**This syllabus is an excerpt. For full course policies, please contact Melissa Michal.**

**American Indian Literature: Speculative American Indian Literature, 3 Credits**

**Course Description:**

*English 494A: The Speculative American Indian Story: Giving Shadows Presence Within Popular Culture*

The category of American Indian literature has caused contention amongst American Indian Studies critics, some arguing the label important to vocalizing Indigenous issues, some arguing that this label continues stereotypical thinking where readers and critics ignore the writer’s aesthetics. Instead, readers become merely those digging for cultural markers as if those writings stand in for all American Indian experiences. This reading and writing intensive course will look at the speculative novel, short story, and comic, where representations of American Indians often either exist as background to the larger story or are nonexistent all together. However, such works investigate larger national and world issues in ways which create palpable mediums readers want to read and experience, and which act as a space illuminating the fears and anxieties of the US and its citizens about American Indian issues. What happens when the clear aesthetic is the speculative subgenre rather than the American Indian themselves? How does this steering away from the typical literary “Indian novel” offer readers a new way to view American Indian issues? Why do we often ignore speculative writing when analyzing literature? What are the benefits of these subgenres discussing certain world and community issues? Finally, how do these works create a new perspective on what it means to be American Indian literature? This course will explore contemporary American Indian fiction, specifically at the intersections between representation, identity, and fiction conventions. The class will seek to re-define a broader consideration of Nativeness and American Indian literature paying particular attention to how these works can be understood and appreciated in relation to their historical, cultural, and literary contexts. The goals are to learn to read critically, to expand our familiarity with the ways cultural history has been represented in American Indian literature, to better understand the evolution of aesthetic trends in American Indian literature, and to understand how fiction can allow us new perspectives on and insight into experiences. Subgenres to be studied may include science fiction, gothic, apocalyptic fiction, contemporary fantasy, dystopian, to name a few.

**General Objectives**:

This course explores contemporary genre fiction by American Indian writers and focuses on stories that use or subvert literary conventions. Too, we’ll be reading and applying literary theory, so part of the objective is 1) to show an understanding of literary criticism about the texts and 2) to apply your own ideas and outside literary criticism to these texts. This is a literature course, not a course in understanding American Indian people better, so though we will discuss outside context—political, historical, tribal—the fiction and literary criticism articles will be our primary texts. As your instructor, I will be guiding you to develop as thoughtful readers and critics.

**Course Goals:**

* To extend the skills of expository writing and critical thinking established in first-year composition.
* To read, understand, and interpret writings by American Indian authors and write analytically about them.
* To understand the importance of orality/literacy, storytelling, tribal sovereignty, land rights, place, survival humor, gender constructions, and tribal community, issues important to critical reading and writing about Indigenous literatures.
* Students will be able to identify and explain the significance of the essential literary elements of novels (i.e. character, setting, conflict, plot, climax, resolution, theme, tone, and point of view)
* Write fresh interpretations of texts and/or issues in literary studies in which you 1) perform a reasonable close reading by analyzing relevant literary elements (techniques, themes, forms/genres, stylistic choices, or other literary devices), and 2) make appropriate references to relevant texts
* Demonstrate how common or culturally specific heritages, perspectives, histories, and/or belief systems influenced the writers in this course and the forms or genres in which they wrote
* Apply theories or critical thoughts of others as lenses with which to deepen arguments
* Explore various aspects of culture using analysis, library sources, internet sources, and potentially oral narratives (among other possibilities)
* Provide various kinds of support for claims
* To construct essays using textual evidence from both primary and secondary sources.
* Use structure, language, documentation and format appropriate for audience and purpose

**NOTE:** Some of the material in this course may be considered sensitive, violent, offensive, or sexual in nature. The materials are intended to deepen critical thinking about cultural issues which means exploring new ideas and concepts that may raise questions about culture, religion, politics, and sexuality. As well, the opinions of myself or classmates may be considered sensitive. Be prepared to enter critical conversations that contain many valid viewpoints, including those that make us uncomfortable. No matter the discussion I expect respect from everyone. If any of these issues concern you, please see me the first week of classes in order to work with such concerns. Otherwise, I will assume you agree to be attentive and fully involved in this course as the design and lessons request.

**Required Texts**:

*Bone Game* by Louis Owens (Choctaw, Cherokee)

*Mapping the Interior* by Stephen Graham Jones(Blackfeet)

*Robopocolypse* by Daniel H. Wilson (Cherokee)

*Eternal* by Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee Creek)

*Moonshot* edited by Hope Nicholson (on reserve in the library)

*Green Grass, Running Water* by Thomas King (Cherokee)

**Course Requirements/Grading:**

All projects must be ready for collection by the due date listed on the syllabus. Each project will include a letter of reflection in addition to the assignment. Computer and printer problems are not valid excuses for late work. All drafts must be typed and double spaced and turned in as hardcopies.

