Native American Women Writers:
Storytelling and Survivance

Instructor: Sara Partridge, Ph.D.
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Office location: TBA
Student drop-in hours (office hours): Tues. 2:00-4:00 p.m., and by appointment

Course information
FYSEM-UA 812, Spring 2021
Class meeting time: Tues. 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Class meeting location: TBA

Course description
This course asks how twentieth-century and contemporary Native American women writers pursue questions of historical memory in literature. It considers the ways these works draw upon Native storytelling traditions with deep histories, enacting the form of cultural resistance that Gerald Vizenor calls “survivance” and yielding novel experimentations with literary form. What role do stories play in the transmission of history? How do they reflect the phenomenological and collective processes of memory? How do Native oral traditions challenge conventional definitions of authorship and text? Many of the authors on this syllabus work to record or recreate history (Zitkala-Sa, Mourning Dove, and Diane Glancy); some offer new modes of historiography (Linda Hogan and Deborah Miranda); while others give old stories new meaning through contemporary literary forms (Joy Harjo and Leslie Marmon Silko). Many of these works depict spiritual or ancestral relationships to the land, and thus offer environmental critiques of American imperialism. They also explore stages and cycles of womanhood, including girlhood, coming-of-age, and motherhood. Memory, trauma, and poverty constitute another type of cycle these works engage. Together, these texts challenge hegemonic forms of history-making by drawing on indigenous epistemologies and feminist positionalities.

Learning objectives
This course is an interdisciplinary humanities course that introduces students to the disciplines of history and literature and the subfields of indigenous studies and gender studies. No previous knowledge or training is required. Students will gain historical knowledge about indigenous American history and learn to understand literary works within their historical context. They will think critically about the concept of genre and deploy this knowledge in their writing. Assignments help students to develop flexible critical writing skills, as they undertake different genres of writing such as historical research, literary analysis, and creative non-fiction. In-class skill-building exercises give students the
opportunity to learn and practice these skills before they are assessed for a grade. Class discussions and short individual presentations help to foster students’ oral communication skills and confidence presenting complex ideas.

**Assignments and grading**
1. Historical research paper (4-5 pp.) 20%
2. Poetry analysis (3-4 pp.) 15%
3. Critical literary essay (4-5 pp.) 20%
4. Creative nonfiction essay (6-7 pp.) 25%
5. In-class presentation (5-10 min.) 10%
6. Class participation 10%

**Course texts**
Whenever possible, I will provide .pdf copies of course texts at no cost. Texts with a double asterisk** will likely need to be purchased or borrowed by the student. Every effort will be made to limit course textbook costs to $75 for the semester.

- Zitkala-Sa (Yankton Dakota Sioux), *Old Indian Legends* (excerpts) (oral history) (1901); “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “Why I am a Pagan” “School Days of an Indian Girl” from the Atlantic (journalism) (1900-1902)
- Mourning Dove (Christine Quintasket) (Okanogan, Arrow Lakes), *Coyote Stories* (selections) (oral history) (1933)
- **Diane Glancy (Cherokee), *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears* (historical novel) (1996)
- **Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), *Storyteller* (poems and short stories) (1981)
- **Deborah Miranda (Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen), *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (tribal history/autobiography) (2013)

**Weekly schedule**
*The readings listed for each class meeting should be read beforehand, in preparation for that class.*
Part I: Oral genres


Week 2 (Feb. 2): Selected oral traditions from Coming to Light; selections from Mourning Dove (Christine Quintasket), Coyote Stories (1933)

* Feb. 7: Last day to drop Spring 2021 classes.

Week 3 (Feb. 9): Zitkala-Sa, Old Indian Legends (excerpts) (1901); and selected essays: “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “Why I am a Pagan” “School Days of an Indian Girl” from the Atlantic (journalism) (1900-1902)

* Assignment #1: 4-5 pp. historical research paper on pre-1900 event
Due Feb. 13, 11:59 PM

Part II: Poetry

Week 4 (Feb. 16): Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), Storyteller (selections) (1981); Selected chapter from Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance by Gerald Vizenor (University of Nebraska Press, 1994)


Week 6 (Mar. 2): Joy Harjo, continued

* Assignment #2: 3-4 pp. poetry analysis
Due Mar. 6, 11:59 p.m

Part III: Novels

Week 7 (Mar. 9): Louise Erdrich (Ojibwe/Chippewa), Love Medicine (1984)

* No class - Spring break Mar. 15-21 *
Week 8 (Mar. 23): *Love Medicine*, continued


Week 10 (Apr. 6): *Pushing the Bear*, continued

Week 11 (Apr. 13): Class trip to the Museum of the American Indian

* Assignment #3: 5-6 pp. critical essay on Erdrich or Glancy
  Due Apr. 17, 11:59 p.m.

