

INDIGENOUS STUDIES 383H

***Special Topics in Indigenous Oral History
Course Outline
Winter 2009***

“Well, I’ve tried to live my life right, just like a story.”
– Angela Sidney, Tagish/Tlingit

“The land has given us everything. It is more than a book.”
– Basil Johnston, Anishinaabe

“The language spoken by the land, which is interpreted by the
Okanagan into words, carries parts of its ongoing reality.”
– Jeannette Armstrong, Okanagan

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Course Information:
Day: Tuesday
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.
Place: OCA 207

This course is an inquiry into the most portable, agile, lithe technology that humanity has ever known: the oral tradition. After Cree elder Walter Lightning, we recognize that myth, narrative, family history, poetry and other modes of oral expression are not easily delineated from one another, as they often are in contemporary Western thought. After Okanagan elder Jeannette Armstrong, we recognize that the basis of the oral tradition in all its forms lies in kinship with land.

This course is divided into two halves: the first half (six course units) sets out a number of perspectives on oral history and literature by elders, scholars, poets and writers, providing us with a number of landmarks, campsites and look-outs on the oral tradition so as to deepen our reading; the second half is dedicated to an examination of primary texts of the finest exemplars in a number of oral genres.

Each course meeting is divided into two halves as well. The first component will consist of a fifteen minute presentation of the reading materials by student(s), followed by a round-table discussion whereby each student is asked to take something in the order of three to five minutes to provide her or his own perspective on and reaction to the readings. Following a short break, the rest of the seminar time (until 11:50 a.m.) will be allotted to a free-ranging conversation on any topic related to course materials, to be facilitated by the seminar presentation team.

Required Text:

Anna Nelson Harry. *In Honor of Eyak: The Art of Anna Nelson Harry*. Michael Krauss, ed. Alaska Native Language Center, 1982.

All other readings will be made available in the INDG 383H mailbox in the Indigenous Studies' mailroom.

Course Assignments

1) Seminar Presentation (10%)

Each student is responsible for one seminar presentation over the course of the semester, either individually or partnership with one other student. A sign-up sheet for seminar presentations will be circulated on the first day of class.

As this is a course in orality, seminar presentations should be made with as little recourse to written notes as possible. Speakers should be comfortable enough with the week's assigned readings to speak in an off-hand manner about them, and in a way that is engaging and informative. Speakers should avoid a rote summary of the readings, and focus instead on memorable presentation of those readings' key ideas and implications, as well as any connections between one week's readings and another week's.

Speakers are responsible for a fifteen-minute presentation; following the break, when we move into our general discussion, speakers are also responsible for facilitating group discussion and providing key questions in the event the conversation doesn't build sufficient momentum.

2) Creation Study (15%)

At the first course meeting, each student will be assigned at random one individual from either the plant, bird, tree, insect, mammal, or rock worlds by the course instructor. Students are responsible for "tracking" their assigned species or being through the oral tradition, with reference to transcribed oral texts, conversations with cultural authorities, elders associated with the Indigenous Studies community or from his or her own community.

A minimum five-page "species biography" or "Creation study" will be produced by each student. This essay is due no later than March 17th. This study, written in whatever style or manner the student wishes, with or without illustrations and with supporting biological and ecological facts, will be included with those of other students and **self-published** into a single volume to be distributed to all course participants on the last course meeting.

3) Elder's Teaching (15%)

Each student is responsible for translating into whatever medium they wish one talk, teaching or lecture by an elder or teacher associated with community events within the Department of Indigenous Studies, specifically either the Elders' Conference or the Pine Tree Talk (other possibilities require approval of the course instructor).

One of the objectives of this exercise is to find a way to bring the words of an elder or teacher alive in a different medium. Students are encouraged to be as innovative as possible. Written work is acceptable; if the student wishes to use video or audio technology, the emphasis is not on a straight voice-to-tape translation, or a filmed talk, but on a "value-added," creative interpretation – a short video, an audio performance piece, etc.. The Elder's Teaching is due March 24th.

4) Peer-Reviewed Essay (10% for review work; 30% for paper)

One major written project will be due in this course. Each paper will be 3000 words in length.

This paper should deal with issues related to but not limited by the course materials; it must be an original composition that has not been submitted for any other course. Accepted methods of academic footnoting and bibliographic documentation are required. If in doubt, please consult a style manual.

This paper is peer-reviewed. This process works as follows: the first draft of this paper is to be sent by the student to the course instructor by e-mail no later than midnight on March 3rd. The course instructor will then choose one student to review this paper; the reviewer will submit comments to the writer as well as the course instructor by e-mail or hard copy.

Each student, working as a peer-reviewer, is responsible for providing insightful feedback on all levels of the reviewee's paper by March 10th.

The final draft of this paper is due on March 31st, to be handed in on the last day of class in hard copy format.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offense and carries penalties varying from failure in an assignment to debarment from the University. Definitions, procedures and penalties for dealing with plagiarism are set out in Trent University's Policy on Plagiarism which is available on request from every Department or College Office or from the Registrar's Office.

