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Spring 2010 Seminars

Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults

Betsy Nies, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of English
University of North Florida

Seminar Summary:

Are you familiar with the writing on the walls of Angel Island? Have you read not only about the Harlem Renaissance but also the Native American Renaissance? If your answer is “no”—or even if it is “yes”—this seminar can help you explore more deeply our rich multicultural heritage, both in terms of literature and history. Here’s the perfect opportunity to take a look at not only what most of us learned in school—about the Harlem Renaissance—but also Native and Asian-American literary traditions. Topics will include African-American folktales, literary and social debates of the Harlem Renaissance, voices of contemporary Native American poets, the immigrant voices of Angel Island, and contemporary Asian-American poetry. Participants also will explore representations of ethnic groups in children’s books and films such as Ellen Levine’s *Henry’s Freedom Box*, Susan Jeffers’s *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky*, Lynne Reid Banks’ *Indian in the Cupboard*, Claire Huchet Bishop’s *The Five Chinese Brothers*, and Disney’s *Mulan and Pocohontas*. Authors for older readers will include: Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, Sherman Alexie, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Frank Chin.

As someone who’s long been committed to teaching ethnic traditions, I welcome your participation in choosing some of the books or poems for review in the seminar.

Betsy Nies joined the UNF faculty in 1998 after earning her doctorate in American literature from the University of Florida. Her research and teaching interests include children’s literature, adolescent literature, and twentieth-century American ethnic traditions. Her background as an elementary school teacher deepens her appreciation for the rigors of public school teaching. Author of *Eugenic Fantasies: Racial Ideologies in the Literature and Popular Culture of the 1920s*