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Graduate Library Research Award
Instructor-of-Record: Dr. Robin Miskolcze

Reflective Essay

For Dr. Miskolcze's Critical Methodologies class, we were asked to write a seminar paper on a researched topic of our choosing. I had previously completed a research presentation on humor in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*; humor in Indigenous literature, when discussed at all, is more commonly believed to be a reaction to colonialism. While this research is essential, the notion that humor is reactionary reemphasizes the colonial narrative in which Indigenous communities, people, and stories are reduced to stereotypes. In the essay that follows, I hope to justify the choices I made in using library resources for my researched essay on humor in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*; in these choices, I hoped to successfully contribute to a body of research that both interrogates and respects Erdrich's work and highlights the voices of scholars who do the same.

In beginning my research, I started with the LibGuide on Native American Studies provided to us through the library. One of the articles provided from Dr. Miskolcze was written by Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, titled, "Responsible and Ethical Criticisms of Indigenous Literatures." Sinclair, in this chapter, remarks "We need to see images of ourselves as healthy, whole people" (Sinclair 302). This sentiment drove my research, and, without his work, I might have strayed in my sourcing. Also on the Native American Studies LibGuide were other useful texts, all of which prioritized Indigenous scholars and voices. I used Sinclair's work in my research project and reading through the other chapters of the book further cemented my clarity of Indigenous scholarship.

Listed on the LibGuide was the main databases it suggested we use, the MLA International Bibliography being one of them, which is where I continued my search. I decided to use the term “Anishinaabe” when initially searching, as I wanted to keep my search focused on the specific people the book discusses; I typed humor in the second box to get the best results. The first three articles presented were written by the same person: Lawrence Gross. I assumed Gross had to be a scholar of Indigenous communities, but I needed to make sure before diving into his research. My goal in researching the author was to ensure I was sourcing research that prioritized the right voices. In one of the early lines of his article, he states “One of the challenges I have faced as an academic is the manner in which I should discuss my own people, the Anishinaabe” (Gross 436). Because of the helpful LibGuide, and the instruction from the reference librarian who spoke to our class, I knew the importance of prioritizing scholarship written by Indigenous academics; by finding Gross’ articles easily through the MLA Database (which then took me to Project MUSE), I felt my research was immediately enriched, for Gross himself is an Anishinaabe scholar.

After reading Gross’ work, I found various other useful articles from JSTOR, another database linked in the Native American LibGuide; however, this turned out to be more difficult than the previous search. One particular article, titled, “Questions of the Spirit: Bloodlines in Louise Erdrich’s Chippewa Language”, by Annette Van Dyke, was published in the *Studies in American Indian Literatures* journal. Again, from what I had learned from both Dr. Miskolcze and the librarian, it was important to source from journals that prioritized Indigenous scholarship, such as this particular journal. I was first intrigued by this article because it was related specifically to Erdrich’s novel; I came across it by searching for Erdrich’s name and “religion.” This article discussed two of Erdrich’s novels, *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*, and this is

one of the reasons I decided not to use in my paper. Additionally, I had a difficult time finding any information on the author, Annette Van Dyke; while the journal seemed reputable, this added to my hesitation in sourcing from this article.

Overall, the use of library resources was an integral part of my research for this paper. With the help of my professors, the librarians, and the easily accessible LibGuides and databases, I was able to complete a project I was proud of, and my research skills continued to grow.