

EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT

AIS 459, EJP
Spring 2024

SYLLABUS

AIS 459: TOPICS IN AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURE INDIGENOUS TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISMS

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN: EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT

SPRING 2024

INSTRUCTOR: ERIN CHESLOW

THURSDAYS, 5:00 – 8:00 PM

To consider relationships between indigeneity and race, this class will ask you to think with emergent relationships within and across borders in the wake of settler colonialism in North America and the Pacific. We will consider the Pacific as a sea of islands and peoples connected through complex histories of navigation and trade, as well as ongoing neocolonial and diasporic relationships with the US. These relationships have been shaped by the racialization and romanticization of Indigenous peoples and lands – and we will consider those contexts at length– but they are also shaped by the relationships between Indigenous communities, and we will try to center those in our discussions. Ultimately, this class will aim to view world literature less as a canon of Western and Western-influenced texts and more as an unbounded collection of texts shaped by relationships to specific places, as well as the routes between them.

Each of the novels and poetry collections we will read in this class focuses on a different settler-colonial space and Indigenous women’s ongoing relationships to that space. Questioning borders, building frameworks for relationality, and contending with the traumas of dispossession, they invite us to imagine alternatives to (post)colonial social and political landscapes. We will move between North America and the Pacific, thinking with different regional ways of knowing and questioning what it means to move between these two spaces, intertwined by settler colonialism and the aftermaths of World War II. In addition, we will read a series of transnational feminist critical frameworks. They will provide foundations and models for us to develop our own strategies for analyzing the negotiated and contested narratives about race, gender, and sexuality that the texts evidence in order to form interpretive arguments that address the ways in which the texts unsettle ideas about the nation, nation building, and national belonging.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

TEXTS

As the start of the semester, you will be provided with a **Composition Notebook** and a **Course Packet** with a series of excerpts and essays that we will read alongside our other course texts. This packet will also include all prompts, peer review methods, and a course calendar. You will need to bring these to class every week.

Throughout the semester, you will be provided with a copy of each of the full-length texts we will be reading as well. I will distribute these texts well in advance, to the best of my ability, to give you plenty of time to read and prepare.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Annotation Notebook: For each day of reading assigned, you will be responsible for an entry in an Annotation Notebook, which you will share with me at the end of each week or when requested. In each entry, you will respond to a prompt and keep notes based on your reading. You can use the following questions to guide your notetaking:
 - a. Note down your initial reactions. How does the text make you feel? Does it affect the way you think about yourself and the world?
 - b. What are some cultural contexts you recognize? How might the reading help you better understand the period in time with which the text is associated?
 - c. How does the text portray space? Where do the characters go and how do they see those places?
 - d. What questions do you have? List at least one.
 - e. Pick one interesting passage to close read and bring it to class for discussion.

Your responses will be used for class discussion and to fuel your writing assignments. They should not take long, but they should be well thought out and relevant to the reading.

2. Close Reading: Due Thursday, March 21st, 3-5 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, or handwritten. Using one of the novels or poems we have already read, choose a word or key passage that helps you to better understand the text, then make an argument about the text based on your reading. Be sure to quote directly from the text to provide evidence for your argument. This assignment requires no additional research.
3. Research Question: Due Thursday, April 4, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, or handwritten. As we prepare for the final research paper, I will ask you to come up with a research question that you would like to explore. Based on one of our readings for the class, what would you like to explore further? How might that reading help you to better understand a larger issue? Specifically, think about the form of the text you have chosen and ask a question that allows you to talk about that form's relationship to content. Also include a bibliography of 5 sources that might help you explore that question. We will spend some time talking about research and library resources before this assignment is due.
4. Final Research Paper: Due Thursday, April 25, 5-8 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, or handwritten. The final paper will incorporate the methods and skills you have practiced throughout the semester. Based on your research question, you will incorporate evidence from the text, as well as at least one theory we have explored in class, to try to answer the question you asked. Remember, your answer may be different than you expected. That is a good thing! It means you are really engaging with the text and the research.

PEER REVIEW: For your Close Reading and Final Research Paper, you will work with other students in class to investigate the methods used by the writer and provide feedback that the writer can use to revise his or her paper. Peer review days are mandatory, except in extreme

circumstances. You will not be able to make up this work, so be aware of deadlines and prepare to participate fully. I will provide you with guidelines and methods for engaging with your peers, as well as extensive time in class to discuss one another's work.

GRADING

This course will not employ a traditional alpha-numeric grading system. Instead, I use a grading contract, outlined below.

Instead of a grade for individual assignments or work in class, you will receive extensive feedback from me and your peers that should help you to think through your own language use and writing and develop skills for working with different texts. I will provide you with methods and examples to help you do this work, and we will continually discuss your expectations for the course and strategies for developing and meeting those expectations.