Part IV: Creative Nonfiction


Week 14 (May 4): Final essay workshop

  * Date TBD: Final essay due *

Class Policies

Student expectations

1. Class preparation. This includes reading the assignment beforehand, bringing a hard copy of the text, and bringing a pen/pencil and paper.

2. Assignments. Students are expected to complete assignments on time, with one three-day extension to be taken as needed without permission. All assignments
must be completed to pass the course. All assignments should be uploaded to NYU Classes by the due date listed on the syllabus.

3. Attendance. Every student may be absent up to 3 times without any impact on the final grade. Please contact me about any extenuating circumstances that may cause you to miss more than 3 classes over the course of the semester.

Diversity and inclusion
As your instructor, I am committed to creating an inclusive and safe classroom environment where all students feel respected, welcomed, and heard. As a class, we will collaboratively develop ground rules for respectful discussion. I will offer guidance on preferred language and critical frameworks for understanding the issues of oppression, marginalization, and violence that arise during the course of the semester. I work to employ pedagogical practices that foster classroom inclusivity and allow students from all backgrounds to succeed. Diversity is central to academic excellence, and this course works to create a more inclusive academy through its subject matter, modes of inquiry, and course policies.

Accessibility and accommodation
As your instructor I am committed to ensuring the course is accessible to all students. All accommodations are coordinated through the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities. Please find more information and register with Moses Center at www.nyu.edu/csd, or contact their office at 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu to receive fair and reasonable accommodation. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. If I can be of any help making course materials more accessible, don't hesitate to let me know.

Academic integrity
Academic integrity entails taking credit only for ideas and work that are your own, and requires you to recognize and acknowledge information derived from other sources. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are taken very seriously at NYU and will result in a failing grade for the assignment, the course, and/or further disciplinary action. Please familiarize yourself with NYU's Statement on Academic Integrity and the protocols for MLA citation, which we will use in this course.

Avoid academic dishonesty by giving yourself ample time to complete assignments, by understanding rules for proper citation, and by proofreading to ensure material you use is correctly quoted and cited. Assignments should be completed individually (not in a group) and without outside assistance. You may not turn in work that was used to satisfy the requirements of another course.
Campus Resources

The Wellness Exchange
The Wellness Exchange is the constellation of NYU’s programs and services designed to address the overall health and mental health needs of its students. Students can access this service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A hotline will put them in touch with professionals who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as crises they may encounter.

726 Broadway, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10003
wellness.exchange@nyu.edu
(212) 443-9999

Counseling
The College Counseling Service (920 Silver; 998-8150) is a branch of the University Counseling and Behavioral Health Services (726 Broadway; 998-4780). The office provides psychological counseling for individuals as well as groups, self-improvement classes, referrals, and psychiatric medication services. All services are confidential and free, except psychiatric medication services.

726 Broadway, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10003
wellness.exchange@nyu.edu; (212) 998-4780
*Satellite office of University Counseling Service* (920 Silver); (212) 998-8150

The NYU LGBTQ+ Center
The NYU LGBTQ+ Center creates a welcoming environment for students, faculty, staff, and alumni to develop their understanding of and engage with LGBTQ+ communities through programs, events, learning and development, support, consultation, and resource sharing.

60 Washington Square South 602
New York, NY 10012
lgbtq.student.center@nyu.edu

The Writing Center
You are encouraged to use the resources of NYU’s Writing Center, where faculty and peer tutors can give you one-on-one help with your written assignments. Help for international and multilingual students is also available through the Writing Partners Program. You may want to make appointments well in advance of assignment due dates to ensure there is availability. 411 Lafayette, 4th floor. (http://cas.nyu.edu/ewp/writing-center.html)
The University Learning Center
The University Learning Center (ULC) also offers resources like peer tutoring, academic skills workshops and the like. Locations: ARC (18 Washington Pl) and UHall (110 East 14th Street) (www.nyu.edu/ulc).