ANTH 312: PACIFIC ISLANDS LITERATURE (5)

Fall '03
Tue/Thurs 10:30-11:50
Denny 306

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“Whatever we produce must not be a version of our existing reality, which is largely a creation of imperialism; it must be different, and of our own making.
We should not forget that human reality is human creation.
If we fail to create our own, someone else will do it for us by default”

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Course Content
This class focuses on recent literary works by Pacific Islanders (novels, short stories, plays and poetry). We will discuss their works both as windows onto the cultures and values of the authors, and as examples of the literary styles created by Pacific writers. Thus, we will be looking at literature “from the inside out.” We will not be looking “from the outside in” (i.e. we will not be examining it from a Euro-American literary standpoint).

For the past two centuries, most of the written literature about the Pacific Islands and Pacific Islanders has been written by temporary visitors to the region (18th century explorers, 19th century colonizers, 20th century writers like Herman Melville, Somerset Maugham, James Michener, etc.). Since the 1970s, however, Pacific Islanders have produced their own written literature (mostly in English and occasionally in other languages) to challenge these earlier colonial representations and to explore issues of significance to them. These issues – key themes covered in the course – include colonialism and its effects on indigenous peoples; capitalism and the ironies of development; race, gender and class; the power of religion; the relationship between ancient mythology and everyday life; the beauty and nourishing qualities of the land; the importance of family and genealogy; and cultural identity and self-representation. This literature communicates experiences of oppression, struggle, endurance, adaptation, strength and survival. The writing exhibits humor, fury, passion, compassion and, above all, a depth of understanding about individual lives and cultural values. As Albert Wendt said, “novels present the most complete histories that have
been written because in a novel you try to bring out the complexity in the characters.” In order to better understand Pacific history, we will be looking at that complexity.

**Course Objectives**

- Examine individual literary works as they reflect the culture and values of the authors
- Explore specific topics (those mentioned above) in depth
- Formulate basic understandings about the styles and characteristics of Pacific Island literature as exemplified by these works
Requirements

• Reading
The following eight books should be purchased from the University Bookstore:

   Barclay, Robert (not a Pacific Islander)

   Duff, Alan
   1990   *Once Were Warriors.* U. Hawai'i. (novel, *Aotearoa*)

   Grace, Patricia

   Hau'ofa, Epeli
   1983   *Tales of the Tikongs.* Honolulu: U. Hawai'i. (short stories, *Tonga*)

   Hereniko, Vilsoni and Teresia Teaiwa
   1993   *The Last Virgin in Paradise.* Suva: Mana. (play, *Rotuma, Fiji, Kiribati*)

   Hereniko, Vilsoni and Rob Wilson (eds.) students will read about half the book

   Trask, Haunani-Kay
   1994   *Night is a Sharkskin Drum.* U. Hawai'i. (poetry, *Hawai'i*)

   Wendt, Albert

• Class Participation
The success of the class depends heavily on student participation in discussion. Thus, attendance, preparation for class, and active participation (which includes being a respectful listener) are essential to guarantee that class time is a rewarding experience for everyone. Please come to class with notes that address your questions, observations, and thoughts about the reading.

• Written Assignments
There will be three short essays (about 5 pages each), with due dates spaced evenly throughout the quarter *(Oct. 21, Nov. 20, Dec. 9).* Details will be explained in class.

1) A passionate (non-academic) discussion about one of the topics dealt with in the literature

2) An analytical (academic) discussion about one of the topics dealt with in the literature

3) Some creative writing of your own
• **Final Exam**
There will be a final exam covering readings and in-class material.

**Grades**
Grades will be based on the following:
- preparation for and participation in class (20%)
- three short written assignments about the readings (20% each, totaling 60%)
- final exam (20%)
TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

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Tue. 9/30

General introduction to the course

Thurs. 10/2

Background information on Pacific Islands culture, history and literature
(plus some commentary by Moetia Aline about Tahitian literature)

Tue. 10/7

Grace, Patricia

Hereniko, Vilsoni

Thurs. 10/9

Grace, Patricia
1986 Potiki.

In Potiki, one community’s response to attacks on their ancestral values and symbols (by property speculators advocating golf courses, high rises, shopping malls, and tourist attractions) provides moving affirmation of the relationship between land and the people who live on it.

Tue. 10/14

Visitor: Kapi‘olani Laronal, McNair scholar

Hereniko, Vilsoni

Thompson, Christina
**Thurs. 10/16**

Duff, Alan  
1990  *Once Were Warriors.*

Alan Duff’s first novel is a raw and powerful story about urban underclass Maori who live a life of frustration and brutality. Concerned about the future of the Maori population, Duff takes a hard stand in communicating that Maori should take control of their own lives rather than blame others for their situation.
Tue. 10/21

** PAPER #1 DUE **

Film: *Once Were Warriors*

Thurs. 10/23

Visitor: Holly Barker, Senior Advisor to the Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)

Tue. 10/28

Barclay, Robert  
2002 *Melal: A Novel of the Pacific.*

Robert Barclay, an American who resided in the Marshall Islands for many years, depicts the entangled parallel worlds of both everyday and mythical realities. He also provides an unadorned view of contemporary relations between Marshallese and Americans at Kwajalein Missile Range, contemporary social conditions in Ebeye, and the complexities of military and postcolonial politics in the Marshalls.

Thurs. 10/30

Student discussion – paper presentations

Tue. 11/4

Visitor: Tevita Ka’ili, Ph.D. student, Department of Anthropology, UW

Hau’ofa, Epeli  

Subramani  

Thurs. 11/6

Hau’ofa, Epeli  
1983 *Tales of the Tikongs.*
Tales of the Tikongs is a series of humorous, satirical stories about politics, love, corruption, religion, culture, dependency, and foreign aid on Tiko, a tiny imaginary island in the Pacific.

**Tue. 11/11**

**NO CLASS – Veterans Day**
Thurs. 11/13

Visitor: TBA

Hereniko, Vilsoni and David Hanlon

Tue. 11/18

Wendt, Albert
1973 Sons for the Return Home.

*Sons for the Return Home*, the first novel by a Samoan author, is a powerful story of cultural encounter between two lovers, one a Samoan and the other a pakeha (European) New Zealander. It explores the complex nature of love, freedom, and racism in New Zealand.

Thurs. 11/20

** PAPER #2 DUE **

Film: Sons for the Return Home

Tue. 11/25

Hereniko, Vilsoni

Hereniko, Vilsoni and Sig Schwarz

Hereniko, Vilsoni
1993 Last Virgin in Paradise.

Vilsoni Hereniko’s play is a serious comedy about several individuals: a beautiful young girl desperate to get out of Marawa, a fictional South Pacific island; a retired psychology professor from Europe looking for a virgin bride; an anthropologist from Harvard collecting data on sexual harassment; and a native feminist educated in Australia in search of her roots.

Thurs. 11/27

NO CLASS - Thanksgiving
**Tue. 12/2**

Visitor: Maile Tauali'i

Trask, Haunani-Kay

Trask, Haunani-Kay

**Thurs. 12/4**

Trask, Haunani-Kay
2002  *Night is a Sharkskin Drum.*

Haunani-Kay Trask's most recent collection of poetry is a fiery revelation about her love for her native land and the rage she feels about its destruction and dispossession from imperialism, tourism, and militarism.

**Tue. 12/9**

Wrap up discussion

**PAPER #3 DUE**

**Fri. 12/12**

**FINAL EXAM**
(10:30-12:30)