English 4710/4996/5710
STUDIES IN GENRE:
AMERICAN HISTORY AND THE NOVEL
Fall 2009 / M-W-F 12:00-12:50
Cudahy 120

“It takes a lot of history to make a little fiction.”
--Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Course Description
This course investigates various ways in which creative writers have attempted to create a sense of the American past and comprehend, through the medium of fiction, its legacies of conflict and conquest. Readings for the course cluster around several key contexts in American history, including the European exploration of the New World; the colonization of New England; and the settlement of the West. Primary texts ranging from documentary accounts to historical romance to contemporary experimental novels bring into focus questions concerning the relationship between fact and fiction, authority and authenticity, history and historiography, narrative and counter-narrative; conflict and resolution. Students are expected to complete a research paper and four brief response papers, in addition to substantial readings and a final exam.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:
- Integrate the methods, perspectives, and concepts used in their major disciplines.
- Acknowledge the existence of connections between their major disciplines and others.
- Consider how creative writers have used fiction as a lens through which to re-examine history and as a medium to revise readers’ perceptions of the past.
- Understand the historical contexts and source materials of the novels studied.
- Comprehend the ways in which creative writing encourages readers to engage with issues of war and peace in the nation’s past.
- Reflect upon, in the context of their specific studies, the impact of their college education on their development as whole persons.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
Sherman Alexie, Reservation Blues (Grove)
Walter Benjamin, Illuminations (Schocken)
Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition (Penguin)
Willa Cather, The Professor’s House (Vintage)
James Fenimore Cooper, The Last of the Mohicans (Broadview)
Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts (Penguin)
Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (Penguin Special Edition)
James Welch, Fools Crow (Penguin)
**Course Requirements:**

- Required readings
- Regular attendance and active participation in class discussions
- Final exam
- Four brief reflection papers (2 pages)
- Research paper (8-10 pages), including Works Cited

**Grading Criteria:**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 Reflection papers</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td>Final exam (integrative)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Learning to discuss literature is both a vital means of arriving at a better understanding of the texts and a rewarding end in itself. One of the primary goals of the class is to create together an environment in which everyone assumes the responsibility of speaking in class, listening attentively and respectfully, responding thoughtfully, debating, agreeing, disagreeing, elaborating, questioning, and otherwise engaging in group discussion. If you have concerns about your ability to participate actively in the course, please see me during office hours.

**Reflection Papers:**
Brief reflection papers of 2 pages will be collected and graded periodically during the semester. In evaluating these papers, I will be looking for evidence of careful first-hand reading of each text, as well as thoughtful consideration of the question posed. Topics will be posted on D2L in advance.

**Research Paper:**
The research paper should offer a reading of one or more of the assigned texts, illuminated by your research into the text’s historical context. The project most likely will grow out of class lectures and discussions (so take notes) and should be informed by a substantial number of secondary sources (at least four). The final paper will build on a prospectus and preliminary bibliography, handed in early in the semester, and an annotated bibliography.

**Late Papers:** Late papers will be accepted ONLY within one week of the due date. All papers handed in after the class meeting in which they are due will be lowered by one full letter grade. All writing assignments must conform to the guidelines set forth in the *MLA Style Manual* (see also the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*). This includes the general format of the document (typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins, etc.), the register of language (formal, academic), as well as the manner in which you acknowledge the source of quotations and other material that warrants attribution (parenthetical documentation).

**Senior Experience:**
As a Senior Experience course, this course is designed to enable students to reflect upon how they have grown from, and been influenced by, the University and its mission over the years. The reflection papers, research project, and classroom discussions will afford ample opportunity to accomplish this goal.
**Attendance:**
Attendance is mandatory and will be taken every day. The regulations of the College of Arts & Sciences stipulate:

*In the case of absences (regardless of cause) greater than the equivalent of two weeks of class (more than 6), the final course grade will be lowered a half letter grade for each additional absence. In the case of absences greater than the equivalent of three weeks of class (more than 9), a grade of WA will be assigned. Once a WA has been issued, it cannot be changed to a W.*

**Academic Honesty:** For university policy on plagiarism and academic honesty, see [http://www.marquette.edu/academics/regulations/acaddishonesty.html](http://www.marquette.edu/academics/regulations/acaddishonesty.html).

**Schedule of Readings and Major Assignments:**

August 31—Introduction / “What Is a Nation?”
Sept. 2—Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition*, pp. 1-24 [film clip]
Sept. 4—Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition*, pp. 25-63
Sept. 9—Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition*, pp. 64-105 and Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”
Sept. 11—Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, Preface through Vol. 1, Ch. 4
Sept. 14—Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, Vol. 1, Ch. 5-8
Sept. 16—Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, Vol. 1, Ch. 9-12
Sept. 21—Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, Ch. 5-8 **Library Visit**
Sept. 23—Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, Ch. 9-15
Sept. 25—Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* Preface through Vol. I, Ch. 4 **Reflection #1 Paper Due**
Sept. 28—Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, Vol. I, Ch. 5-8
Sept. 30—Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, Vol. I, Ch. 9-13
Oct. 2—Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, Vol. I, Ch. 14-17
Oct. 7—Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, Vol. II, Ch. 6-10
Oct. 9—Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, Vol. II, Ch. 11-16 [film clip]
Oct. 12—Allen, “The Sacred Hoop” (e-reserve); Welch, *Fools Crow*, pp. 1-69

**Midterm Break**

**MIDTERM BREAK**

Oct. 26 — Welch, *Fools Crow*, 312-360  

Oct. 30 — Cather, *The Professor’s House*, pp. 1-60  
Nov. 2 — Cather, *The Professor’s House*, pp. 61-113  
Nov. 4 — Cather, *The Professor’s House*, pp. 114-55  
Nov. 6 — Cather, *The Professor’s House*, pp. 156-202

Nov. 9 — Cather, *The Professor’s House*, pp. 203-58 Reflection #3 Paper Due  
Nov. 11 — Silko, “Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination” (e-reserve) and Silko, *Ceremony*, through pp. 34

Nov. 13 — Silko, *Ceremony*, pp. 35-76  
Nov. 16 — Silko, *Ceremony*, pp. 76-106  
Nov. 18 — Silko, *Ceremony*, pp. 107-42  
Nov. 20 — Silko, *Ceremony*, pp. 142-98  
Nov. 23 — Silko, *Ceremony*, pp. 199-44 RESEARCH PAPER DUE

**THANKSGIVING**

Nov. 30 — Alexie, *Reservation Blues*, Ch. 1-2  
Dec. 2 — Alexie, *Reservation Blues*, Ch. 3-4  
Dec. 4 — Alexie, *Reservation Blues*, Ch. 5-6  
Dec. 7 — Alexie, *Reservation Blues*, Ch. 7-8  
Dec. 9 — Alexie, *Reservation Blues*, Ch. 9-10  
Dec. 11 — Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” Reflection #4 Paper Due

Take Home Final Due Friday, December 18 by 3:00 sharp!!

**Please be advised:**
- No laptop computers are to be used during class.
- No cell phones, including text messaging, or other electronic devices are to be used during class.
- Information about grades will not be released via e-mail.
- The instructor reserves the right to use TurnItIn anti-plagiarism software.