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CRWR 491.01: Special Topics - Eco-poetic Structures

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Bitsui, Sherwin J., "CRWR 491.01: Special Topics - Eco-poetic Structures" (2017). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 8727.

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CRWR 491 Special Topics: Eco poetic Structures 3 units

CRN #35050

Thursday 3:30pm-6:20pm

Room NAC 105

Spring 2017

Instructor: Sherwin Bitsui

Office Location: Liberal Arts 113

Office Hours: Tuesday 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM
Thursday 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Also by appointment.

Email: sherwin.bitsui@mso.umt.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Poetry as a literary form.

Focus on form and theory through Indigenous poetry (with some emphasis on Contemporary Navajo poetics).

This class will enter into theory and practice of the eco poetic with a focus in Contemporary Indigenous and Navajo poetry. The structure of this blending will provide new forms, or stylized eco-architectures, while participants create unique poems fitting form to individually stylized inspirations. Eco poetry blends ecological immersion with poetic practice. In witnessing particular place(s) and land-based poetics, we begin to incite our personal poetic muse to develop a space to become geared specifically toward that devotion. Spatial-poetics give us an alignment, a dynamic affiliation, to the place, space, and nature of our environment that bring the poetry and place to a balanced harmony, giving participants a particular value that may develop the poems in an attempt to produce articulate exactness on the page. This class gives specific time and place to enjoy meditations and reflect on the natural alongside and underneath the industrialized world. We will develop new poems and technique during the course of this semester.

COURSE COMPETENCIES:

As a result of successfully completing this course, the student will be able to:

- Discuss: Students will be able to discuss Contemporary Indigenous and Navajo poetic thought in a complex manner.
- Differentiate: Through critical assessment, students will differentiate why poems are successful, or not.
- List: Terms, uses, practices, and sources of successful/unsuccessful poetic example.
- Show: Craft, application, demonstration, and commitment to the genre, along with final product.

- Evaluate: Poetic success and building a body of work intentionally.
- Students will gain a deeper understanding of Native American poetry and worldview.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Students will write a poem a week.**
- **A final portfolio of 8 to 10 pages of new work.**
- **Students are required to participate in weekly writing assignments and discussions.**
- **Each student will write one discussion brief to an assigned work during the semester. The discussion brief will be 3 to 5 pages (typed, 12 pt. font, double spaced). That assigned person for the book assigned that week will be the discussion leader of the week. All other respondents will prepare a normal critical brief, minimum 3 paragraphs to two pages to foster a thorough discussion for all those present. Participation counts high in this class, so make sure to get this done.**
- **Each participant is responsible, not only for adding to the discussion hosted by the discussion leader, but adding their own individual reading awareness and book commentary. We want to know what your platforms are. Discussion allows us to do this in class.**
- **Each person only works as discussion leader once during this semester. All participants discuss.**

Required Texts:

Title: She Had Some Horse

ISBN: 978-0393334210

Author: Harjo, Joy

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company (December 17, 2008)

Title: From Sand Creek

ISBN: 9780816519934

Author: Simon Ortiz

Publisher: University of Arizona Press

Title: Saanii Dahataal - The Women Are Singing

ISBN: 9780816513611

Author: Tapahonso, Luci

Publisher: University of Arizona Press

Title: No Parole Today

ISBN: 9780931122934

Author: Tohe, Laura

Publisher: West End Press

Title: From the Belly of My Beauty
ISBN: 9780816519545
Author: Belin, Esther C.
Publisher: University of Arizona Press

Title: I Swallow Turquoise for Courage
ISBN: 9780816525928
Author: John, Hershman R.
Publisher: University of Arizona Press

Title: Another Attempt at Rescue
ISBN: 9781931236515
Author: Smoker, Mandy
Publisher: Hanging Loose Press

Title: Dark Thirty
ISBN: 9780816528141
Author: Frazier, Santee
Publisher: University of Arizona Press

