

SAMOAN 461 TRADITIONAL SAMOAN LITERATURE

COURSE SYLLABUS

Pre-requisite:

Proficiency in the Samoan Language and
a Genuine Interest in Samoan Storytelling and Writing

INTRODUCTION

Talofa lava. Malo le soifua lelei. Welcome. You have probably been wondering what this course is really about. And you have probably been wondering about what constitutes “traditional literature,” two concepts which can be problematic since the academic jury is still out on what “traditional” means, and “literature” has become another buzz word in academic jargon and popular media, i.e., people talk about passing out “literature” on the latest drug for arthritis pains, or literature on sports. For the purpose of this class, traditional Samoan literature is about the classical and folksy ways the Samoans used to record their pasts and transmit them from one generation to the next. These ways are not as prevalent any more because of the infusion of, or preference for, “modern” systems. I use the terms “classical” and “folksy” to classify the texts we will be studying in this course. When something becomes a classic, it belongs to a different era and it is written down. What has been written down in this case have been the *tala o le vavau*, *fagogo*, *pese*, and *lauga*. This is Samoa’s folklore, or the ways of the common folk, hence, my use of the term “folksy.” I present them to you as literature, simply because they have been written down. This is useful in this day and age since these traditional ways are no longer available in the “everyday” of the Samoans in Samoa, Hawaii, the US Mainland, New Zealand, and Australia. Where once people naturally learned these ways through participation in storytelling in the village and at home, today, they have been replaced by Sesame Street, Meet the Fockers, and Playstation IV. Some people may argue that this is only natural—that cultures change especially at the junctures of cross-culture encounters; consequently some elements of the old survive, others do not. Yet, in societies like Samoa, where orality is still very much the main mode of transmission, it is imperative that stories of old are written down for various reasons. We will visit some of these reasons during the semester and search for ways to dispel or absorb them.

OBJECTIVES

- To promote an appreciation of literature and Samoan culture through an examination of poetry and the writings of people like *Tuiatua Tupuola Efi*, *Aumua Mataitusi Simanu*, *Aiono Dr. Fanaafi Le Tagaloa*, and others. How do these scholars contribute to the body of literature that we may be calling traditional literature?
- To examine the content, context, and form of each genre of literature and discover what historical or cultural aspects of Fa’asāmoa are bundled up in there. For this purpose, we will study poetry and song, myths, and legends, and discover how these writings had been composed, performed and shared by, or with other people.
- To examine story grammar and other literary devices for the Samoan solo, *tala o le vavau* and songs within/against those of English literature. We will not work with the Samoan novel since it is largely a modern and contemporary device and may therefore be considered as non traditional. The novel is an

introduced genre of literature which departs from traditional modes based on its arrival as literature for literature's sake.

- To self-publish a collection of family/village stories for future generations of your own family.
- To examine the literariness of the Samoan lauga—what are the stories behind the faalupega, alagaupu, and taeao sections of the lauga.

SCHEDULE

WEEKS

Key texts: Samoa Ne'i Galo by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Samoa
O si manu a alii (Aumua Mata'itusi Simanu)
Your own family stories.

Supplements: Fagogo (Robert Moyle)
Velevelega Tupua (Tanuvasa Tavale)
Tala o le Vavau (Gatoloai Peseta and Iosua Iosefa)
Ata Tifaga: Tautoga Motusia, Laughing with the Samoans, etc.
Tatou Tusitala: Let's Write Stories: An Anthology of Samoan Writings, Vol. 1, No. 1 Spring 1999 (Edited by Nora Schubert Kanemura and Evelyn Wong)- a project of the Samoa Fealofani Club at UHM.
E Vaetuli le Fale Samoa 'a 'o le Fa'asinomaga (Afemata Tunumafono 'Apelu 'Aiāva'o)

1 – 3 *Tala o le Vavau, Fagogo*

Upu Tomua/Introduction: elements, genres, significance

- O fa'afiafiaga Fa'asāmoa ma o latou aoga i olaga o tagata. Writing assignment: *Su'e ma toe fa'amatala se fagogo poo se tala o le vavau mai lo tou motu poo le nu'u.*
- Tualumaga o le Vasega—silapasi ma galuega i totonu ma fafo o le vasega
- Term Project: Uiga o suafa o tagata, nu'u, itumalo, ma le atunu'u. Start compiling a collection of family stories in Samoan or English or both. *Ia le laitiiti ifo i le sefulu ni tala'aga o igoa ma suafa o outou aiga, nu'u, ma le itumalo. A leai, fafau ni au tala i ni mea na tutupu i lou olaga, ae maise ni fa'afitauli o le olaga Samoa mo oe ma ni fofo e te iloa e aoga. Ia tofua le vaiaso ma le tala fou.*

In class assignment

Faitau se tala ma toe fa'amatala.

Talanoa i aoga o tala i olaga o tagata Samoa anamua ma aso nei.

Key texts: Samoa Ne'i Galo by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Samoa
O si manu a alii (Aumua Mata'itusi Simanu)
Your own family stories.

