

# Indigenous American Literatures

## ENGL 162

Fall 2025 Section 01 Hybrid 4 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/20/2025

### Course Information

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#### Format

Class will meet in person, twice a week. Additional materials will be available on Canvas. All assignments to be submitted to Canvas.

#### Description

This brand-new course is an introduction to contemporary Indigenous American literature, namely, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and film. We will examine stories produced by Native American authors and how they have shaped—and continue to shape—Indian identity. The course texts will push us to confront past and ongoing issues facing Native Americans and their communities, such as leaving/returning/staying on reservations, sovereignty, self-identity, and addiction. Central to our work, however, will be an exploration of resilience, survivance, and futurity. To this end, we will look to how these Native storytellers imagine reparative and future-oriented worlds in which American Indian identity, traditions, and history are uplifted and celebrated.

### Course Description and Requisites

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Examination of a polyvocal and multiethnic American literary tradition, with possible topics including indigenous oral expressions, assertions of national identity in the New Republic, narratives of bondage, and/or competing visions of Americanness.

Prerequisite: Upper division standing.

Letter Graded

### \* Classroom Protocols

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#### Classroom Etiquette

We will be spending a lot of time together in our classroom and engaging each other in thoughtful discussion. With that in mind, we need to be mindful of how we behave and treat each other.

- Please NO phones

- Please come to class with course texts read and be prepared to discuss them
- Please be open-minded and respectful of each other's ideas, opinions, and questions

### Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people's ideas and writing as long as you cite them. But submitting work from online or other secondary sources without attribution is a form of plagiarism. Any assignment containing plagiarism will receive a failing grade, which may lead to failure of the course. Further disciplinary action may also be taken by the University per policy [E 15-7](#).

### AI/LLMs

In many ways, the act of writing is a way to think further on a topic and to organize or clarify those thoughts. The connection between writing and thinking is crucial to your development as a communicator, and it is a skill that will serve you well in all of your future endeavors. Using AI to respond to essay prompts is cheating; it is cheating you out of the education you are paying for. If I find that you used AI for any significant percentage of any written assignment, I will not provide feedback, nor will you receive a passing grade for the assignment.

## Program Information

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The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

### Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.

3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

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#### Department Information:

**Department Name:** English and Comparative Literature

**Department Office:** FO 102

**Department Website:** [www.sjsu.edu/english](http://www.sjsu.edu/english) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

**Department email:** [english@sjsu.edu](mailto:english@sjsu.edu) (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

**Department phone number:** 408-924-4425

## Course Goals

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1. To gain an awareness of the range of cultural experiences and productions that make up contemporary Native American literary and cultural history.
2. To explore various literary genres of Native American texts.
3. To hone and strengthen our abilities in engaging literary text and analyzing both its form and content as well as its social and historical contexts.

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

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Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, and/or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to Native American literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively.
4. Develop and carry out research projects.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

## Course Materials

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1. Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (2003)
2. N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn* (1968)
3. Richardson Morse, *House Made of Dawn* (1972)
4. James Welch, *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979)
5. Lou Diamond Phillips, *Sioux City* (1994)
6. Sherman Alexie, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993)
7. Chris Eyre, *Smoke Signals* (1998)

8. Deborah A. Miranda, *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (2012)
9. Tommy Pico, *Nature Poem* (2017)
10. Tommy Orange, *There There: A Novel* (2018)
11. Rebecca Roanhorse, *Trail of Lightning* (2017)

## Course Requirements and Assignments

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**Essays:** You will write two formal essays (5–6 double-spaced pages each). The first essay asks you to analyze the narrative function of a single “story”—a term we will interpret broadly—within one of our course texts. You will also have the option to identify this story, or a version thereof, in a modern text, examining how its function is adapted for similar or different purposes. The second essay will involve a more detailed close reading of some aspect of one of our course texts. Prompts will be distributed for both essays in advance. Your success on these papers will be directly proportional to your knowledge and understanding of the texts.

