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**Paula Gunn Allen 1939 ~ 2008**

## Advocate for Indian writing

By Jocelyn Y. Stewart

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In the 1960s, when some in academia still denied the existence of American Indian literature, Paula Gunn Allen embarked on a career that proved them wrong—and altered the required reading lists of literature classes on U.S. campuses.

Ms. Allen, a leading scholar and feminist, died of lung cancer May 29 in Ft. Bragg, Calif. She was 68.

The former professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, helped define the canon of American Indian literature, encouraged its development through new American Indian writers and nurtured a broader audience for the work.

"This is great literature—American literature," Ms. Allen said in a 1990 St. Louis Post-Dispatch article. "What I want from readers is a fundamental recognition that American Indian culture is alive and thriving."

Over three decades, Ms. Allen wrote 17 books, including works of poetry, a novel, literary criticism, essays, short stories and works of scholarship. In 1983 she published "Studies on American Indian Literature, Critical Essays and Course Designs," a seminal work that laid the foundation for the study of American Indian literature.

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"It was the first time anybody had some kind of a guideline if they were looking to establish a course," said Patricia Clark Smith, professor emeritus at the University of New Mexico and a longtime friend.

With her 1986 book "The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions," Ms. Allen countered the stereotypical view of American Indian women with provocative essays examining female deities, the honored place of lesbians and the importance of mothers and grandmothers to Indian identity.

*Los Angeles Times*

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