

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF A COURSE IN THE
GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:
EDUCATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL: DEPT. OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE COLLEGE: CAS
DEPARTMENT CONTACT: DR. LORI BURLINGAME CONTACT PHONE: 487-1494
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1. Subject Code, Number, and Title: Literature 161: Native American Literature
2. Credit Hours: 3
3. Course Description

Literature 161 will study the oral and written literatures of Native American cultures—emphasizing memoirs, essays, fiction, poetry, drama, and film of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—examined within their cultural and historical contexts. This course will promote an understanding of traditional Native world views, as well as examine the impact of Native peoples' contact with other cultures.
4. This course is (check one):
 - an existing course with no revisions (need not go through the input system)
 - an existing course with revisions (attach this form to Request for Course Revision form)
 - a new course (attach this form to Request for New Course form)
5. Check the General Education requirement this course is intended to meet. If the course is to be proposed for more than one requirement, submit a separate form for each one.
 - Effective Communication**
 - Quantitative Reasoning (*QR designation*)**
 - Writing Intensive (*WI designation*)**
 - Perspectives on a Diverse World**
 - Global Awareness
 - U.S. Diversity
 - Knowledge of the Disciplines**
 - Arts
 - Humanities
 - Science
 - Social Science
 - Learning Beyond the Classroom (*LBC designation*)**
6. Rationale. Provide a concise, clear, jargon-free explanation of why this is a General Education course and how it fits into this specific requirement. This rationale should appear on the general course syllabus provided here and should be included in specific course syllabi given to students.

Literature 161 will study the oral and written literatures of Native American cultures, with emphasis upon the authored memoirs, essays, fiction, poetry, and film of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Students will read and become familiar with a range of oral traditional and 19th, 20th, and 21st century texts by Native American writers from a variety of Native North American cultures and literary genres, and they should be able to identify continuities between oral traditional and contemporary Native texts. Students will understand the history of Native American literatures from their oral beginnings to the present; they will be aware of issues involved in studying oral traditional texts in translation, as well as cultural issues raised by the teaching of sacred texts in the classroom; and they will understand the history of Native Americans and examine how texts were read in their contemporary contexts, as well as the interpretive questions that they present for readers today. Students will learn literary terms and understand their application to the analysis of texts; they will become aware of issues in and approaches to literary analysis. They will also study the philosophies and religious beliefs of Native peoples and cultures as they manifest themselves in the texts. Through their studies, students will gain an appreciation of the rich diversity, strength, and beauty in Native cultures and literary traditions.

7. Clearly and concisely explain how this course meets each of the General Education outcomes for the requirement checked in number five (all outcomes should be addressed). To do this, (a) list the General Education outcomes for the requirement and explain how the course meets each outcome; and (b) explain, in general terms, the method(s) of evaluation to be used in the course and how these methods assess the degree to which students have met the General Education outcomes for this requirement.

Methods of Evaluation

Methods of evaluation for this course may include many different types of assignments, from multiple-choice quizzes to longer analytical papers which are designed to have students develop critical analyses of and arguments about literary texts and Native American cultural and historical issues. In any particular section of this course, student knowledge will be evaluated using a range of tools such as the following: reading quizzes; multiple-choice exams that focus on historical and cultural content, literary terms and their application in critical analysis, and specific knowledge of assigned texts, their structures and themes; exams which require students to focus on the analysis of specific passages from the texts; in-class or take-home reflective writing assignments about questions and issues raised by class material; and essay assignments in which students develop an in-depth analysis of a literary text or other class material. Extra credit assignments which extend the knowledge of class material and encourage participation in university and community events related to Native American cultures may also be included. Active participation in class discussion is also integral to many instructors' evaluations of student attainment of course objectives. Further details of how evaluation methods assess students' meeting of General Education objectives is provided below, with multiple examples designed to indicate the range of means by which different instructors may assess each objective.

