COURSE DESCRIPTION

The United States was formed through migrations, both forced and otherwise: From the voluntary migrations of European colonists and settlers to the so-called “New World;” to the forced migrations of indigenous people to reservations and enslaved Africans to the United States; to the Great Migration at the turn of the last century of Chinese, Japanese, and European immigrants enticed by the promise of a new start in America; to the millions of people from all over the world who continue to seek new homes in the United States.

These migrations have had a profound impact on American literature and culture. Migration brought people from vastly different cultures into contact with each other, forcing them to rethink their values, assumptions, and traditions at the same time as they struggled to understand the “other.” Separated from their homelands, migrants had to adapt to new situations, often changing their very identities in the process. The legacy of forced migration continues to shape American society and culture even as Toni Morrison and Sherman Alexie celebrate the survival of their communities in their novels about African American slavery and reservation life respectively. Most fundamentally, migration has created a nation preoccupied which questions of who does and does not “belong.” American literature has been grappling with these questions and problems from its earliest moments.

In this course, we will study a select group of novels that address America’s identity as a nation of migrants. Each text speaks to a different historical moment and perspective: James Fenimore Cooper’s Last of the Mohicans attempts to fashion a coherent origin story out of the messy clashes between English, French, and indigenous groups that characterized its colonial history. Willa Cather’s My Antonia contemplates the meaning of the “Great Migration” of eastern Europeans in terms of America’s broader national story. Pearl S. Buck makes a case for the “belonging” of Chinese Americans, one of America’s most ostracized groups until well into the 20th century. Paul Bowles depicts a group of privileged American tourists confronted with the “foreignness” of the Arab world. Toni Morrison’s Beloved attempts to recover the memory and dignity of Africans uprooted and exploited by slavery. Finally, Sherman Alexie celebrates indigenous survival through the unlikely vehicle of a magic blues guitar. I chose these books because they each speak to an important moment in the history of American migrations, and because they are important and rewarding books to read.

REQUIRED TEXTS (Available in the Bookstore)
James Fenimore Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans* (Broadview Press)  
Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (Broadview Press)  
Pearl S. Buck, *The Good Earth* (Simon & Schuster)  
Paul Bowles, *The Sheltering Sky* (Harper)  
Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues* (Grove Press)  
Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (Vintage)  


**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**  
Please bring your texts to class.

**Week 1**

- Sept. 14: Introduction to Course  
- Sept. 16: *The Last of the Mohicans* (introduction and first chapter, plus Appendix B#2 and Appendix D)  
  - Seminar Sign-up

**Week 2**

- Sept. 21: *The Last of the Mohicans* (Vol 1)  
- Sept. 23: *The Last of the Mohicans* (Vol 2)

**Week 3**

- Sept. 28: *My Antonia*, Seminar  
- Sept. 30: *My Antonia*

**Week 4**

- Oct. 5: *My Antonia*  
- Oct. 7: Mid Term #1

**Week 5**

- Oct. 14: *The Good Earth*

**Week 6**

- Oct 19: *The Good Earth*  
- Oct 21: No Class

**Week 7**

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Oct 26: The Sheltering Sky, Seminar
Oct 28: The Sheltering Sky

Week 8

Nov 2: The Sheltering Sky
Nov 4: Mid-Term #2

Week 9

Nov 9: Beloved, Seminar
Nov 11: Beloved

Week 10

Nov 16: Beloved
Nov 18: Beloved

Week 11

Nov 23: Reservation Blues, Seminar
Nov 25: Reservation Blues

Week 12

Nov 30: Reservation Blues
Dec 2: Mid Term #3

ASSIGNMENTS
Mid Terms: 40%
Presentation: 20%
Essay: 40%

1. Mid Terms: Questions (Essay, short answer, or a combination) will be based on the two previous novels studied, class lectures, and presentations. Each mid-term will be weighted equally.