**Discussion Posts & Questions:** To sharpen skills in grappling difficult ideas, critical thinking, and generating intellectual conversations, you are expected to respond to each reading with **(1) a short discussion post** and **(2) a question for discussion** on our Canvas site by the beginning of class. Discussion posts & questions do *not* need to be exhaustive—aim for around 150 words—but I would like you to spend some time writing out your thoughts, ideas, opinions, insights, and a genuine question that you have. Summarization, however, should be avoided. Four times over the course of the semester you can “pass” and not write up a discussion post and question (please use this to your advantage). The Canvas discussion posts are opportunities for you to highlight points you find interesting and meaningful in our course texts. The discussion posts are also a chance for you to reflect on and challenge the ideas we encounter over the semester. This may also serve as a way for you to boil down and organize your thoughts before small-group and whole-class discussion.

**Final Research Paper:** For the final, you will be asked to conduct research on one of the course texts. Your task will be to create a deeper understanding of something that is underexamined or something most people engage with uncritically in your selected text.

**Late Work Policy:** Keeping in mind the many unforeseen events that can occur in the average SJSU student’s life, I have a generous extension policy. Provided you give me a request in writing (complete with a new deadline) before a paper’s due date, most requests for an extension will be granted. If the original deadline is passed by a student who has not received an extension or an extended deadline has been passed, 10% of the total points possible will be taken off for lateness up to one week. After the first week, 10% will be taken off the top of the paper score for each day late (i.e. 8 days late = -20%, 9 days = -30%, 10 days = -40%, and so on). After 16 calendar days, no paper will be accepted. The Late Work Policy, however, does not apply to Canvas Discussion Posts & Questions and the Final Research Paper.

### **Paper Format**

Please submit all papers in 12-pt. Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Please include a heading in the upper left-hand corner (your full name, my full name, the class name, and the due date of the respective assignment). Make sure to add a centered assignment name or a creative title, too! Papers are to be submitted on Canvas in the Assignments tab.

## Participation

"Participating" is defined in this class as *doing the reading* and *being able and willing to respond* to the comments and questions of both the professor and your fellow students on a daily basis. As a large portion of this course involves discussion, active participation will be imperative. In addition, because the exchange of diverse ideas is so important to this class, it is necessary for everyone to be respectful of one another. In our class discussions, it is normal and even expected that we will disagree. Differences can and should be discussed, but these discussions should maintain the academic spirit of respect. Disrespectful language and behavior will not be tolerated in our classroom.

## ✓ Grading Information

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### Evaluation

Your final course grade will be weighted as follows:

<u>Essay #1</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>Essay #2</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>Discussion Posts &amp; Questions</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>Final Research Paper</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>Presence and <i>active</i> participation in all class sessions</u>	<u>20%</u>

## University Policies

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Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

## Course Schedule

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Week 1	Class Topic	Reading Due	Homework Due
Thu 8/21	Welcome, introductions, syllabus, course overview		
Week 2	Class Topic	Reading Due	Homework Due

Tue 8/26	Thomas King, <i>The Truth About Stories</i> (2003)	<i>Truth About Stories</i> , ch. I–III	Discussion post & question #1 on Canvas
Thu 8/28	<i>The Truth About Stories</i>	<i>Truth About Stories</i> , ch. IV–V	Discussion post & question #2 on Canvas
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 9/2	N. Scott Momaday, <i>House Made of Dawn</i> (1968)	<i>House Made of Dawn</i> , Prologue–1 The Long Hair	Discussion post & question #3 on Canvas
Thu 9/4	<i>House Made of Dawn</i>	<i>House Made of Dawn</i> , 2 The Priest of the Sun	Discussion post & question #4 on Canvas
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 9/9	<i>House Made of Dawn</i>	<i>House Made of Dawn</i> , 3 The Night Chanter– 4 The Dawn Runner	Discussion post & question #5 on Canvas
Thu 9/11	Film adaptation: <i>House Made of Dawn</i> (1972)	Watch <i>House Made of Dawn</i> on YouTube	Discussion post & question #6 on Canvas
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 9/16	James Welch, <i>The Death of James Loney</i> (1979)	<i>The Death of Jim Loney</i> , Part 1	Discussion post & question #7 on Canvas
Thu 9/18	<i>The Death of James Loney</i>	<i>The Death of Jim Loney</i> , Part 2	Discussion post & question #8 on Canvas
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>