General Education Outcomes

Humanities

1. Recognize how the humanities cultivate aesthetic appreciation, imagination, and empathic understanding of others.

A. Literature 161 is designed to cultivate students' aesthetic appreciation of Native American thought, culture, and historical experience through the study of the oral and literary traditions, film, arts, and music of Native peoples. As Paula Gunn Allen notes, literature plays a much more pivotal role in oral traditional cultures than it does in print and media-based cultures. In traditional Native cultures, oral literatures tell the people "who they are, how they came to be, and how they should live in the world and with each other" (Ramsey). For example, through imaginative engagement with Coyote in the "Orphic" stories, students will understand the role that these stories play in cultivating empathy, helping their hearers through the stages of grief, and establishing the mourning process. When reading *Fools Crow*, students will gain aesthetic appreciation for the ways in which James Welch transcribes Blackfeet terms into English in order to make his readers feel like they are in a Blackfeet world, even though, ironically, Welch is recreating that traditional Blackfeet world in English and in the print medium. When students read Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*, which has a multiple narrative structure, they will find two seemingly opposite narrators, whose stories will ask them to see two different versions of reality as truth. Writers like Erdrich use narrative strategies to challenge readers' assumptions about race, class, and gender. These narrative strategies also give students the opportunity to locate themselves imaginatively, culturally, and politically in situations which will enhance their sensitivity to and understanding of others. In general, they should become better world citizens through their development of critical thinking skills about cross-cultural issues. In writing assignments, students will be encouraged to grapple with the complexities of Native American cultural identities as they relate to the identities of other non-Native peoples and groups. Students will also acquire knowledge of literary terms (symbolism, character development, plot, narrative styles, etc.) which will facilitate the analysis and discussion of texts. In addition, this course will examine the historical and social contexts in which this literature was created and the ways in which it constitutes a tradition within the literatures of the United States.

B. Some quantitative quizzes or exam questions may focus specifically on literary terms and specific knowledge of texts, as well as the history and culture of Native Americans; qualitative quiz or exam questions may focus specifically on the development of Native American literature and culture (specifically the continuities between oral and written literatures) and how it reflects and intervenes in its historical context (for example, the ways in which Native autobiography critiques the boarding school system). Papers may ask students to contribute original and culturally-specific analyses of literary texts. For example, students may be asked to comment upon character development in *Fools Crow*, which is a novel of development; they may discuss narrative positioning and the reliability of narrators in *Tracks*; or they may talk about the literary strengths and weaknesses of Ella Deloria's *Waterlily*, as well as its contributions to the canons of Native American and American literature. The active participation of all class members is paramount and may also be a basis for the evaluation of students' achievement of the above outcomes. Students may also earn extra credit for attending and participating in cultural events, like Pow Wows, where they will cultivate an aesthetic appreciation of Native American cultural traditions.

2. Demonstrate basic competency in reading and understanding literary, philosophical, or religious works both in their original historical context and as they inform debate and dialogue today.

A. Literature 161 asks students to read/view critically a number of literary genres ranging from oral traditional literatures in translation to essays, novels, short stories, memoirs, poetry, drama, and film produced by Native American writers from the foundations of myth to contemporary times. Students will understand the history of Native American literatures from their oral beginnings to the present; they will be

aware of issues involved in studying oral traditional texts in translation and in English, as well as cultural issues raised by the teaching of sacred texts in the classroom; and they will understand the history of Native Americans and examine how texts were read in their contemporary contexts as well as the interpretive questions that they present for readers today. Students will learn literary terms and understand their application to the analysis of texts. They will also study the philosophies and religious beliefs of Native peoples and cultures as they manifest themselves in the texts.

B. Some quantitative questions quiz or exam questions may focus specifically on literary terms or historical facts or the characteristics of Native American literary genres, like creation stories, Trickster stories, or “Orphic” stories. Qualitative methods of evaluation may include analytic papers, essay questions on exams, reflection papers to prepare students for class discussion, and oral presentations. For example, students might be asked to examine the roles of women in Ella Deloria’s *Waterlily* from the standpoint of Dakota cultural values in the mid-nineteenth century and considering contemporary feminist theory. Class discussion of issues like the use of Native American mascots in sports, as depicted in the works of writers like Sherman Alexie, will reinforce the connections between literary texts, history, and contemporary debates.

3. Analyze and write about literary, philosophical, or religious works.

A. This course focuses on the reading, writing, and class discussion of Native American literatures and cultures. Students will apply their knowledge of literary terms, the development of Native American literary traditions from their oral beginnings to the present, and related aspects of Native American culture, philosophical, and religious beliefs to their analyses of Native American literature. Throughout the course, the instructor will model and students will demonstrate their abilities to analyze and interpret literary texts.