The idea here is that, unlike in a graded classroom, most of the feedback you will receive in your life will not be graded. If you wanted to learn to crochet, no one would give you an F for making a misshapen sock. Instead, they would show you how to do better and provide their responses to your process and any mistakes you might have made. It's the same in this class. Instead of providing a stick and carrot to get you to meet what you perceive my standards might be, I will instead continually provide you with my thoughts as a reader of your work and as a fellow reader of the other texts in the class. We will treat your texts just like we do the published texts we read, responding to them as part of a larger conversation about a give subject or contending with a particular issue.

Research in education and psychology over the past 30+ years has shown that the presence of grades in classrooms negatively affects the learning and motivation of students, and sometimes of teachers too. It discourages students from taking risks and exploring what it means to write, read, and learn. In this class, you are encouraged to take risks, to make creative choices that might not pan out in the end but will ultimately help you and others in the class think about writing differently. It is my hope that you will be creative and thoughtful in your work and bring your own interests to the table in your choices.

The following grading contract will only affect your final grade in the class. For all other assignments and readings, we will enter into conversation as a class about what the texts we write and read are doing, how we respond to them, and the choices you have made. When done properly, a shift away from grading is not a shift away from rigor. It is, in fact, quite the opposite.

The Grading Contract:

Letter Grade	Required Work
A	Close Reading completed Final Research Paper completed All texts annotated in your composition notebook Consistent, thoughtful participation Respectful engagement in peer review and workshops for all assignments
B	Close Reading or Final Research Paper turned in but incomplete Majority of texts annotated in your composition notebook Reliable participation Respectful engagement in peer review and workshops for all assignments
C	Close Reading and Final Research Paper turned in but incomplete Majority of texts annotated in your composition notebook Sporadic participation Limited engagement in peer review and workshops for one or more assignment
D	Close Reading or Final Research Paper not turned in Some texts annotated in your annotation notebook
F	Did not complete assigned writing and reading

DEADLINES AND LATE WORK

In this course, deadlines are considered motivation and accountability tools. They are designed to help you pace out your responsibilities. Since your work is assessed on the basis of the contract, there will be no deduction in your grade in you submit an assignment late. However, deadlines are not only a tool for you; they are also an agreement with me and your peers, a way to be considerate of the time of others. I will accept late work, but you will miss out on vital feedback from me and your peers, and continually missing deadlines shows disrespect for me and your peers. While mistakes and emergencies happen, please view all the work we do in this class in terms of the responsibilities you have to others and the responsibilities they have to you. That said, I am always happy to grant extensions if you ask in advance.

PARTICIPATION

In each class, contribute to each class discussion with any thoughts or questions you might have throughout the class. Remember, **there are not wrong answers!** While you may not have something to say every single day, I expect you to contribute to class discussion often. Say what comes to mind and build off of what your peers say. For more information, see the Etiquette and Expectations section of this syllabus.

It is your responsibility to obtain notes and other materials from a classmate for any class period missed.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this class, students should be able to do the following:

- Engage critically and dialogically with primary and secondary texts

- Develop understanding of a variety of transnational feminist approaches and theoretical frameworks
- Think critically about Indigenous presence, movement, and relationality
- Develop a working vocabulary of literary terms and close reading skills
- Collaborate with texts and peers through careful reading and discussion to produce effective and engaging writing

STATEMENT OF DIFFERENCE

In most respects, this class is the same as the one that I teach on the University of Illinois campus. I expect the same level of work from all of my students. The only differences are logistical: I have removed one assignment, an artwork presentation that would require access to museum websites, and augmented the final research paper so that you do not need to do research with resources you may not have access to. Because of the changes to the final assignment, I have changed the reading list to include more theoretical reading that you can then learn to apply to our fictional and poetic readings, just as my students would do on campus. So, basically, the difference is that I provide the texts for you that you might otherwise have to find yourselves, and I expect slightly more reading from student at DCC to offset the differences in research requirements. At any time, you are very welcome to ask me to elaborate on these differences.

TEACHING APPROACH

As above, I do not offer grades in this class. Instead, you will receive extensive feedback on all your writing. Each class will be discussion based, and I will repeatedly ask you to reflect on your thinking in the course, as well as the texts we read. Your knowledge will often guide our discussions, so please come to class prepared and do not hesitate to share your thoughts.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (PLAGIARISM)

Through imitation, you can learn the forms, methods, and conventions utilized by writers and their discourse communities. The words and phrases used by the writer, however, are their own. Any copied wording or phrasing or any repeated passages that are not properly quoted and cited will be considered plagiarism, resulting in a 0 on the paper in question. Do not hesitate to speak with me if you have any questions regarding this matter. Please keep in mind:

- Any source consulted must be included on your Works Cited page, even if you have not quoted it directly.
- All paraphrased and summarized information must be distinct from the material paraphrased or summarized and must be cited correctly, including an in-text citation.
- Much of what has been written, even in published texts and especially online, does not qualify as a reputable sources. We will discuss source viability further in class.

Often unintentional plagiarism happens when students are unclear about documentation expectations, so please see me when you are confused. Intentional plagiarism often happens when students feel desperate, so also contact me or talk to another instructor or tutor when you are confused or in a crunch, rather than resort to unethical measures that can severely impact your academic success.