4 – 5 *Pese ma Solo*

Discuss the elements of Samoan poetry and music. O a ni mamanu o pese ma solo Fa'asāmoa? Fatu se pese a le vasega mo le fa'ai'uga o le semester, ma ia peseina i le tuufaatasiga o vasega i le faai'uga o le semester. This pese is to be developed throughout the semester.

In class assignment

Faitau pese ma solo ua filifilia.

Fatu sau pese poo se solo i autu nei:

- Fa'atusatusa sau hani i mea'ai Samoa.
- Fatu se vi'i o sou tua'a ua maliu.

- Fatu sau pese e momoli ai lou le malie i le malo o Amerika Samoa/UH Manoa/Faigamalo a Amerika, etc.

In class assignment

Fatu ma lau/lagi sau solo/pese

Group assignment: *Fatu se pese Samoa mo le faatasiga pe a mae'a le semester.*

Key text: Pese Sāmoa (Taalolo Chante Ilaoa)
O si manu a alii (Simanu)

5 – 7 Alagāupu ma Muāgagana ma o latou Faaaogaga

How are they created? What is their significance?

What is lauga and its significance to Samoans? While this class is not about learning how to construct and perform lauga, we will attempt to examine closely the literariness of the proverbs and honorifics embedded in there.

In class assignment

Rehearsal of pese and solo

Talanoa uiga o alaga'upu ma muagagana.

Fafau ma faatino se solo o se tuvaoga e faaoga ai alagāupu eseese.

Key texts: O si manu a alii (Simanu)
Proverbial Expressions of the Samoans (Schultz)

Week 8 MIDTERM EXAM

9 – 11 Faleaitu: traditional versus contemporary motifs, patterns and performance.

What use is faleaitu to Samoans? How and when are they performed? How are they constructed? What do the comedians use as sources and resources for their performances?

In class assignment

Su'e sau paga e fafau ma faatino sa lua faleaitu. O le faleaitu e sili e fai ma sui i le fa'ai'uga o le semester.

Key texts: Video tapes of faleaitu by Petelo and Sumeo, and Lauging with the Samoans—
Ete and Tofiga.

12– 14 Taaloga ma Palopaloga

Ta'aloga a Samoa i aso anamua. Fa'atusatusa ma ta'aloga o nei aso. O a ni eseese o le olaga o Samoa i ona faatinoga i aso na ma aso nei?

In class assignment

Talanoa ma tusi ni palakalafa e uiga i taaloga ma palopaloga a Samoa i aso na ma aso nei. What games and riddling do Samoans engage in? What is the evolution of this aspect of growing up and living Fa'asāmoa? Compare traditional and contemporary games. What brought about trends and changes across time and space?

Filifili se ta'aloga e fa'atino i le fa'ai'uga o le semester.

Key texts: Tusi o Ta'aloga ua saunia e Aumua Mataitusi Simanu
Le Tu Manu ae Tu Logologo ua saunia e Tauiliili Pemurika,

15-16 *Tu'ufa'atasiga* ma le aofa'iga o galuega tōgia o le semester. O a ni fa'alumaga mo le fa'ai'uga o le semester? Preparation for final exam, final projects, culmination activity. All projects are due the week before finals.

17 FINAL EXAM and FINAL PERFORMANCE

POINT DISTRIBUTION

PROJECTS

1. LIFESTORY OF AN IMPORTANT PERSON IN YOUR LIFE (30 POINTS)

Produce a mini biography of an important person in your life that is at least 60 years old. In this biography, information about Samoa before and since airplanes came to Samoa is to be gathered and analyzed for the kind of knowledge that is embedded in the history and stories. Ask him/her about life in Samoa when he/she was a child. Also, what role does that elder currently play in Faasamoa relative to others in her family and village? The finished product should be both a hardcopy and a presentation to be done on the last day of instruction. See examples

2. REPRODUCTION OF A TALA O LE VAVAU OR FAGOGO (20 POINTS)

Choose a story from any text,
Retell the story as a narrative and then as a poem.
To be included in your family stories below.

3. FAMILY HISTORIES (30 POINTS)

Throughout the semester, embark on a journey to document important family stories. This is not about genealogies, but more about the origins or beginnings of certain cultural and family names, beliefs, and practices. This project must be between five and ten stories thick, typed, double spaced. It should be bound or properly housed in a binder. This book is for your family. Assistance on editing and presentation will be provided. All projects are to be shared on the second to last meeting of the semester.

EXAMS

MIDTERM (50 POINTS)

This entails a critical analysis of a song, poem, lauga, or narrative on any aspect of Fa'asāmoa and how Samoans conduct their lives. Short answer questions will be provided about certain historical and cultural aspects of Faasamoa as modeled during class discussion.

FINAL EXAM OR PRODUCTION (50 POINTS)

SOLOFEST I LE FA'AI'UGA O LE SEMESTER

CLASS ATTENDANCE (20 POINTS)

Except for emergencies, each absence will cost you two points. I will allow one unexcused absence without penalty. Taking or picking up relatives to and from the airport, medical appointments, and a lengthy illness (i.e. a two-week absence) are not valid excuses. Please be mindful of this policy since it can affect your final grade. MANUIA LE SEMESTER