B. Analysis of Native American literary, philosophical, and religious works will occur in class discussions, web-caucuses, or written papers. While some questions or assessment tools are geared toward students demonstrating comprehension of basic information about literature and culture, the “A” student must demonstrate a knowledge of literary and cultural terms and history and their application in the interpretation, analysis, and discussion of course texts, through analytic papers and/or through quantitative exam questions that require students to engage in complex analyses of course texts. For example, students may be asked to apply Paula Gunn Allen’s arguments about the philosophical ideologies that undergird many traditional Native cultures to their analyses of texts like *Fools Crow*, *Waterlily*, or *Mean Spirit*.

4. Demonstrate basic knowledge of the history of literary works, or religious or philosophical ideas.

A. Lectures and class discussions will focus on the history of Native American literatures from their oral beginnings to the present. Students will become familiar with basic genres of oral traditional literatures in translation including creation stories, Trickster stories, “Orphic” stories, problem/conflict stories, and ceremonies; they will read philosophic essays like Paula Gunn Allen’s “The Sacred Hoop,” which provide a cultural and philosophic context for understanding oral traditional literatures. Students will also study the history of the shift from orality to print by focusing on the memoirs and short fiction of the first generation of Native writers in English, and they will read a sampling of texts from different Native cultures, which move, more or less, chronologically from boarding school narratives to the present, examining the interconnections between Native American literature and history. In particular, lectures and class discussions will explore the interconnections between our literary texts and the history of the boarding school era, the 1887 Land Allotment Act, the 1890 Massacre at Wounded Knee, the Indian New Deal of the 1930s, the Termination Era of the 1950s, the Red Power Movement and American Indian Movement protests of the 1960s and 1970s, and contemporary issues involving the appropriation of Native religious traditions by the New Age

Movement, the use of Native Americans as sports mascots, and contemporary land claims cases, among others.

B. Some quantitative quiz or exam questions may focus specifically on literary terms or historical facts or the characteristics of Native American literary genres, like creation stories, Trickster stories, or “Orphic stories.” Qualitative methods of evaluation may include analytic papers, essay questions on exams, reflection papers to prepare students for class discussion, and oral presentations. For example, students might analyze the ways in which the Trickster figure mediates between the polar opposites of tribal good citizenship and individual self-fulfillment, and they might also discuss the philosophical ideologies or world views that inform this figure and the stories about him. Students might also examine both the history of the boarding schools that shapes Zitkala-Sa “School Days of an Indian Girl” and the history of critical responses to her work.

5. Become familiar with the discursive practices particular to the study of the humanities.

A. Literature 161 teaches the critical vocabulary and historical and literary contexts necessary to an understanding of Native American literatures and cultures. Students will explore a number of different Native American literary genres, periods, and styles of writing; they will also learn the critical vocabulary (analysis of plot, setting, character, and theme) necessary for appreciating and analyzing works of literature.

B. Writing assignments and qualitative exam questions require students to engage critically with the application of the terms and concepts of literary studies, the development of Native American ideologies and cultural practices, and the history of Native peoples and their interactions with other cultural groups. For example, when studying contemporary poetry, students will become familiar with the idea of “free-verse” poetry as opposed to poetry with set rhyme and metrical patterns, but they will also be made aware of the ways in which free verse poetry is structured. They will be encouraged to look closely at imagery, diction, and tone in their interpretations. When examining novels, like Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks*, students will explore the implications of the multiple narrative structure on character development and credibility. When looking at Leslie Silko’s *Ceremony*, they will be presented with cultural studies readings, feminist readings, Marxist readings, and other ways of interpreting the texts, and they will be encouraged to develop their own interpretive strategies in exam questions and essays.

