



## **NATIVE LITERACIES**

English 341. Fall 2004

<http://academic.reed.edu/english/Courses/English341/>

**PROFESSOR:** Laura Leibman (503 771-1112 x7329); [Laura.Leibman@Reed.edu](mailto:Laura.Leibman@Reed.edu)

**TIME:** Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:30-11:50 ETC 205

**CLASS EMAIL:** English341Native

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** How did Native Americans understand the early American contact period and in what forms did they record their views? How do pre-contact Native traditions influence early post-contact texts? This course compares the alternative literacies of Mesoamerica and Colonial New England. We will examine a variety of communicative and textual traditions ranging from letters, plays, histories, autobiographies, poems, and conversion narratives, to pictographic works and material culture. This course fulfills the "before 1700" requirement for English majors. Prerequisites: two English courses at the 200 level or higher, consent of instructor OR any one of the following: Anthropology 348, Anthropology 372, History 359, History 386, or Spanish 353. Conference.

### **REQUIRED BOOKS (All on Reserve)**

- *Breaking the Maya Code*, Michael Coe
- *Stories in Red and Black*, Elizabeth Boone
- *A Scattering of Jades: Stories, Poems, and Prayers of the Aztecs*, Thelma D. Sullivan & Timothy J. Knab
- *Holy Wednesday*, Louise M. Burkhart
- *Spirit of The New England Tribes*, William Simmons
- *Indian Converts*, Experience Mayhew (Handout from Laura to be given out after fall break)

### **RECOMMENDED TEXTS (All on Reserve)**

- *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650 (Civilization of the American Indian Series, Vol. 221)*, Kathleen Joan Bragdon

### **SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

#### **Week 1: REDEFINING LITERACY: THE MAYAN EXAMPLE**

T 8.30 Michael Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code*, 9-72. (Bookstore/On Reserve) In-class Mayan translation

R 9.2 Michael Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code*, 9-72. (Bookstore/On Reserve)

Assignment for everyone: One page response to *Breaking the Maya Code* and the sample of Mayan writing you translated from Tuesday. This response should include (1) your translation and (2) a brief discussion of what you perceive to be the significance of the differences between writing a text in Mayan glyphs versus English (or even Mayan in the Roman alphabet).

#### **Weeks 2-7: THE NAHUAS (AZTECS)**

##### **1. HISTORIES**

T 9.7 Elizabeth Boone, Chapters 1-4, *Stories in Red and Black*, 1-86. (Bookstore/On Reserve)

Assignment Group One: Genre Analysis from one Chapter from Boone

R 9.9 Thelma Sullivan & Timothy Knab, "The Aztec World of Ancient Mexico," *A Scattering of Jades*, 15-50. (Bookstore/On Reserve); Elizabeth Boone, Chapters 9, *Stories in Red and Black*, 238-49.

Excerpt of the Mendoza Codex (Handout)

Group Two: Announce in class readings for Tuesday from James Lockhart's *We People Here* (on reserve)

T 9.14 Selection from James Lockhart, *We People Here*, as chosen by Group Two (On reserve)

Assignment Group Two: Close Reading

R 9.16 Rosh Hashanah: No Class

T 9.21 James Lockhart, "Language," *Nahuas after the Conquest*, 261-325 (On reserve)  
Assignment Group Three: Word Analysis of Word from Selections from previous two meetings.

## 2. POETRY

R 9.23 William Gingerich, "Heidegger and the Aztecs: The Poetics of Knowing in Pre-Hispanic Nahuatl Poetry," *Recovering the Word*, ed. Brian Swann, 85-112. (On Reserve)  
"Songs of Ancient Mexico," *A Scattering of Jades*, Thelma D. Sullivan & Timothy J. Knab, 160-63. (Bookstore/On Reserve)  
Assignment Group Two: Genre Synopsis  
Group Three: Announce Poems to be read for Tuesday from *A Scattering of Jades*, Thelma D. Sullivan & Timothy J. Knab (Bookstore/Reserve)

T 9.28 Selection of Poems chosen by Group Three from *A Scattering of Jades: Stories, Poems, and Prayers of the Aztecs*, Thelma D. Sullivan & Timothy J. Knab (Bookstore/On Reserve)  
Assignment Group Three: Close Reading  
Group One: Announce any new poems to be read for Tuesday from *A Scattering of Jades*

R 9.30 No Class: Sukkot  
[Readings: Louise M. Burkhart, "Part One: The Setting," *Holy Wednesday*, 11-88. (Bookstore/On Reserve)]

T 10.5 Poem(s) from *A Scattering of Jades* from previous days or as chosen by Group One  
Assignment Group One: Word Analysis.