20%--First Pages rough draft—6-8 page early draft

In this early draft of the final paper, students will write the **critical opening** which engages in some specific issue in American Indian studies. Students should not yet engage in literary analysis of their primary source (the novel from the semester which they choose). Although in the opening, it should be part of the thesis how this novel fits their critical interventions. The rest of the early draft must make use of critical secondary research sources, which do not take over the student’s own argument. Instead, such sources should show how the student is extending the other arguments made within this field and this issue. (Students will turn in an abstract for this paper before the early draft).

10%--Annotated Bibliography—5-7 sources

For this project, students will annotate several critical sources important to their final paper. These should be sources which give important critical interventions from within American Indian Studies—not sources which merely give facts and numbers (although those might be important to the dialogue, they do not get annotated). Annotations should be at least 250 words and should contain the article’s argument, how it helps the student’s research/argument, and how the student’s argument adds on to this dialogue. The professor must see an early list of the articles (in MLA format) to approve the sources. (Students will turn in an early draft. The final revised draft is due with the final paper.)

10%--Short Story

Throughout the semester, students will be mapping and analyzing many different types of speculative stories. For this project, a student must take one or two of the stories as inspiration to write their own. Using their own topic, students will use the other stories to help them decide on writing techniques, ways of building plot, and types of characters usually seen in speculative writing. This story should be no less than 5 pages (in proper MLA format) being 5 pages to the bottom. And it should be no more than 10 pages unless prior arrangements have been made. The story should draw on themes and writing techniques discussed in class and should show student understanding of how the form and genre has been utilized over time. Alongside the short story should be included a 750 word analysis from the student on how and why they made the writing choices that they did, **and** how they drew inspiration from the stories read in class. This should NOT be a summary of their story or a summary of other stories read. It should be a critical analysis of choices made.

40%--Final full draft—12-15 page paper

This paper should explore further one of the ideas from either critical articles or class discussion in relation to speculative literature or American Indian Studies more broadly speaking. A literary work from this class should be the primary source used and analyzed. This paper should strengthen and finish the arguments made in the earlier draft turned in. And it should address professor and peer comments by making the argument stronger with such reviews and feedback.

20%--Participation

# Participation: In our classroom, knowledge is jointly constructed, not simply disseminated from teacher to student. I expect each of you to participate in that process and so will look forward to hearing from you daily. To earn an A in participation means to listen and discuss with passion and energy throughout each class, to spark conversation, but not to dominate it. Class, then, will be a dialogue between you, your fellow students, and myself. This approach means consistent attendance is essential. Thus, for every absence over two, your final grade will be lowered by half a letter; more than three absences is grounds for failure.

1. Regular in class discussion and presence:
   1. Your participation grade is determined by the following factors: how much you participate in discussions and other work; the careful thinking demonstrated by your remarks. Participation means offering comments during class on discussions, readings, or giving feedback during group work. Participation also includes completing homework, in-class discussion, in-class group work, and in-class writing. The five factors for gaining strong participation grades are: being on time to class, not being disruptive, sticking to the topic at hand, speaking regularly in each class, and giving strong comments which further discussion in positive directions.
   2. Relate discussion to our conversation. Random questions or comments unrelated to our discussion will have a negative impact on your grade. There are also other variables involved that will negatively affect your grade, which include the following: late arrival to class; missing work; unsatisfactory in-class work; lack of preparation, which means failure to be prepared for discussions, class work, or peer workshops; unprofessional conduct; and chatting during class on things unrelated to class. I expect your reading, writing, analyses, and discussion to reflect careful thought and preparation.
2. We must all be active learners of our community. Students must learn to take risks sharing their ideas, while also respecting the ideas of others. If this is something that you struggle with, then please make an appointment to conference with me for tips on better participation. Remember, this is an integral part of your grade. The stronger you become at speaking, the better you will also become at writing.
3. There will be many days where I will require you to be bring in any news or popular culture items which relate to the topic in the novel or critical article. I might also ask about something in the novel like say a law or historical event. Please be prepared to discuss any of the above. This means being a good reader and observer of the world. That also means not just reading a text, but involving it in your current world in some way.
4. **Cultural event** **and local hike**. You are required to attend one cultural event during the semester that relates to American Indian issues. Turn in a 500 word, typed overview of the experience within a week of the event. This should NOT be a summary of the event. But instead, it should showcase and analyze how this event ties to the class and how it helped you better connect to the literature or the issues discussed in class. Attend your event BEFORE week 13. We will also be doing a hike to the local Petroglyph Gallery. This date is listed on the syllabus. If you cannot physically complete the hike, there will be important other activities to complete that day with local park rangers. If you decide you wish to not do this hike after speaking with me, you may attend another cultural event in its place. Be sure to speak with me about this.

