Introduction

What is Samoan Literature?

To date, there is no definition of what Samoan literature is in the research; however, for the purposes of this course, I define Samoan literature as poetry and fiction about Samoans written by both Samoans and non-Samoans. Our survey of who has written what for and about Samoans will take us to the colonial era which for Samoa began in the late nineteenth century and back to the second half of the twentieth century when Samoans began to put pen to paper and create their own literary motifs and representations of their own people. What I wish you take away from this course is a heightened awareness and appreciation of Samoan literature and Samoan culture; perhaps more questions will arise as to its validity, value, and/or contribution to an understanding of the human condition, or our humanity.

Additionally and perhaps just as important, I would like to introduce you to, or remind some of you who have read these writings, of the migrant writers, or those from the outside whose stories are set in or influenced by their experiences in Samoa. Robert Louis Stevenson's writings will be discussed, as will be others such as Faye Calkins (Alailima), Joseph Thoreaux, and Paul Thoreax, to name a few. While most of these writers are well known around the world, very few Samoans are aware of their associations with their people; what do they say about/for/against Samoa?

Purpose of the Course

The purpose then of this class is multifold: primarily, to build a repertoire of knowledge about contemporary Samoan writers—what, why, who, and how of their stories. To examine these stories in the context of colonial and post colonial political and economic administration, and within Samoan traditions. Secondarily, to discuss the writers and their crafts and the approaches used. We will use elements of literature to frame our discussions of the writings; moreover, I would like to have everyone try their hand at writing, using traditional literary motifs and creating a personal style, just as our Samoan authors have done.

Literature does two things for its readers: first, it instructs; secondly, it entertains. I trust that we can have fun throughout our survey of the masters. The notion of (imaginative) literature as a window into a world can lead and has lead readers to see the world the author creates as actual reality. While this view reduces any literature to a cultural text, it is especially tricky in the reading of multicultural literatures written in English. One danger is the tendency for readers to be overly drawn to cultural details and traditions for their exoticity and factuality without sufficiently considering how those traditions figure in the wholeness of the work. The other kind of reading (or misreading) of multicultural literatures is the almost total exclusion of cultural context. Readers who engage in this practice include critics who often come to the text with the expectations of universal themes and images but little regard as to how the author might have woven them from and around the mores and values of the indigenous communities traditions.
Pacific literature, and therefore Samoan literature, has been subjected to both kinds of readings. This course will examine some of the more recent writings of Samoan authors, both as windows into the Samoan culture, and as artistic creations of the authors, keeping in mind the interplay between the two interpretations. The basic goals and objective of Samoan 227 are:

1. To examine the attitudes of various indigenous writers from Samoa through their writings.
2. To gain insights into the representations of the culture and society of Samoa as constructed through the works of various Samoan authors.
3. To examine the similarities and differences between the writings of various Samoan authors, both men and women.
4. To study the development of the writings of Samoan author Albert Wendt.

Course Requirements
The class will be conducted in English through lectures and discussions. Students will complete the assigned readings and participate in class discussions. Students will be required to complete three course requirements. Assignments may be written in Samoan or English.

1. Journal: Students will keep a weekly journal recording reactions to or thoughts on the readings and class discussions. Questions, comments, disagreements, and elaboration on points made in class are some of the types of entries expected in the journal. Students will be required to share journal entries with the class and rewrite their journals incorporating comments from the instructor and their peers. Class attendance is very important for this course, for this reason the journal, which will reflect your reactions to class discussions and readings, will be evaluated throughout the semester.

2. First paper: The first paper will contain an outline of the students thoughts on the cultural perspective as opposed to the literary approach using some of the works discussed in class to support positions taken in the paper. The paper will be evaluated by peers and the instructor. (approximately 5-7 pages)

3. Final paper: The final paper will be a revised version of the first paper, however, students will be also required to add an additional dimension to the paper, such as comparing two writers, comparing male and female writers, etc. (approximately 10-15 pages)

Final grade will be based on:

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If you are a student with a disability and have disability-related needs or concerns please contact the Kokua Program at 956-7511 or go to Room 13 in the Queen Lili’uokalani Center for Student Services.
SAMOAN 227: CONTENT

Week 1. Introduction

Week 2. Definitions: What is literature? What is Samoan Literature?  
A brief history of the social, cultural, and political contexts.  
A brief history of the literary beginnings of Samoan literature.  
Issues of Representations throughout the literary ages.

Week 3 - 4. Migrant Writers  
Robert Louis Stevenson: The beach at Falefa.  
Faye Calkins (Alailima): My Samoan Chief

Week 5 - 6. Native Writers--Fiction: the novel  
Albert Wendt

Week 7 - 9. Native writers: Fiction: the short story  
Albert Wendt  
Epi Enari  
Meghann L.K. Otineru

Week 10. Native writers: Poetry - colonial  
Ruperake Petaia  
Eti Saaga  
Noumea Peseta Simi  
Tate Simi  
Albert Wendt  
Clara Reid

Week 11. Midterm

Week 10 - 11. Native writers: Poetry - post colonial  
Carol Sinavaiana Gabbard  
Sia Figiel  
Bill Legalley  
Lemanatele Mark Kneubuhl

Week 12 - 13. Native writers: Drama/Play  
John Kneubuhl  
Victoria Kneubuhl  
Albert Wendt

Week 14. New Voices and One-timers
Tia Seloti
Emma Kruse Vaai
Luafata Simanu-Klutz
Michael Fanene-Bentley
Dan McMullin
Selina Marsh
Melanie Macapagal
Vaimagalo J. Galeai
Tanya Tuitele
Tina S. Ioane
Michelle Savali Frederick
Caroline Fagatele
Michael Langford

Weeks 15 - 16 Presentations

Week 17. Final examination.

Readings

Kneubuhl, John A. *Think of a Garden* (unpublished and will be xeroxed)
Maughm, Somerset. "Rain"