5) Participation (20%)

Participation marks are all-or-nothing. If students show up and participate in each and every discussion, they will receive the full 20%.

Students are permitted one absence without excuse (a proportion of their participation mark will be deducted for this excused absence, on the order of 2 percent); any additional absence must be accounted for by a doctor's notice. Additional absences also require the student to submit a five-page annotated bibliography covering that week's readings by the time of the next course meeting.

Attendance will be taken on a weekly basis.

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109, 748-1281, disabilityservices@trentu.ca) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

INDIGENOUS STUDIES 383H

Special Topics in Indigenous Oral History

Readings

PART ONE: CONTEXTS

January 13 – *The Listener's Tale*

Johnston, Basil. "Introduction." In *Honour Earth Mother*. Cape Croker Reserve: Kegedonce Press, 2003. v-xi.

Johnston, Basil. "How do we learn language? What do we learn?" In *Talking On The Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. 43-51.

Lightning, Walter. "Compassionate Mind: Implications of a Text Written by Elder Louis Sunchild." *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 19 (1991) 215-253.

January 20 – *The Scholar's Tale*

Archibald, Jo-ann. "Coyote Searching for the Bone Needle." *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008. 35-57.

Cruikshank, Julie. "The social life of texts: Editing on the page and in performance." In *Talking On The Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. 97-119.

Dauenhauer, Nora Marks & Richard Dauenhauer. "The paradox of talking on the page: Some aspects of Tlingit and Haida experience." In *Talking On The Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. 3-41.

January 27 – *The Anthropologist's Tale*

Bringhurst, Robert. "The Anthropologist and the Dogfish" and "The Epic Dream." In *A Story As Sharp As A Knife*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1999. 135-154; 173-200.

Medecine, Bea. "Learning To Be An Anthropologist and Remaining Native." In *Learning How To Be An Anthropologist and Remaining Native*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001. 3-18.

February 3 – *The Land's Tale*

Abram, David. "In the Landscape of Language." In *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996. 137-179.

Armstrong, Jeannette. "Land Speaking." In *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing*. Simon Ortiz, ed. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999. 174-194.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories." In *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing*. Simon Ortiz, ed. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999. 2-24.

February 10 – *The Musician of Thought's Tale*

Bringhurst, Robert. "Goose Food" and "Spoken Music." In *A Story As Sharp As A Knife*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1999. 27-63.

Scollon, Ron. "Aristotle Fails to Persuade the Donkey: Conflicting Logics in Narrative Social Analysis." Public Lecture. Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark.

PART TWO: VISITING IN TIME & SPACE

February 24 – *The Eyak's Tale*

Harry, Anna. *In Honor of Eyak: The Art of Anna Nelson Harry*. Michael Krauss, ed. Alaska Native Language Center, 1982.

March 3 – *The Little Old Ladies' Tale*

Ned, Annie, Angela Sidney & Kitty Smith. Selections from *Life Lived Like A Story*. Julie Cruikshank, ed. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990.

March 10 – *The Land Marriage Tale*

Ka-kisikaw-pihtukaw. "The Bear Woman." In *Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree*. Leonard Bloomfield, ed. Saskatoon: Thistledown Books, 1993.

Mandeville, Francois. "The Man Who Became A Wolf." In *The Narrative Ethnography of Francois Mandeville*. Ron Scollon, ed. Forthcoming 2009.

Skaay of the Qquuna Qiighawaay. "The Man Who Married A Bear." In *Being in Being*. Translated by Robert Bringhurst. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001. 141-147.

March 17 – *The Okanagan Tale: Three Generations of Orality*

Armstrong, Jeannette & Lally Grauer. “Reciprocities: Kindness and the Land: An Interview.” *Lake: A Journal of Arts and Environment*. Vol. 2 (2008): 5-17.

Kwelkweltaxen. “Okanagan Tales.” In *Folk Tales of Salishan and Sahaptin Tribes*. Franz Boas, ed. New York: American Folklore Society, 1969. 65-97.

Robinson, Harry. *Nature Power: In The Spirit of an Okanagan Storyteller*. Wendy Wickwire, ed. Vancouver: Talon Books, 2004.

March 24 – *Susan Barss’s Tale*

Paul, Elizabeth, Peter Sanger & Alan Silyboy. Selections from *The Stone Canoe*. Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2007.

March 31 – *Raven Head’s Tale*

Mandeville, Francois. “The Way Raven Head Lived.” *The Narrative Ethnography of Francois Mandeville*. Ron Scollon, ed. Forthcoming 2009.

Seminar Presentations Indigenous Studies 383H

(Two students maximum per week)

January 13 – *The Listener's Tale*

January 20 – *The Scholar's Tale*

January 27 – *The Anthropologist's Tale*

February 3 – *The Land's Tale*

February 10 – *The Musician of Thought's Tale*

February 24 – *The Eyak's Tale*

March 3 – *The Little Old Ladies' Tale*

March 10 – *The Land Marriage Tale*

March 17 – *The Okanagan Tale: Three Generations of Orality*

March 24 – *Susan Barss's Tale*

March 31 – *Raven Head's Tale*