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Featured Bookshelf: 2019 Native American Heritage Month

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Native American Heritage Month Featured Bookshelf



November in the United States is Native American Heritage Month, also referred to as American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month. It celebrates the rich history and diversity of America's native peoples and educates the public about historical and current challenges they face. Native American Heritage Month was first declared by presidential proclamation in 1990 which urged the United States to learn more about their first nations.

Join the UCF Libraries as we celebrate diverse voices and subjects with these suggestions. Keep reading below to see the full list, descriptions, and catalog links for the featured Native American Heritage titles suggested by UCF Library employees. These 16 books plus many more are also on display on the 2nd (main) floor of the John C. Hitt Library next to the bank of two elevators.

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[An American Sunrise](#) by Joy Harjo

In the early 1800s, the Mvskoke people were forcibly removed from their original lands east of the Mississippi to Indian Territory, which is now part of Oklahoma. Two hundred years later, Joy Harjo returns to her family's lands and opens a dialogue with history. In *An American Sunrise*, Harjo finds blessings in the abundance of her homeland and confronts the site where her people, and other indigenous families, essentially disappeared. From her memory of her mother's death, to her beginnings in the native rights movement, to the fresh road with her beloved, Harjo's personal life intertwines with tribal histories to create a space for renewed beginnings. Her poems sing of beauty and survival, illuminating a spirituality that connects her to her ancestors and thrums with the quiet anger of living in the ruins of injustice.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

[Bird Songs Don't Lie: writings from the rez](#) by Gordon Lee Johnson

In this deeply moving collection of short stories and essays, Gordon Lee Johnson (Cupeño/Cahuilla) cements his voice not only as a wry commentator on American Indian reservation life but also as a master of fiction writing. In Johnson's stories, all of which are set on the fictional San Ignacio reservation in Southern California, we meet unforgettable characters like Plato Pena, the Stanford-bound geek who reads Kahlil Gibran during intertribal softball games; hardboiled investigator Roddy Foo; and Etta, whose motto is "early to bed, early to rise, work like hell, and advertise," as they face down circumstances by turns ordinary and devastating. From the noir-tinged mystery of "Unholy Wine" to the gripping intensity of "Tukwut," Johnson effortlessly switches genre, perspective, and tense, vividly evoking people and places that are fictional but profoundly true to life.

Suggested by Megan Haught, Research & Information Services/Teaching & Engagement

[Coming Down from Above: prophecy, resistance, and renewal in Native American religions](#) by Lee Irwin

An introduction to an important strand within the rich tapestry of Native religions, this shows the remarkable responsiveness of those beliefs to historical events. It is an unprecedented, encyclopedic sourcebook for anyone interested in the roots of Native theology. From the highly assimilated ideas of the Puget Sound Shakers to such resistance movements as that of the Shawnee Prophet, Irwin tells how the integration of non-Native beliefs with prophetic teachings gave rise to diverse ethnotheologies with unique features. He surveys the beliefs and practices of the nation to which each prophet belonged, then describes his or her life and teachings, the codification of those teachings, and the impact they had on both the community and the history of Native religions. Key hard-to-find primary texts are included in an appendix.

Suggested by Sandy Avila, Research & Information Services

[Fools Crow](#) by Thomas E. Mails; assisted by Dallas Chief Eagle

Set in Montana shortly after the Civil War, this novel tells of White Man's Dog (later known as Fools Crow so called after he killed the chief of the Crows during a raid), a young Blackfeet Indian on the verge of manhood, and his band, known as the Lone Eaters. The invasion of white society threatens to change their traditional way of life, and they must choose to fight or assimilate.

Suggested by Mary Lee Gladding, Circulation

[Four Souls: a novel](#) by Louise Erdrich

After taking her mother's name, Four Souls, for strength, the strange and compelling Fleur Pillager walks from her Ojibwe reservation to the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. She is seeking restitution from and revenge on the lumber baron who has stripped her tribe's land. But revenge is never simple, and her intentions are complicated by her dangerous compassion for the man who wronged her.

Suggested by Jada Reyes, UCF Libraries Student Ambassador

[House Made of Dawn](#) by N. Scott Momaday

He was a young American Indian named Abel, and he lived in two worlds. One was that of his father, wedding him to the rhythm of the seasons, the harsh beauty of the land, the ecstasy of the drug called peyote. The other was the world of the twentieth century, goading him into a compulsive cycle of sexual exploits, dissipation, and disgust. Home from a foreign war, he was a man being torn apart, a man descending into hell.

Suggested by Mary Lee Gladding, Circulation

[Keepers of the Morning Star: an anthology of native women's theater](#) edited by Jaye T. Darby and Stephanie Fitzgerald

This is the first major anthology of Native women's contemporary theater bringing together works from established and new playwrights. This collection, representing a

rich diversity of Native communities, showcases the exciting range of Native women's theater today from the dynamic fusion of storytelling, ceremony, music and dance to the bold experimentation of poetic stream of consciousness and Native agitprop.

Suggested by Rich Gause, Research & Information Services

Native Southerners: indigenous history from origins to removal by Gregory D. Smithers

Long before the indigenous people of southeastern North America first encountered Europeans and Africans, they established communities with clear social and political hierarchies and rich cultural traditions. Award-winning historian Gregory D. Smithers brings this world to life in *Native Southerners*, a sweeping narrative of American Indian history in the Southeast from the time before European colonialism to the Trail of Tears and beyond.

