ENG 4300-001: Twice-Told Tales

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"Twice-Told Tales"

Why, in the late twentieth century, did writer Jane Smiley take the artistic risk of employing Shakespeare's *King Lear* as an integral part of the structure and theme of her novel *A Thousand Acres*? And why did it then win the Pulitzer prize? Why did Hollywood think Smiley's was a story worth filming? And why did that film disappear so quickly from movie screens?

This seminar will give us an opportunity to answer these questions and to ask and answer questions about other twice told tales. Texts will come from a number of historical periods (from the Middle Ages to our own) and genres (poetry, children's books, drama, novels, short stories, movies). To ground our discussions, we will situate our close readings of texts in the historical as well as personal circumstances of the works and their authors.

**Required Texts**

- Bronte, *Jane Eyre*
- Coetzee, *Foe*
- Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans*
- Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
- Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
- Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*
- Shakespeare, *King Lear*
- Silko, *Ceremony*
- Smiley, *A Thousand Acres*

**Grades:**

First Eight Weeks
- Midterm Examination: 25%
- Class Participation/Short Writes: 15%

Second Eight Weeks
- Group Participation/Presentation/Handouts: 25%
- Final Essay: 35%

**Attendance:**

We will do our best work and have the most fun only if you are prepared for and take part in class discussions and assignments. Please be in contact with me if you find it necessary to miss class. More than three unexcused absences will lower your class participation grade to an F. As outlined in the student catalogue, I will consider an absence excused only for "reasons of illness, emergency, or university activity."
Writing Guidelines:
    All out-of-class writing should be typed and use MLA style internal citations where appropriate. Include a "Works Cited" page. If you have any questions about this format, please see me or visit the Writing Center. In addition, please turn in all essays on the assigned dates. Unless we have made other arrangements, a late essay will be graded down a half letter grade per class hour it is late. Finally, be sure you are familiar with the English Department and University policies on plagiarism.

Disability Policy:
    If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
Week 1
M 8/24/26/28--Introductions--to the course, one another, and our critical method and goals

Week 2
M 8/31 to F 9/4--The Bluest Eye and the Dick and Jane stories

Week 3
M 9/7--No Classes
W 9/9 to F 9/11--King Lear and Shakespeare's milieu

Week 4
M 9/14 to F 9/18--King Lear

Week 5
M 9/21 to F 9/25--finish King Lear and begin A Thousand Acres

Week 6
M 9/28 to F 10/2--A Thousand Acres and Smiley's milieu

Week 7
M 10/5 to F 10/9--A Thousand Acres and view film

Week 8
M 10/12--Finish with A Thousand Acres
W 10/14--Organize Groups; Review for Exam
F 10/16--Midterm Exam