

DECOLONIZING THE TEACHING OF NATIVE AMERICAN ORAL TRADITION VIA INDIGENOUS STORYWORK AND APPRENTICESHIP PEDAGOGIES

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English literature courses often reduce Native American oral tradition to written transcriptions, divorcing stories from their social contexts and reinforcing presumptions “that the oral is a less developed version of the written” (Heath Justice, 2018). This SoTL project suggests “Indigenous storywork,” which requires oral tradition “to be taken seriously” (Archibald, 2008), offers instructors a decolonizing framework for teaching Native American orature. The study also recommends non-Native instructors incorporate storywork in partnership with Indigenous knowledge-keepers, adopting an “apprenticeship pedagogy” (Vellino, 2022). The project involved a semester-long Native American Literature course in which students investigated Indigenous thinkers’ own theorizations about the function and act of storytelling, analyzed the relationship between Native oral and literate traditions, and experienced live storytelling with a citizen of the Ho-Chunk nation. The effects of the intervention were studied via qualitative analysis of three surveys issued at critical points in the semester.

