



Special topics in Native American Literature & Oral Traditions

Our legends are like gems with many facets. They need to be read, savored, and reread from many angles. My elders never said to me, "This story carries such and such a meaning." I was expected to listen carefully and learn why the story was being told. Though guided, I was allowed the dignity of finding my own interpretation.

--Vi Hilbert, taq^wšəblu[?], Upper Skagit elder

THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE	SPRING QUARTER: 2006
Faculty: Rebecca Chamberlain, Phone ext. 866-2141	e-mail: chambreb@evergreen.edu
Meeting Times: Tuesday 6-10 p.m. Upper Division: 4 quarter hours	Location: SEM 2 C3109 May 9 & 15: SEM 2 C1107 Reference No. : (30501)

ṭəṭəwaas Stars:

ti[?]ə mima[?]ən xəṭ ti ləxšad ʔal tudi[?] šəq bək^w əad g^wadsəsuuc, g^wəl x^wi[?] k^wi tib ɬil, diṭ ṭəṭəwaas.

There are tiny things kind of like little lights way up in the sky, every place you can see them, but you cannot see those that are really far away, those are what we call stars.

--Vi Hilbert, taq^wšəblu[?], Lushootseed Vocabulary

Description:

The Starchild epic is one of the central myths of Puget Sound; however, there are versions found across North America. Why was it so important, and what does it teach our world today? As we ground our work in traditional stories of the Northwest, we will read contemporary poets and writers. Our study of Native American literature will make connections to art, music, environmental education, cultural studies, and Northwest history. It will include: storytelling, mythology, folklore, and ethno-poetics; the impact of literacy and technology on both traditional and contemporary arts; patterns of memory and meaning in legends, myths, oratory, songs, historic, and biographical accounts; the forms of poems, essays, short stories and film. We will read and listen to stories in Lushootseed and English. We will visit with traditional storytellers. As we explore how "stories are the elders way of teaching," we will look at the work of contemporary writers who speak of indigenous justice, the role of the artist and activist, the power of place, respect for tradition, and a vision for the future. This course is designed to be taken with "Lushootseed Language and Literature" for those who want additional work with language, stories and songs.

When we can understand the animals, we will know the change is halfway. When we can talk to the forest, we will know that the change has come.

--Andrew Joe, Skagit

Guest Artists: We are fortunate to have a number of guest artists visit our program this quarter. The college has been generous to bring them to our community for our program this spring, and we will be sharing them with other full-time and part-time programs as part of a spring liberal arts forum. Check class schedule for the dates of each artist.

- Johnny Moses (Tulalip) *Spring Star Stories and Songs*, (Week 7)
- Pauline Hillaire (Lummi) *Star Stories and Songs*; (Wk 7)
- Elizabeth Woody (Warm Springs) *The Power of Poetry and Healing Traditions of the Earth*; (Wk 6)
- Tina Wirihana (Maori) *Material & Spiritual Culture: Star Traditions of the Southern Hemisphere*; (Wk 3)
- Willie Smythe (Washington State Arts Commission) *Ethnographic Studies in Folklore*. (Wk 3)

May 20th, we have free tickets to a "healing for the earth" gathering hosted by Vi Hilbert (Upper Skagit Elder), and the Seattle Symphony at Bennaryoa Hall, in Seattle. (optional)

Required Texts: We will read selections from the following texts that are available in the book store.
* I have put the following texts that are on reserve in the Library.

- *Alexi, Sherman. *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven*. Atlantic Monthly Press, New York. 1993. (Weeks 9-10)
- Clark, Ella, *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest*. University of California Press, 1953. (Wk 1)
- *Chamberlain, Rebecca, *In Search of the Starchild: Program Reader* (a variety of star-stories, myths, and essays on: Native American oral, poetic and literary traditions and theory, orality and literacy, historical, political and cultural influences.) (Throughout the quarter.)
- Hogan, Linda. *Dwellings. A Spiritual History of the Living World*. Touchstone, 1995. (Wk 2-3)
- *King. Thomas. *The Truth About Stories*. House of Anansi Press, 2003. (0887846963) (Wk 7-8)
- Moses, Johnny. *Peace (and Star) Stories of the Pacific Northwest Coast*. Transcribed by Bill Cody. (Wk 6)
- *Niatum, Duane. *Harper's Anthology of Twentieth Century Native American Poetry*. San Francisco:Harper, 1988. (00625066) (Wk 5)
- Smyth, Willie, and Esme Ryan. *Spirit of the First People: Native American Music Traditions of Washington State*. Seattle: University of Washington, 1984. (Wk 4)

Anthologies of Short Stories: (Select ONE of the following texts) (Wk 6)

- *Gunn Allen, Paula, *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*. Ballantine Books, 1990. 044990508X)
- Rosen, Kenneth. *The Man To Send Rain Clouds*. Penguin, 1992. (014017317X)

Supplemental Texts: (Limited quantity available in the Bookstore or on reserve in the library.)