## 3. DRAMA

R 10.7 No Class: Shmini Atzeret  
Readings: Louise M. Burkhart, "Part One: The Setting," *Holy Wednesday*, 11-88. (Bookstore/On Reserve)

T 10.12 "Part One: Interpreting 'Holy Wednesday'" & "Part Two: The Translations," *Holy Wednesday*, 89-164. (Bookstore/On Reserve)  
Assignment Group Three: Genre Synopsis

R 10.14 The Translations," (cont.) & "Appendix: Comparative Texts," *Holy Wednesday*, pp. 105-164; 255-278. (Bookstore/On Reserve)  
Assignment Group One: Close Reading

## October 16-24 Fall Break

T 10.26 "Part Two: Commentary of the Plays," *Holy Wednesday*, pp. 165-255 (Bookstore/On Reserve)  
Assignment Group Two: Word Analysis.

## Weeks 8-13: ALGONQUIANS OF NEW ENGLAND

### 1. ORAL NARRATIVES

R 10.28 William Simmons, "Introduction," "From Past to the Present," & "Worldview" *Spirit of The New England Tribes*, 3-64. (Bookstore/On Reserve)  
William Bascom, "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives," *Sacred Narrative*, ed. Alan Dundes, 5-29.  
In class: Tape of Princess Red Wing  
Group One: Genre Analysis

- T 11.2 “The First Europeans,” “Christianity,” *Spirit of The New England Tribes*, 65-90. (Bookstore/On Reserve)  
Dighton Rock (Handout)  
Group Two: Close Reading
- R 11.4 “Shamans and Witches,” & “Ghosts and the Devil,” *Spirit of The New England Tribes*, 91-161.  
(Bookstore/On Reserve)  
Group Three: Word Analysis  
(Resources on Reserve for Word Analysis: Kathleen Bragdon’s *Native People of Southern New England*;  
William Wood’s *Vocabulary of Massachusetts*; Roger Williams’ *A Key Into the Language*.)

## 2. (AUTO)BIOGRAPHIES

- T 11.9 Sacvan Bercovitch, “Puritanism and the Self,” *Puritan Origins of the American Self*, 1-34.  
Arnold Krupat, “The Indian Autobiography: Origins, Type, and Function,” *Smoothing the Ground*, ed.  
Brian Swann, 261-82. (On Reserve)  
“Japheth Hannit,” *Indian Converts* (Handout)  
Group Two: Genre Analysis
- R 11.11 The Hannit Family, *Indian Converts* (Handout)  
Group Three: Close Reading
- T 11.16 Selected Dream Biographies, *Indian Converts* (Handout)  
Ann Marie Plane, “Falling Into a Dreame,” *Reinterpreting New England Indians*, ed. Calloway &  
Salisbury, 84-105. (On Reserve)  
Group One (one half): Word Analysis
- R 11.18 “Samuel Coomes,” *Indian Converts* (Handout)  
Documents Relating to Fornication & Intermarriage (Handout)  
Ann Marie Plane, “In their Families,” *Colonial Intimacies*, 96-128. (On Reserve)  
Group One (other Half): Word Analysis

