1992)
- **The Vanishing American (1925) Director: George B. Seitz
- WhaleRider

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