Title: WHEREAS
ISBN: 9781555977672
Author: Long Soldier, Layli
Publisher: Graywolf Press.
PUBLICATION DATE: MAR. 7, 2017

Title: FROM UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY
9781890650469
Author: PEREZ, CRAIG SANTOS
Publisher: Omnidawn

STUDENT CONDUCT AND ATTENDANCE:

All students are responsible for knowing and understanding the Student Conduct Code. The student is responsible for completing each course he/she is registered. The student is also expected to attend all sessions of the classes he/she is enrolled. Please review and adhere to all University of Montana Student Conduct code: <http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/documents/Student%20Conduct%20Code%20PDF-%20FINAL%208-27-13.pdf>

Attendance:

If you know you will be absent, petition early for excuse. If sick, please stay home and please notify me ASAP.

- One unexcused absences will elicit a warning.
- Two unexcused absences quantify as “F” letter grade and you will be asked to drop the course.

PUBLIC NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION:

The University of Montana is committed to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of every member of its community and that is free from harassment and discrimination based upon race, color, religion, national origin, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, age, political ideas, marital or family status, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Such an environment is necessary to a healthy learning, working, and living atmosphere because discrimination and harassment undermine human dignity and the positive connection among all people at our University. Acts of discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, and retaliation will be addressed consistent with this policy. Consistent with state and federal law, reasonable accommodation will be provided to persons with disabilities.

SOURCE: <http://www.umt.edu/eo/titleix/notice.php>

Disability Statement:

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me privately after class or in my office. Be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator

GRADING PROCEDURE:

This syllabus is subject to change. I retain instructor authority to amend as necessary. Additionally, due to class needs, we may elect to amend as a class.

Discussion, participation & presentation	35%
Weekly assignments/responses (on time)	20%
Final Portfolio (critical work as assigned, alternative portfolio, multi-media project)	20%
Final Manuscript (chapbook) (eight to ten pages of publishable poetry)	25%

If you have an idea for an alternative portfolio option (special project you are interested in) please see me individually to petition, otherwise stick with the syllabus as written and/or options given by instructor otherwise..

Discussion briefs are objective investigations of work authored, including: style, strategy, technique, device, and many other manners of poetic and poetry composition. **They are not personal responses or reviews.**

They are annotations toward understanding of what an author/poet has done to create the work and how the movement, or gesture, affects the reading.

Final Manuscript is assessed as follows:

1-16 pts Avoidance of clichés

1-16 pts Freshness of imagery

1-16 pts Attention to sound and silence

1-16 pts Attention to rhythm and form

1-16 pts Imaginative risk

1-20pts Mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, sensibility...)

Assignments are expected to be completed on time.

<p>January 26</p>	<p>Introductions.</p> <p>Syllabus.</p> <p><i>Placed-based Eco-poem. Be in the environment. Write from that space. Allow the poem to enact qualities of the environment if possible. How does the wind shape your poem's syntax? How does texture inform the tone of a work?</i></p> <p><i>This poem will begin your semester's "throughline" project. Think of it as an origin story for your work. All work should stay tethered to this piece in some way. Consider it a main tributary for your semester's work.</i></p>	<p>Read: <i>She Had Some Horses</i></p> <p>Assignment 1. Call and Response. Write a poem responding to a poem in <i>She Had Some Horses</i>. Use a form found in the Harjo's collection</p>
<p>February 2</p>	<p>Discussion: <i>She Had Some Horses</i>.</p> <p>Discussion leader:</p> <p>Film: TBA</p>	<p>Read: <i>From Sand Creek</i> by Simon Ortiz</p> <p>Assignment 2: Find a treaty online. Treaty should be from a tribe/nation indigenous to your area of origin or residence. Read and research the</p>

