



The Department of English invites you to attend an
American Studies Guest Lecture
Indigenous Storytelling
from the 20th and 21st Century:
Literature, Disability, and Age

Dr. Nina De Bettin Padolin

Wednesday, 15 April 2026

11:45-13:15

Lecture Hall 4 and online

Lecture

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes that “Storytelling is at its core decolonizing, because it is a process of remembering, visioning and creating a just reality where Nishnaabeg live as both Nishnaabeg and peoples” (Dancing 33). The Nishnaabeg are an Indigenous nation whose lands span what is now the United States and Canada, and, like many other Indigenous nations, they have carried knowledge through story for millennia. Tracing an arc from the 20th century to the present, we will use a few examples to discuss Indigenous literatures from the perspective of aging and disability. We will ask how they name disability not only as an individual condition but also as an ongoing outcome of colonial violence. We will spotlight community-centered storytelling (e.g., Leslie Marmon Silko and Louise Erdrich) and contemporary writers who adopt a subjective approach to writing about their experiences of disability (e.g., Joshua Whitehead, Terese Marie Mailhot, and Ma-Nee Chacaby). I invite us to consider what stories do: how they carry knowledge across generations and how they contest imposed histories. And most importantly, I want us to examine why Indigenous narratives remain an important site of resistance against settler colonial violence.



Nina De Bettin Padolin is a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Ageing and Care (CIRAC) at the University of Graz. Her current book project examines the representation of disabled aging in North American Indigenous literary and performative works by Indigenous writers from the 19th century onwards. She has recently been awarded with the Fulbright Prize and the Schaumayer Prize for her dissertation “Staging the planet: Indigenous dramaturgies and decolonial aesthetics in contemporary performance.” Her further research interests include spatial theory, environmental studies, and gender studies.