Literature by Native American authors has grown in popularity since the publication of N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) and *House Made of Dawn* (1968), which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Today some of the most exciting young writers of novels and poetry, such as Sherman Alexie, are native authors. The novels by Alexie and Louise Erdrich that we will read combine the styles and techniques of twentieth-century literature in English with expressions of Native oral traditions. To really understand these texts, we will need to learn about the history, cultural contexts, and oral traditions of native peoples. During the term we will watch documentaries, video interviews and a feature film, both to acquaint us with the authors and learn about the cultures in which they lived.

In our first book, we will see how Momaday combines the myth and traditions of the Kiowa with the tribe's history and with his own experience, a project to recover his identity which also inspires many other authors.

It is often assumed that before European colonization, American Indians had no written languages. This is not true. Studying the Mayan creation story *Popol Vuh* and looking at carved texts more than 1500 years old will help us appreciate the radically different cosmology of an indigenous American culture, and what the implications of these differences for a literature might be.

Because North America is home to a great variety of indigenous cultures, we can’t expect to learn about them all. The works I have chosen after the *Popol Vuh* concern the Salish and Spokane tribes of Idaho and Montana, and the Ojibway of the Northern Plains and Canadian shield. We will see in three twentieth-century novels how native writers try to resist monolithic stereotypes about Indians, and preserve their cultures and families amid the discrimination and injustices of modern America.

The term is short, and our class meetings are limited at two per week. Much of the reading in the first half of the term will be unfamiliar and difficult, and in the second half the pace of the assignments is fast, at roughly 100 pages per class. To get the most from this course, it is imperative that you do all of the assigned reading before class, and come prepared with questions and comments about the assignments. Unannounced quizzes will occasionally test you on this preparation.

**Course Materials**

Books: At the University Bookstore
Dennis Tedlock, trans., *Popol Vuh* Touchstone
John Tanner, *The Falcon* (1830) Penguin

Additional Readings in pdf form on blackboard coursesite:
*A Forest of Kings* by Linda Schele and David Freidel pp. 50-54 and 78-84
“This is what it means to say Phoenix, Arizona” from *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* by Sherman Alexie.
Louise Erdrich, from *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* pp. 42-46
“Song for Beaver Hunting and the Metai” from original 1830 edition of Tanner’s narrative, edited by Dr. Edwin James.
N. Scott Momaday, “The Man Made of Words”

Assignments and Grading
In-class quizzes and writing assignments may occur in class on any day. No late or make-up assignments are possible for these. Combined with participation, these will account for 15% of final grade.
Midterm Exam will be worth 10% of the final grade.
Final Exam is also worth 25% of final grade.
The most important assignments are the two essays, due Feb. 4th and March 16th. Each is worth 25 points, which is 25% of the final grade. I encourage you to visit office hours to review drafts of your paper with me before the due date.

Classroom Conduct
The use of laptop computers or cell phones is not permitted during class. I want to have your full attention, and recommend that you take notes on paper, for later review. When I have prepared discussion questions or readings and show them on the projector during class, my practice is to post these to the blackboard site following class. I will not post any lecture notes.

Attendance
I will be taking attendance by the method of a sign-in sheet that will circulate during each class session. Please sign your full name to verify your presence. Absences should be limited to two classes, as there are only 20 meetings in the entire term. Those missing more than two will be penalized on their final grade.

Schedule of Assignments
Have each assignment read and prepared when you come to class that day.

1/5 Introduction: Native Literature and the Oral Tradition; watch part of video of Momaday reading at the UO in 1996.

“N.B. because of late book order, i have changed the assignments for Jan. 7 and 12!”

1/7 Introduction to Mayan literature and the Popol Vuh: time and numbers
Read: Popol Vuh Parts One and Two (pp. 63-88); Tedlock’s introduction (pp 21-30); Also, on blackboard, an excerpt from A Forest of Kings pp 78-84 about the Mayan calendar.

1/12 The Way to Rainy Mountain
Read: The entire book, because it’s only 90 pages; and Momaday’s “The Man Made of Words” on blackboard

1/14 The story of Hunapuh and Xbalanque; watch first part of animated video
Read: Popol Vuh Part Three (pp 91-142)

1/19 Mayan literature and the Popol Vuh: writing
Read: Popol Vuh Part Four (pp145-175) and excerpt from A Forest of Kings, pp 50-55, about Mayan writing.

1/21 Conclusion of Popol Vuh, Mayan poetics, and the ball game; watch remainder of animated version.
Read: *Popol Vuh* Part Five (pp 179-198)

1/26  *The Falcon*
     Read: Chapter 1-6 (pp 1-83)

1/28  Meet in Knight Library Room 41 to screen the film “Cree Hunters of Mistassini”
     Read: *The Falcon* Chapters 7-8 (pp 84-131) & excerpts from original book on blackboard

2/2   *The Falcon* Chapters 9-11 (pp 132-198), and excerpt from *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country.*

2/4   *The Falcon* Chapters 12-15 (pp 199-280)  First Paper Due

2/9   Tracks Chapters 1-4 and Mid-term (40 minutes long)

2/11  Tracks Chapters 5-6, watch video of interview with Erdrich and Dorris

2/16  Tracks Chapters 7-9

2/18  *The Surrounded* Chapters 1-9

2/23  *The Surrounded* Chapters 10-22

2/25  *The Surrounded* Chapters 23-34

3/2   *Reservation Blues*
     Read: Chapters 1-3 (pp 1-91) and watch video: “White Shamans and Plastic Medecine Men”

3/4   *Reservation Blues*
     Read: Chapters 4-6 (pp 92-195) and websites about Robert Johnson

3/9   *Reservation Blues* Chapters 7-10 (pp 196-306), and watch first half of “Smoke Signals”

3/11  Second half of “Smoke Signals” and review for final exam
     Read: “This is what it means to say Phoenix, Arizona” from *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*

3/16  Final Exam at 8:00 am; Second Paper Due