2. Group Seminars (Groups of 3-4): Your group will lead a class discussion using your seminar topic as a starting point. In preparing your seminar, you should consult 5 relevant scholarly books and/or articles (this number does not include general reference works, biographical works, or encyclopedia entries). Make sure you orally cite borrowed material (e.g. “Joe Professor says that....”) in your presentation. You should spend about 20-30 minutes presenting your material, and the rest of class time facilitating discussion. The seminar topic is meant to as a starting point for your seminar; please feel free to direct discussion in any way you

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wish, so long as you remain focused on the text. You may divide tasks any way you wish, but all group members should contribute equally to the project. Any difficulties within the group should be brought to my attention early in the process.

After your seminar, please hand in the following:
1. An annotated works cited using correct MLA citation format: After each entry, include an annotation that briefly summarizes the source and explains how you integrated it into your seminar.

2. A peer evaluation: Write a brief, constructive critique of each of your peers' contributions to the project. Email it to me after your seminar. This will help me arrive at a group participation mark.

3. Any written notes you used during your presentation. These are for reference purposes only and will not be evaluated.

**Evaluation:**

Group Mark (50% of seminar mark): Quality and intellectual ambition of the content, research preparation and integration into seminar, clarity of delivery, facilitation of discussion.

Group Participation Mark (50% of seminar mark): Intellectual contribution, contribution to workload, cooperation with others, leadership abilities, availability for group meetings and/or by email.

Seminar Topics

Seminar sign-up will take place during first week of class.

*My Antonia:* According to Joseph R. Urgo, characters in *My Antonia* reinvent themselves with every migration. Elaborate on this point. Illustrate this process of identity-shifting with close readings of examples from the primary text.

*The Good Earth:* This novel was published when the *Chinese Exclusion Act,* barring Chinese immigration into the United States, was still in effect. How does *The Good Earth* make a case for Chinese belonging in the United States?

*The Sheltering Sky:* According to Brian Edwards, *The Sheltering Sky* is a novel that imagines—and stages—an American relationship to the foreign. Elaborate on this point and illustrate it with close readings of examples from the primary text.

*Beloved:* Toni Morrison has described her novel as an “Afrocentric” text. In what ways is *Beloved* Afrocentric? Illustrate your points with close readings of examples from the primary text.

*Reservation Blues:* Analyze Sherman Alexie’s use of historical references. Illustrate your points with close readings of examples from the primary text.
Your essay should compare and contrast two texts studied in this course. Your essay topic should address a concept and/or problem discussed in class lectures and presentations, in considerably more depth than covered in class. You are responsible for developing your own topic and having it approved by me. One of your texts can be the same as the one studied for your seminar, provided you do not recycle substantial material from the seminar.

Your topic must be approved by me before you proceed. To have your topic approved, please make an appointment with me.

Optional: You can submit to me an essay proposal and outline at least two weeks before the essay deadline, which I will critique and return to you before you hand in your essay. This exercise has saved a lot of tears in the past and I highly recommend it.

Evaluation: Quality and intellectual ambition of the argument; clarity of expression; use and citation of supporting evidence (must follow MLA format); essay structure; grammar, spelling, and usage; format (as per Little Brown Handbook). A 5% bonus will be awarded to essays with less than three spelling or grammatical errors and correct MLA format.

Policies
Exams: Rescheduled only in the case of emergencies documented by a medical or mental health professional. For information on appropriate action and documentation in the case of illness see http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/students/accom_illness.html. Student travel plans do not constitute a basis for accommodation.

Essays: Extensions will be granted if you approach me at least one week before the deadline and propose a reasonable alternative date. Otherwise, late essays will be penalized 3%/day.

Seminars: If an emergency arises, contact me and your group members as soon as possible so we can make alternate arrangements for the seminar. Appropriate documentation will be required.

LEGAL STUFF

Academic Integrity:
Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g.,
plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek
guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate
Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary
penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For information on
categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 -
Student Discipline, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm
Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her
university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a
grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4,
http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm Appeals: A student
may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student
Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student
Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student

Academic Integrity website (Arts):
http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html Academic
Integrity Office (UW): http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Note for students with
disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall,
Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate
accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic
integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the
impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each
academic term.