Suggested by Megan Haught, Research & Information Services/Teaching & Engagement

Nature Poem by Tommy Pico

This work follows Teebs—a young, queer, American Indian (or NDN) poet—who can't bring himself to write a nature poem. For the reservation-born, urban-dwelling hipster, the exercise feels stereotypical, reductive, and boring. He hates nature. He prefers city lights to the night sky. He'd slap a tree across the face. He'd rather write a mountain of hashtag punchlines about death and give head in a pizza-parlor bathroom; he'd rather write odes to Aretha Franklin and Hole. While he's adamant—bratty, even—about his distaste for the word “natural,” over the course of the book we see him confronting the assimilationist, historical, colonial-white ideas that collude NDN people with nature. The closer his people were identified with the “natural world,” he figures, the easier it was to mow them down like the underbrush. But Teebs gradually learns how to interpret constellations through his own lens, along with human nature, sexuality, language, music, and Twitter. Even while he reckons with manifest destiny and genocide and centuries of disenfranchisement, he learns how to have faith in his own voice.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

On the Rez by Ian Frazier

This is a sharp, unflinching account of the modern-day American Indian experience, especially that of the Oglala Sioux, who now live on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in the plains and badlands of the American West. Crazy Horse, perhaps the greatest Indian war leader of the 1800s, and Black Elk, the holy man whose teachings achieved worldwide renown, were Oglala; in these typically perceptive pages, Frazier seeks out their descendants on Pine Ridge—a/k/a “the rez”—which is one of the poorest places in America today.

Suggested by Larry Cooperman, Research & Information Services

Shapes of Native Nonfiction by Elissa Washuta

Just as a basket's purpose determines its materials, weave, and shape, so too is the purpose of the essay related to its material, weave, and shape. Editors Elissa Washuta and Theresa Warburton ground this anthology of essays by Native writers in the formal art of basket weaving. Using weaving techniques such as coiling and plaiting as organizing themes, the editors have curated an exciting collection of imaginative, world-making lyric essays by twenty-seven contemporary Native writers from tribal nations across Turtle Island into a well-crafted basket.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

Surviving Genocide: native nations and the United States from the American Revolution to bleeding Kansas by Jeffrey Ostler

An authoritative contribution to the history of the United States' violent path toward building a continental empire, this ambitious and well-researched book deepens our understanding of the seizure of Indigenous lands, including the use of treaties to create the appearance of Native consent to dispossession. Ostler also documents the resilience of Native people, showing how they survived genocide by creating alliances, defending their towns, and rebuilding their communities.

Suggested by Megan Haught, Research & Information Services/Teaching & Engagement

The Man to Send Rain Clouds: contemporary stories by American Indians edited by Kenneth Rosen

Over a two-year period, Kenneth Rosen traveled from town to town, pueblo to pueblo, to uncover the stories contained in this volume. All reveal the preoccupations of contemporary American Indians. Not surprisingly, many of the stories are infused with the bitterness of a people and a culture long repressed. Several deal with violence and the effort to escape from the pervasive, and so often destructive, white influence and system. In most, the enduring strength of the Indian past is very much in evidence, evoked as a kind of counterpoint to the repression and aimlessness that have marked, and still mark today, the lives of so many American Indians.

Suggested by Rich Gause, Research & Information Services

The Marrow Thieves by Cherie Dimaline

Humanity has nearly destroyed its world through global warming, but now an even greater evil lurks. The indigenous people of North America are being hunted and harvested for their bone marrow, which carries the key to recovering something the rest of the population has lost: the ability to dream. In this dark world, Frenchie and his companions struggle to survive as they make their way up north to the old lands. For now, survival means staying hidden ... but what they don't know is that one of them holds the secret to defeating the marrow thieves.

Suggested by Mary Lee Gladding, Circulation

Thunder in the Mountains: Chief Joseph, Oliver Otis Howard, and the Nez Perce War by Daniel J. Sharfstein

Recreating the Nez Perce War through the voices of its survivors, Daniel J. Sharfstein's visionary history of the West casts Howard's turn away from civil rights alongside the nation's rejection of racial equality and embrace of empire. The conflict becomes a pivotal struggle over who gets to claim the American dream: a battle of ideas about the meaning of freedom and equality, the mechanics of American power, and the limits of what the government can and should do for its people. The war that Howard and Joseph fought is one that Americans continue to fight today.

Suggested by Sandy Avila, Research & Information Services

Where the Dead Sit Talking by Brandon Hobson

With his single mother in jail, Sequoyah, a fifteen-year-old Cherokee boy, is placed in foster care with the Troutt family. Literally and figuratively scarred by his mother's years of substance abuse, Sequoyah keeps mostly to himself, living with his emotions pressed deep below the surface. At least until he meets seventeen-year-old Rosemary, a troubled artist who also lives with the family. Sequoyah and Rosemary bond over their shared Native American background and tumultuous paths through the foster care system, but as Sequoyah's feelings toward Rosemary deepen, the precariousness of their lives and the scars of their pasts threaten to undo them both.

Suggested by Rich Gause, Research & Information Services

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