- *Hilbert, Vi. *Haboo: Native American Stories from Puget Sound*. Seattle: University of Washington, 1985.
- Kirk, Ruth. *Tradition and Change on the Northwest Coast*. U. W. 1986.
- Macnair, Peter, and Alan Hoover and Kevin Neary. *The Legacy: Continuing Traditions of Canadian Northwest Coast Art*. British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1980.
- Williamson, Ray and Jean Monroe. *They Dance in the Sky: Native American Star Myths*. Houghton Mifflin. 1987.
- Williamson, Ray. *Living the Sky: The Cosmos of the American Indian*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1987. (0806120347)



In the telling of a story there are silences in which words are anticipated or held on to, heard to echo in the still depths of the imagination. In the oral tradition silence is the sanctuary of sound.

--N. Scott Momaday,

Expectations:

- Faithful attendance and full participation at meetings, guest lectures, workshops, films, and seminars.
- Read and write weekly responses to the texts.
- Participate in class workshops and writing groups.
- Maintain a portfolio and journal of class handouts, notes, workshops, papers, writing, research, and cumulative work for the quarter. These will be reviewed at fifth week and final evaluation conferences.
- Successful completion of individual and group projects, presentations, workshops, or assignments on time.

There were always the stories. And they weren't just stories, they were the truth. They were views on the truth of life. And the truth of this life was that it was a way of life, the way we – the community of Acoma Pueblo, the larger Native American world, the world in general – lived. And it was the stories which opened my eyes, my mind, my soul upon that way of life, that world in which I lived. And because the world continued and I continued with it, the stories went on, constantly in the making, changing, reaffirming the belief that there would always be the stories.

--Simon J. Ortiz, "Always the Stories"

Course Equivalencies: Students can receive a total of four quarter hours credit for college level work in the following areas: American Literature and writing.



If I am a poet who is charged with speaking the truth (and I believe that the word poet is synonymous with truth-teller), what do I have to say about all of this?

--Joy Harjo,

Assignments:

1. **Reading Response Papers:** your synthesis of each weeks readings, turned in promptly at the beginning of seminar (1-2 pages, typed). These papers will allow you to: 1) comment upon the readings, lectures, workshops, guest artists, and films, and 2) summarize, reflect upon, and integrate program topics, themes, and issues.
2. **A Writing Project:** a piece of academic or creative writing that you will develop and refine over the quarter. This can be ONE of the following: An academic essay, research paper, or creative writing project.
 - a. An 1) academic essay, or 2) research paper (3-5 p.) that explores an author, topic, theme, topic, or issue that intrigues you. As you begin, you will research and explore some aspect of interpretation and meaning, literary criticism, background material, historic information, parallel texts, and other material. The idea is to press forward into the work of interpretation This is an opportunity to develop your research skills along with a deeper understanding of the influence of Native American writers, oral and poetic traditions. You will revise this in a writing workshop in week five.
 - b. A creative writing project (a personal essay or poem) that you will develop, edit, and revise in a writing workshop in week five.
3. **A final performance or presentation** on some aspect of your work over the quarter. This can be an oral presentation of a research project, ideas from an academic essay, a selection from a personal essay, a poem. It can also be the presentation of a song, story, or visual art piece

that you create over the quarter to represent what you have learned. You will present your work during weeks nine or ten of the quarter.



Translating the literature of one language into another is never easy, especially when the cultures involved are extremely dissimilar. The task is made even more difficult when the translator must also render in writing what has been an oral tradition.

--Thom Hess

Class Portfolio

Each student is required to keep a class portfolio throughout the quarter. This will be turned in during the fifth week and during week nine of the quarter. It will be returned to you in week ten. Include your name and a table of contents. **Record the topic and date of each item** in your portfolio. Each section should be arranged chronologically. The portfolio must be kept in a loose-leaf three ring binder with dividers and should contain the following:

Note: Date and chronologically order each entry.

- 1) Table of contents that includes the following
- 2) Course syllabus, covenant, and all class handouts
- 2) Reading responses for required texts and readings. Follow format on reading response handout.
(A section of reading notes is strongly recommended.)
- 3) Class notes: lectures, guest speakers, workshops and films.
- 4) In-class workshops. (Each workshop will be numbered and dated.)
- 5) Seminar notes
- 6) A special writing project: An 1) academic essay, 2) research paper, or 3) creative writing project (personal essay or poem) that you develop in class. This includes multiple drafts of your work, notes from peer editing workshops, research notes, and notes for oral presentations.
- 7) Self and Faculty evaluations
Three signed copies on official forms due in week ten. (These are worth one credit.)



We have stories
as old as the great seas
breaking through the chest
flying out the mouth
noisy tongues that once were silenced,
all the oceans we contain
coming to light.

Linda Hogan, "To Light"