		<p>treaty.</p> <p>Write a poem that engages the matter of agreement and failure of agreement.</p> <p>Employ patchwork approach and erasure.</p> <p>Work to create a form that demonstrates devastation/destruction.</p>
February 9	<p><u>No Class.</u> <u>Students on Independent study. See assignment.</u></p>	<p>Revise poems. Begin to envision poetic <i>throughline</i> for the semester</p>
February 16	<p>Discussion: <i>From Sand Creek</i> by Simon Ortiz</p> <p>Treaties—Discuss creative process.</p> <p>Discussion Leader:</p>	<p>Read: <i>Saanii Dahaataal</i> by Luci Tapahonso.</p> <p>Assignment 3: Write a poem where memory is accessed through engagement with land and place. Song lines.</p> <p>Employ hybrid, classic or created poetic form to convey weaving approach.</p> <p>[patterns, constellations, deep narrative]</p>
February 23	<p>Discussion: <i>Saanii Dahaataal</i>.</p> <p>Memory and Place: Navajo worldview</p> <p>Discussion Leader:</p>	<p>Read: <i>No Parole Today</i> by Laura Tohe.</p> <p>Assignment 6: Write a poem based in historical trauma.</p> <p>Employ a form related to <i>docupoetics</i> and include oral history/interview.</p>

March 2	<p>Discussion: <i>No Parole Today</i>.</p> <p>Education and Erasure.</p> <p>Film: <i>Shimasaní</i> by Blackhorse Lowe.</p>	<p>Read: <i>From the Belly of My Beauty</i> by Esther Belin.</p> <p>Directional</p> <p>In-class assignment: Rex Lee Jim (Translation)</p>
March 9	<p>Discussion: <i>From the Belly of My Beauty</i> Esther Belin</p> <p>Discussion Leader:</p>	<p>Read: <i>I Swallow Turquoise For Courage</i> by Hershman John.</p> <p>Assignment 7: Write a poem based in Hershman's response effort coupled with his own coyote form.</p>
March 16	<p>Discussion: <i>I Swallow Turquoise For Courage</i>.</p> <p>Coyote, Trickster.</p> <p>Trickster poems.</p> <p>Discussion Leader:</p>	<p>Assignment: Bring in revised copies of three poems. Hand out to class for workshop next week.</p>
March 23	Spring Break	
March 30	<p>Workshop poems. Discussion on Process. Direction.</p>	<p>Read: <i>Another Attempt at Rescue</i>, by ML Smoker.</p> <p>Assignment 10: Write a poem based in epistle, or ode. (See her poems to Welch and Hugo.) Triggering places.</p>
April 6	<p>Discussion: <i>Another Attempt at Rescue</i>.</p> <p>Narrative.</p> <p>Discussion Leader:</p>	<p>Read: <i>Dark Thirty</i>.</p> <p>Assignment 10: Write a poem based in Frazier's content immediacy.</p> <p>Employ narrative form.</p>

April 13	Alternative class. TBD Discussion: <i>Dark Thirty</i> . Discussion Leader	<i>Whereas</i> by Layli Long Soldier Prompt: TBD
April 20	Discussion: <i>Whereas</i> Layli Long Soldier. Discussion Leader	Read: <i>Saina</i> by Craig Santos Perez Assignment: The page as field. Write a poem that
April 27	Discussion: <i>Saina</i> by Craig Santos Perez Discussion Leader:	Assignment 11: Bring in three poems for workshop.
May 4	Discussion: Poetry Workshop.	Discussion topics to demonstrate understanding of works read in semester and participation beyond portfolio. Write statements and commentary to use in next week's discussion.
May 11	Last Day of Class	Reading. Final Discussion. Evaluations.

Calendar Spring 2015

*** Each poem assignment is due (in class) the following week. These poems will be shared in class the following week, as time permits. Be prepared. In addition, the readings every week will be open for discussion in the following week. If not presenting a discussion brief for that week, please write one page of critical response to initiate your platform of discussion for that discussion period. Thus, *She Had Some Horses* will be discussed in the second week. Bring in three paragraphs to two pages of discussion contribution to read from in class. Discussion is led in this way as a group.**

No sexual, racial or religious harassment will be tolerated.