## 3. LETTERS

- T 11.23 Tammy Schneider, “This Once Savage Heart of Mine,” *Reinterpreting New England Indians*, ed.  
Calloway & Salisbury, 232-63 (On Reserve)  
Konstantin Dierks, “The Familiar Letter and Social Refinement in America, 1750-1800,” *Letter Writing as a  
Social Practice*, ed. David Barton & Nigel Hall, 31-41 (On Reserve)  
Hezekiah Calvin, Letters to Eleazar Wheelock (Handout)  
Group Three: Genre Analysis
- R 11. 25 **Thanksgiving**
- T 11.30 Samson Ocom, “Short Autobiography” & “An Account of the Montauk Indians” (Handout)  
Mary Ocom, Letter (Handout)  
Group One: Close Reading
- R 12.2 Ruth Herndon and Ella Sekatau, “Colonizing the Children,” *Reinterpreting New England Indians*, ed.  
Calloway & Salisbury, 137-161. (On Reserve)  
Simon Children, Letters (Handout)  
Group Two: Word Analysis of Letters from Previous Days (or from Ocom’s Writings)  
(Resources on Reserve: Lederer’s *Colonial American English* and the OED).
- T 12.7 **Final Assignment Due:** Bring to class a revision of **one** of your Genre Analyses. In class: discussion of  
Genre Analyses. Make sure you bring enough copies to class for Laura and everyone else in the class.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

All of the assignments for this class are short ones: 1-2 pages each. In addition to the short response due the second day of class, there are six of these papers per semester and a revision of one of the genre analyses due at the end of the semester. You will be asked to sign for a group and each group will turn in their papers on the above assigned days. Each group is asked to do three types of papers (two each). All papers should be emailed to the class via the class email list at least **24 hours** before the assigned day. You should **paste** these into the body of your email and **NOT** send them as an enclosure because enclosures can spread viruses and make your paper difficult to open. Please make sure you read your classmates' papers before class, as these will be the starting point of our discussion. These types of papers are described below:

### **1. Genre Analysis.**

Your genre analysis should provide a brief description of the Native America/Early Modern genre we are discussion for that day (for example letters, autobiography, Aztec poetry). Your discussion should build off of the assigned critical essay but should go beyond just summarizing it. You should identify what distinguishes this Native Genre from the genre more generally. For example, how are Aztec histories different from Western histories that you have read? You should hypothesize what you think are the sources of this difference wherever possible. Don't worry that you don't know enough yet to fully answer this question: you will have the chance to revise one of your genre analysis papers for the final paper.

### **2. Close Reading**

For your close reading, choose a short passage (one paragraph to one page) of text and analyze the details of the passage. You may want to think about all or some of the following:

1. **GENRE.** What is the genre in which the passage or longer work was written? How do the details of the passage relate to our expectations for genre? You will want to refer to the previous group's genre analyses.
2. **PURPOSE.** What is the purpose of the passage in the work as a whole? Does it introduce the work? Provide closure? Provide the emotional climax? Serve as a bridge? What elements help it achieve this function and how?
3. **LANGUAGE.** What kind of language is used? High or low? Figurative or literal? Native or colonial? What does the language tell us about the audience and speaker? How does the style enhance the message?
4. **TONE.** What is the tone of the passage? How is this tone conveyed?
5. **SPEAKER.** Who is speaking? How does the speaker establish his or her authority or deference?
6. **NARRATEE.** Who is the ideal audience? Is anyone excluded (deliberately or not) from this audience?
7. **CHARACTERS.** Who are the characters appearing in the passage? What are their main attributes? Are we meant to sympathize with them or not? How does the writer create (or dispel) sympathy?

### **3. Word Analysis**

This is a more in-depth close reading that focuses on the connotations, denotations, and resonances of a particular word in a text. You should pay attention to how the word was used both in the Native community and in the colonial era more generally. There are a number of Native dictionaries on reserve to help with this task, as well as the OED and Lederer's "Colonial American English." You may want to discuss how the word differs in Native languages and English and/or Spanish and how this different meaning changes the meaning of the passage or work.

### **Final Paper: Revised Genre Analysis (due Dec 7<sup>th</sup>, the last day of class)**

For your final paper I ask you to submit a revised version of one of your genre analyses that reflects your more sophisticated understanding of the genre following our discussion of that genre in conference. This paper should be slightly longer than your previous one and should include quotations from examples we have covered that support your generalizations. Please bring enough copies for me and for everyone else in the class to the last day.

**GROUP ONE:**

**GROUP TWO:**

**GROUP THREE:**