

# ENGLISH 329 – Great Plains Studies

**FOUR FORMAL CLASS MEETINGS. FOUR INDIVIDUAL FIELD TRIPS.**

**FOUR BOOKS ARE READ.**

**(IF YOU WANT TO TAKE A VACATION THIS SUMMER, THIS IS THE COURSE FOR YOU.)**

**INSTRUCTOR: DEB SHARP**

**421-2848 (H)**

## **Course Description**

This is the study of selected authors and writings which have as their setting the Great Plains of the United States. It will examine themes and techniques common to this genre of literature and will explore literature as a primary tool for the expression of our history. Using Plains Literature as an example, we will discuss unique models of literature characterized by a particular style, form, or content. The readings selected focus on Native Americans, rural and frontier life and, though they suggest a diversity of people and events, the images of men and women created will give the student a clearer understanding of America in the making.

## **Course Objectives:**

- to incorporate the skills of reading and writing to support inquiry into the history of the Great Plains and the people who settled there.
- to understand the thematic range of the literary heritage of people of the Plains.
- to discover through the writings of both male and female authors that men and women saw the development of the Great Plains through different eyes.
- to examine the traditional roles of men and women in regard to pioneering.
- to examine through literature our own ethnic heritage in the making of America.
- to understand plains literature as a unique literary model.
- to read for both inquiry and enjoyment.

## **Evaluation:**

**ATTENDANCE IS AN EXPECTATION, NOT AN OPTION. NO FORMAL CLASS MEETINGS MAY BE MISSED.**

**Novel Response Papers: 400 points**  
**Field Trips Response Papers: 400 points**

**Scale: 97 - 100 = A+**  
**93 - 96 = A**

**67 - 69 = D+**  
**63 - 66 = D**

90 - 92 = A-  
87 - 89 = B+  
80 - 82 = B-  
83 - 86 = B  
77 - 79 = C+  
73 - 76 = C  
70 - 72 = C-

60 - 62 = D-  
59 and Below = F

**Textbooks:** Try your city libraries and used bookstores; they have multiple copies

- *Black Elk Speaks* by John Niehardt
- *My Antonia* by Willa Cather
- *Old Jules* by Mari Sandoz
- *Plainsong* by Kent Hariff

**Class Agenda:** Please note that there is one session that the class does not formally meet. This is “comp time” for individual field trips; the sites you are required to visit are not open evenings. You may take these field trips at any time that is convenient for you; however, all of the reflection papers are due the last session that the class meets.

**Session 1: MAY 28**

**Lecture:** The Great Plains: Where/What Is It?

**Video:** Lewis and Clark

This class may include a visit to 9-Mile Prairie, so dress appropriately (walking shoes, long pants, bug spray, hat)

**Session 2: JUNE 4**

**No formal class meeting;** comp time for field trip

**Session 3: JUNE 11**

***Black Elk Speaks*** discussion; response paper must be turned in at the beginning of class; no late papers will be accepted.

**Session 4: JUNE 18**

**No formal class meeting;** comp time for field trip

**Session 5: JUNE 25**

***My Antonia*** discussion; response paper must be turned in at the beginning of class; no late papers will be accepted.

**Session 6: JULY 2**

**No formal class meeting;** comp time for field trip

**Session 7: JULY 9**

***Old Jules*** discussion; response paper must be turned in at the beginning of class; no late papers will be accepted.

**Session 8: JULY 16, *Plainsong* by Kent Hariff**

***Plainsong*** discussion; response paper must be turned in at the beginning of class; no late papers will be accepted.

**THESE INDIVIDUAL FIELD TRIPS ARE ON YOUR OWN. YOU NEED TO WRITE A THREE-PAGE MINIMUM INFORMAL RESPONSE PAPER ON EACH FIELD TRIP. ALL FIELD TRIPS MUST BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE LAST SESSION CLASS.**

- Required Individual Field Trips:**
- Homestead National Monument,  
Beatrice, Nebraska
  - Museum of Nebraska History  
15<sup>th</sup> and P Streets, Lincoln, Nebraska  
471-4754
  - International Quilt Study Center and Museum  
1523 No. 33<sup>rd</sup> (& Holdrege) St., Lincoln, Nebraska  
**Tues-Sat = 10:00-4:30; Sun = 1:00-4:30**  
First Fridays of month, 5:00-7:00 (free)  
**D tours: Wed, 11:00; Sat, 11:00 and 1:00**  
**\$3.00 with student ID**
  - Arbor Lodge,  
Nebraska City

**TAKE YOUR STUDENT ID FOR CHEAPER ADMISSION.**

**Admission receipts with date must be turned in with the response papers. NO VISUAL TOURS!**

**Response Papers to Novels: A four-page typewritten minimum response paper on each novel is due.** Understand that a response paper is casual -- it reflects your thoughts and reactions to the book; however, sentence and mechanics do count. Double space throughout the paper. I don't appreciate excessive quotes of length; if a quotation is three or four lines in length, it should be included in the text of the paragraph. Please do not go on-line and give me words that others have written or retell me the story. Cite specific incidents and include a span of the entire book, not just the beginning or end. Convince me you read it without repeating plot. There are no wrong answers. I have provided (**see attached**) starter questions for each novel if you have trouble getting started. You do not have to use any or all of my suggestions. **I WANT TO KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS.** Be certain to include something throughout the book and not just the beginning or end. Convince me that you read it. Ask questions; relate incidents to your own life. **All response papers will be handed in at the beginning of each class in which the novel will be discussed. Absolutely no paper will be accepted unless you stay for the duration of the entire class. No late papers will be accepted; if you are not in class, you do not get the credit. DO NOT ASK TO LEAVE EARLY OR BRING YOUR CHILDREN TO CLASS!!** There is plenty to discuss in each novel. You do not have to use all or any of my suggestions on the sheets. I am very familiar with **Cliff's Notes**. Simply read the book and respond.

**Response Papers to the Field Trips: A three-page typewritten minimum response paper on each field trip.**

- What did you learn?
- What did you think?
- Does it relate to the novels in any way?
- What did you see?

Original thoughts. Respond.

### **Suggestions for Written Responses to Literature**

θ Identifies feelings story elicits.

- θ Identifies important information in story.
- θ Connect own experiences to story.
- θ Connect other books/authors to story/author.
- θ State opinion or preference and provide support.
- θ Interpret author's meaning
- θ Analyze aspects of setting, plot, characters, or theme.
- θ Analyze literary style.
- θ Identify theme or generalize to the larger world.
- θ Make predictions or hypotheses.
- θ Ask questions.