All essays will present your interpretation of specific texts. You will make your points and convince your readers to agree with you by crafting a solid and precise thesis statement, by planning your argument carefully, and by selecting appropriate direct quotations and specific references to the literature and to secondary sources (pieces of criticism or research which you will find at *reliable* internet sources or in the library).

**Attendance**:

**Students are expected to attend all class sessions. As stated in the participation section,** class, then, will be a dialogue between you, your fellow students, and myself. This approach means consistent attendance is essential. Thus, for every absence over two, your final grade will be lowered by half a letter; more than three absences is grounds for failure.

One week can set you quite far behind and lead to failure. If you miss, get the notes from someone. Then e-mail me if you like or come and see me. I can’t cover an hour of material in an e-mail. And I can’t re-teach classes in such meetings. But I can help.

If you are late, it’s disruptive for the class when you enter while I lecture or while fellow students speak. And you miss material. You will be marked as absent unless you see me after class to let me know you were there. I mark attendance at the start of every class. Two lates equal one absence. Late is considered anytime past the start of class.

Grading is based on specific assignment criteria, and will follow English Department standards for content, organization, expression, and mechanics. To compute final course grades, the following values are assigned to the standard letter grades of A through F:

* A = 4.0
* A- = 3.7
* B+ = 3.3
* B = 3.0
* B- = 2.7
* C+ = 2.3
* C = 2.0
* C- = 1.7
* D+ = 1.3
* D = 1.0
* D- = 0.7
* F = 0.0
* No paper = 0.0

90-100 % = A, 80-89% = B, 70-79% = C, 65-69% = D, 64% or under =E

I do give + and – grades such as B+ or C- within the ranges above. And there is no rounding up of grades.

Zero (0) will be the score when no work is turned in. So it is always better to hand the work in, as say for example, a ten is better than a zero.

**Late Writing Projects**: Late papers will not be accepted for a full grade unless **prior** arrangements have been made with me and verified in writing. If this is an issue, come see me about tips for organization. In college, it is expected that you will work your schedule to complete things on time. If, for some reason you decide not to complete an assignment, you will simply receive an F (0) on that assignment, which also leads to failure of the course. Each calendar day that a paper is late (any minute past the class hour that it is due), I will deduct one letter grade. Oftentimes, such lateness leads to not passing a project, which can lead to not passing this course. Any late work will not receive feedback.

As a rule, I do not give make-up assignments. Sometimes I do give bonus point assignments. Do the work in the first place as bonus assignments won’t make up for most missed things.

**E-mail Policy:** I do not accept e-mailed homework unless prior arrangements have been made. You will print it and bring it in. That and most times you will need it printed out in order to make workshop comments. If it is a portfolio and you are sick, you will need to make arrangements to get it to me before class begins on that due date as most of the materials cannot be e-mailed.

I have e-mail office hours where I check in the mornings before noon M-F. I’ll get back to any questions at that time within 24-36 hours. Questions sent over the weekend will be replied to on Monday. Don’t wait until the hour before something is due or the night before to tell me of some issues with the assignment as I can’t help you 11th hour.

Your e-mails should be professional. It’s an English class and consider your audience--me. Go ahead and impress me with proper sentences—not text language. Do sign your e-mail. Include something in the subject line. Otherwise, it looks like junk mail and I reserve the right to assume it is spam as in someone hacked your computer.

By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students’ Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV’s official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students’ e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

**Blackboard/Webcampus:** In this class, **we will use Blackboard extensively** as a required educative and communicative tool. Ask as many questions as you need to in order to become familiar with the software.

I might post something phenomenally important. Or I might send you a message. Please check it every other day. If any technological problems arise during the semester, contact me first to inform me of the problem, then contact the Help Desk for assistance. If it is related to homework, send me a message and I will respond during e-mail office hours.

**Writing assignment format: All** writing assignments must be in required MLA format, typed in black ink, stapled, and printed out. You must use double space, one inch margins, with Times New Roman 12 point font. Also, label each exercise and essay with your name, course name and section number, date, professor, and assignment title. Include page numbers on each page, **except** for the first page.

This is MLA, a Humanities format. I require these formats not only for ease of my reading, but also because following specific guidelines are the expectations in most professional environments and publications, as well as future classes. It is healthy practice for your future needs and goals.

\*\*\*Note: This syllabus and the schedule that follows may be amended or modified in any way upon notice; most such changes will affect the schedule, so be sure that you know if any due dates or homework requirements change.