Tue 9/23	<i>The Death of James Loney</i>	<i>The Death of Jim Loney</i> , Part 3	Discussion post & question #9 on Canvas
Thu 9/25	Film: <i>Sioux City</i> (1994)	Watch <i>Sioux City</i> on YouTube	Discussion post & question #10 on Canvas
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 9/30	Essay #1 Peer Review		Bring rough draft of Essay #1 to class
Thu 10/2	Sherman Alexie, <i>The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven</i> (1993)	<i>Lone Ranger and Tonto</i> , Every Little Hurricane– All I Wanted to Do Was Dance	Discussion post & question #11 on Canvas, Essay #1 due on Canvas by 11:59pm Sunday 10/5
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 10/7	<i>The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven</i>	<i>Lone Ranger and Tonto</i> , The Trial of Thomas Builds-the-Fire–Indian Education	Discussion post & question #12 on Canvas
Thu 10/9	<i>The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven</i>	<i>Lone Ranger and Tonto</i> , The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven–Junior Polatkin's Wild West Show	Discussion post & question #13 on Canvas, Short Essay #1 due on Canvas Sunday 10/13 by midnight
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 10/14	Film adaptation: <i>Smoke Signals</i> (1998)	Watch <i>Smoke Signals</i> on Vimeo	Discussion post & question #14 on Canvas

Thu 10/16	Deborah A. Miranda, <i>Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir</i> (2012)	<i>Bad Indians</i> , The End of the World: Missionization 1776–1836–Bridges: Post Secularization 1836–1900 (pp. 1–74)	Discussion post & question #15 on Canvas
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 10/21	<i>Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir</i>	<i>Bad Indians</i> , The Light from the Carrisa Plains: Reinvention 1900–1961–"In the Basement of the Bone Museum" in Teheyapami Achiska: Home 1961–present (pp. 75–151)	Discussion post & question #16 on Canvas
Thu 10/23	<i>Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir</i>	<i>Bad Indians</i> , "Testimony" in Teheyapami Achiska: Home 1961–present–end (pp. 152–208)	Discussion post & question #17 on Canvas
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 10/28	Tommy Pico, <i>Nature Poem</i> (2017)	All of <i>Nature Poem</i> (pp. 1–74)	Discussion post & question #18 on Canvas
Thu 10/30	Tommy Orange, <i>There There: A Novel</i> (2018)	<i>There There</i> , Prologue–Part I: Remain (pp. 1–78)	Discussion post & question #19 on Canvas
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>



Tue 11/4	<i>There There</i>	<i>There There</i> , Part II: Reclaim– Part III: Return (pp. 79– 225)	Discussion post & question #20 on Canvas
Thu 11/6	<i>There There</i>	<i>There There</i> , Part IV: Powwow (pp. 226–290)	Discussion post & question #21 on Canvas
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 11/11	Veteran's Day (NO CLASS)		
Thu 11/13	Essay #2 Peer Review		Bring rough draft of Essay #2 to class, Essay #2 due on Canvas by 11:59pm Sunday 11/16
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 11/18	Rebecca Roanhorse, <i>Trail of Lightning</i> (2017)	<i>Trail of Lightning</i> , ch. 1– 13 (pp. 1–103)	Discussion post & question #22 on Canvas
Thu 11/20	<i>Trail of Lightning</i>	<i>Trail of Lightning</i> , ch. 14–23 (pp. 104–178)	Discussion post & question #23 on Canvas
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Tue 11/25	Catch-Up Day (NO CLASS)		Short Essay #2 due on Canvas by midnight
Thu 11/27	Thanksgiving (NO CLASS)		

Week 16	Class Topic	Reading Due	Homework Due
Tue 12/2	<i>Trail of Lightning</i>	<i>Trail of Lightning</i> , ch. 24–38 (pp. 179–285)	Discussion post & question #24 on Canvas
Thu 12/4	Final review, evaluations, farewells		
Week 17	Class Topic	Reading Due	Homework Due
Thur 12/11	Submit Final Research Paper		Final Research Paper due on Canvas by 11:59pm