

# English 164 (First Nations Literature)

Fall 2004

In this course, we will be reading and responding to a broad range of First Nations literature. Our purpose is to study our language, culture and writing in a context that promotes discussion, analysis and interpretation. As a prerequisite, students should already be able to write college-level essays with appropriate documentation of primary and secondary works (this is covered in English 150).

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## **Texts:**

- Moses and Goldie, eds. *An Anthology of Canadian Literature in English*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition .
- Robinson, Eden. *Monkey Beach*
- Highway, Thomson. *The Rez Sisters*.
- VanCamp, Richard. *A Man Called Raven* (on reserve in the library).
- A good reference guide for writing (e.g. Buckley's *Checkmate*)

## **Calendar Description:**

This course, which examines both the oral and literary traditions of First Nations people, introduces students to the study and analysis of indigenous literature from North America. Students read and discuss a novel, short stories, poems, and plays by First Nations writers and write about these works in journals, essays, and tests.

## **Course Objectives:**

In reading literature, students will be encouraged to

- make connections,
- consider meaning,
- make and support inferences,
- and evaluate.

Instructors will select course materials and provide information to enable students to

1. analyze First Nations literature from both the oral and written traditions;
2. analyze First Nations pre-contact literature in the genres of song, prayer, and storytelling by addressing their roles within First Nations communities;
3. analyze First Nations literature in the post-contact period through the genres of poetry, fiction, non-fiction and drama;
4. identify First Nations literary forms, elements, and techniques.

In discussing literature, students will be given the opportunity to develop and communicate responses and interpretations using varied methods and resources.

Students will be expected to

1. identify the continuing inter-relationship of First Nations pre-contact literatures with the written tradition;
2. examine Eurocentric notions of literal and figurative meaning in relation to First Nations literature;
3. use literary terms such as metaphor, irony, character, setting, and plot;
4. explore the significance of differing literary interpretations from Native and non-Native perspectives;

5. use vocabulary associated with analyzing fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fiction;
6. analyze themes common to First Nations literature;
7. explore various literary theories that are relevant to the study of First Nations literature (e.g. post-colonial theory, feminist theory, reader response theory, etc.).

In writing about literature, students will be expected to explain, support, and illustrate points in essays by

1. using a critical approach with appropriate language;
2. comparing pieces of First Nations literature;
3. documenting sources using current MLA bibliographic conventions.

### Important Course Policies:

1. Late assignments: Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Late assignments will lose 10% per day for the first two days. After this they will not be accepted at all.
2. If you miss in-class work/exams, you will receive a zero (unless you can prove a medical emergency). Check with me beforehand if you know in advance that you will be unable to attend.
3. Please be careful when using other people's words or ideas. Using them without identifying the author constitutes fraud (plagiarism) and can have a lasting impact on this course and your future studies. See me if you are in any doubt about where to draw the line between your work and someone else's.

### Evaluation:

Journals	25%
Essay 1	15%
Essay 2	15%
Mid-term Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%
Participation (including presentation)	15%

#### **Important notes:**

1. **Students who cannot pass the in-class assignments or exams will NOT pass the course.**
2. "Participation" means contributing to discussions in class in a genuine and generous way. Obviously, you can't participate if you aren't here.