**Course Syllabus**: Daily Plans

**Week One**

**Jan 17**—**Introductions/ class expectations**

Terminal Avenue Eden Robinson

**Week two**

**Jan 22** **Speculative Fiction Criticism—Active Resistance**

Links on Webcampus—Subgenres

Article 1—A Story Teller Stands Where Justice Confronts Basic Human Needs Sara Paretsky

Article 2—Imagining Indigenous Futurisms Grace Dillon

Article 3—Speculative Fiction in Native American Literature—BA thesis Jennifer Burnham

**Jan 24 Post-Apocalyptic and the Feminist**

Article 4— The Appeal of the Gothic by Charles Palliser

Article 5— The Only Lasting Truth by Tananarive Due

Article 6—Introduction: The Whiteness of Science Fiction and the Speculative Fiction of Blackness André M. Carrington

**Week 3**

**Jan 29** **Victimry and Oral Tradition**

Article 7—“Toward A National Indian Literature” by Simon Ortiz

Article 8—“American Indian Art and Literature Today” by Gerald Vizenor

**Jan 31** **Mystery and Suspense**

Bone Game Louise Owens 1-75

**Week 4**

**Feb 5 Museum Repatriation**

Bone Game 76-150

**Feb 7** **Outsider Tricksters**

Bone Game 151-end

\*\*Group work day

**Week 5**

**Feb 12** **The Shorter Novel**

Mapping the Interior Stephen Graham Jones First half

**\*\*Annotated bibliography outline (List of 7 main sources MLA style found thus far) and abstract due today**

**Feb 14** **Historical Trauma**

Mapping the Interior Second Half

Article 9—Maria Yellowhorse Braveheart Historical Trauma Response

**Week 6**

**Feb 19**  **President’s Day--OFF**

**Feb 21** **Robots and Colonization/The Apocalypse and Cinema**

Robopaocolypse 1-250

**\*\*Saturday, February 24—Hike to Petroglyph Gallery 8-11 am (Plan B date=March 3 8-11 am)**

**Week 7**

**Feb 26**  **Globalization and Genocide**

Robopaocolypse 251-350

Article 10—Voice of the Land: Giving the Good Word Elizabeth Woody

**Feb 28 Community as Nation and Indigenous Resurgence**

Robopaocolypse 350-end

**\*\*Annotated bibliography due (Annotations of 5-7 main sources MLA style revised as per my comments)**

**Week 8**

**March 5** **The Opposite of the Sparkly Vampire**

*Eternal* Cynthia Leitich Smith

**March 7 Young Adult Literature Genre**

*Eternal* Cynthia Leitich Smith

**Week 9**

**March 12 Dark Angels**

*Eternal* Cynthia Leitich Smith

**\*\*Paper draft due today (First 5-7 pages of critical opening—not the literary analysis yet)**

**March 14— Teen Romance and Coming of Age**

*Eternal* Cynthia Leitich Smith

**Week 10**

**March 19—** **Queering Speculative Literature**

Letter from the Editor Hope Nicholson

Beyond the Grim Dust of What Was Grace Dillon

Returning to Ourselves: Two-Spirit Futures and the Now Niigaan Sinclair

Aliens Richard Van Camp

**March 21** **Two-Spirit**

Article 11—Reading Queer Indigenous Writing—Indigenous Fantasies and Sovereign Erotics: Outland Cherokees Write Two-Spirit Nations Lisa Tatonetti

The Boys Who Became Humming Birds Daniel Heath Justice

NéLe! Darcie Little Badger

Transitions Gwen Benaway

**Spring Recess March 24-April 1**

**Week 11**

**April 2 Dislocation through Multi-layers**

Green Grass Running Water Thomas King 1-124

**April 4—** **Critical Interventions and Narrative/ Drafting Final Papers**

Green Grass Running Water 125-222

**\*\*Bring in paper draft**

**Week 12**

**April 9—** **Polyvocal Structure**

Green Grass Running Water 223-350

**\*\*Short Story and critical analysis of your story due today**

**April 11 Tricksters, Oral Stories, and Intention**

Green Grass Running Water 351-end

**Week 13**

**April 16 Speculative Through Images**

Moonshot edited by Hope Nicholson on reserve in the Library

Forward and Introduction

Ochek David Robertson and Haiwei Hou

The Qallupiluk: Forgiven Sean and Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley and menton3

**\*\*Full drafts (all 12-15 pages) due to peer groups—make sure it is 12 pages at least**

**April 11** **Peer Review Day**

**Week 14**

**April 23**  **Reading the Comic—Visual Divides**

Moonshot edited by Hope Nicholson on reserve in the Library

Ue-Pucase: Water Master Arigon Starr and David Cutler

Strike and Bolt Michael Sheyahshe and George Freeman

Ayanisach Todd Houseman and Ben Shannon

**April 25** **The Lyric Speculative**

*This Accident of Being Lost* Leanne Betasamosake Simpson excerpts

Akidean Boreal

This accident of being lost

Pretending Fearless

Situation Update

**Week 15—Final Week**

**April 30** Paper discussions

**May 2** Final class/party

**Final Full Paper due with final REVISED annotated bibliography and abstract**

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