6. Begin to recognize how society influences humanistic thought and how the humanities transform society.

A. Literature 161 focuses on the literature and cultural practices of America’s First Nations and the ways in which these societies have shaped the cultures of the United States. Native American literary texts have both reflected and shaped the aesthetic, cultural, and political development of the United States. In the late 1960s, N. Scott Momaday’s Pulitzer Prize winning novel *House Made of Dawn* spawned what Kenneth Lincoln calls the Native American Renaissance and drew national attention to Native American writing, both the works of writers like D’Arcy McNickle and John Oskison, who came before him, and writers, like Leslie Silko and Louise Erdrich, who have come after him. This burgeoning of attention to Native American writing has been reflected in the multicultural movement and in the ways in which the study of Native American literature has developed in conjunction with more traditional cultural studies and more contemporary post-modern approaches. Contemporary Native American literature has been influenced by both oral traditional literatures and the works and styles of modernist writers like William Faulkner. Similarly, Western literatures have been impacted by Native thoughts and literary practices; for example, nature poet Mary Oliver’s work takes from Native American literary and philosophical traditions. Indeed, the traditions of ecological and environmental literatures and approaches to literary study have long been part

of Native American cultural and literary traditions. Humanistic thought is very much grounded in and shaped by the history of cross-cultural contact. The United States is built upon lands that first belonged to Native American nations; without Native American assistance, European immigrants would not have survived in the Americas; the current United States government is based upon principles of checks and balances found in the Iroquois Confederacy; half of the crops grown in the world today were first grown by Native cultures; and 59 medicinal drugs used today came from Native cultures. These are just a few examples of the impact of the First Nations on United States cultures today. Native American literature, especially post-contact literature, will also be examined as a response to and intervention into the political, social, and economic practices which have supported the marginalization and oppression of Native peoples and cultures through ethnocentrism, social intolerance, institutionalized racism, and exclusion in the United States. Native Americans have been made to feel like foreigners in their own lands, and ironically, in some Western versions of events, the victims of ethnocentrism have been reinvented as the villains in history. This course will explore these issues, as well as issues of language loss as it relates to cultural identity and the Native American literary tradition, the continuities between oral traditional and contemporary Native texts, the interconnections between Native and Western literary traditions, and the universal aspects of human experience, as depicted in literature.

B. A range of assignments invite students to experience the ways in which nineteenth and twentieth-century Native American texts continue and adapt the oral tradition and Western literary models and genres. For example, texts like Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* combine both Native oral traditional narrative techniques and the multiple narrative structures that are common in the works of modernist writers like William Faulkner. Students will also consider the ways in which Native American writings and ideologies critique and intervene in contemporary American society. For example, they might write an essay about the ways in which Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* critiques Western cultural values like materialism and individualism. Students might explore the ways in which Zitkala-Sa's memoirs indict and help to change ethnocentric government policies like sending Native children to identity-denying, military style boarding schools.

7. Become practiced in the interpretation and generation of ideas.

A. Literature 161 emphasizes the practice of reading critically by encouraging students to develop their own well-argued interpretations of texts. Using examples from literary criticism, teachers will illustrate the idea that one text can have multiple and often contradictory, but well-argued interpretations. For example, some critics argue that Ella Cara Deloria's *Waterlily* represents an idealized depiction of traditional Dakota culture, others might argue that the novel idealizes the protagonist's family but not the culture, and still others that the book is not an idealization of Dakota culture. Students will be shown through class discussions and sample writing assignments how to develop strong arguments about a text, and they will be encouraged to avoid plot summary and to use textual, historical, cultural, and critical evidence to support their arguments.

B. Students are guided through the process of developing thorough, critical, and culturally-appropriate interpretations of texts and other literary forms through class discussion, web-caucuses, writing, and the active interpretation of class materials. Student ability to generate their own interpretive responses may be assessed in multiple ways: through the quality of comments and active listening in classroom discussions, the coherence of arguments produced in papers, exams which measure knowledge acquired in the course; and the application of this knowledge to the understanding of literature.

8. Attach a syllabus (1-inch margins and 10-12 pt. font). The syllabus must include the rationale from #6 above and clearly reflect the outcomes and methods detailed in #7 above.

Please submit all materials in electronic form.



Action of the Department/College

1. Department

Vote of department faculty: For _____ Against _____ Abstentions _____

Department Head _____ Date

2. College

College Dean _____ Date

Action of General Education Advisory Committee

Vote of General Education Committee: For _____ Against _____ Abstentions _____

Chairperson, General Education Advisory Committee _____ Date

Approval

Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies and Curriculum _____ Date