CAST 223
SURVIVING AMERICA: INTRODUCTION TO NATIVE STUDIES MWF 11:00-11:50

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Classroom: King 101

Course Description

This class is an introduction to the study of the indigenous peoples of North America and the academic field of Native Studies. Native Studies seeks to understand indigenous peoples from indigenous perspectives and to undertake research to address the problems created by the history of Euro-American misrepresentations and mistreatment of Native peoples. This course explores critical issues facing Native communities including legal and cultural identities, cultural revitalization, environmental racism, gender and sexuality, religious freedom, sovereignty, and tribal self-determination.

The course particularly focuses on the themes of identity and representation and as such will examine Euro-American constructions of “native” people and how those constructions have developed over time as a result of and in-step with colonization. Students should expect to take away an understanding of Native Studies’ theoretical/methodological concerns and debates and situate these within Native/Indigenous peoples’ broader responses to ongoing colonization.

Course Objectives

- Be able to trace historical representations, constructions and uses of “the Native” and discuss the ways that Native peoples have contested or engaged with these
- To understand the colonization of Native peoples in the North America as an ongoing, multiply encoded, perpetuated, and complex process
- To engage with and learn more about contemporary Native American identities, struggles, cultural politics, nationalisms, and futures
- To discuss the possibilities of Native/Indigenous Studies as discipline/theories/methodology to address the issues of colonialism that will effect Native/Indigenous peoples into the future
Required Texts


Recommended Texts


Ebook. Available on Oberlin College Library website

All assigned course readings not from the above required texts will be posted to Blackboard.

Course Format/Expectations

This course will be a combination of some lecture, and a great deal of large and small group discussion. Lectures will supplement readings with historical background and/or context. Students should arrive to each class having read the assigned texts for that day and be prepared to engage those materials in class discussions. It is useful if you bring printed copies of the days readings to class.

The course is broken into smaller units, however, as Indigenous Studies is interdisciplinary by design many areas of study/topics will overlap. Students are expected to engage or read those materials both comparatively in relation to other course materials and specifically with the current topic of study.

The histories of Indigenous/Native peoples is a colonial history and as such will inevitably and necessarily bring out many difficult or sensitive issues including, for example, racism, genocide, ethnocentrism, classism, sexism, and xenophobia: but it is my hope that as a collective group we can grapple with and work through these sensitive subjects and develop an intellectual community that is able to skillfully and respectfully debate these pressing issues that affect not only Native/Indigenous peoples but extend also to U.S. and global futures.
**Policies**

**Attendance**

Class participation is essential to get the full learning process. The class is built, in great part, on class participation from all students so all students need to attend. Regular attendance and thoughtful preparation also show respect for other students and the instructor and help contribute to a respectful and productive class environment and intellectual community. Therefore, to receive participation points students must be in regular attendance.

That being said, it is expected that absences are sometimes unavoidable. Each student will be allowed to miss two classes over the semester without affecting their final grade. Beyond that absences will bear on your grade for the class. However, it is expected that students will make every reasonable effort to attend all classes and to notify me as soon as possible of any absence. If you miss class it is your responsibility to ask a fellow class member for details and catch up.

**Cellphones**

Off and stored in your bag. No exceptions. Using them during class is extremely disrespectful.

**Laptops**

Many of your readings will be in pdf form so I appreciate the usefulness of computers in class. You may use your laptop in order to have course readings immediately available or to take notes during lectures. However, use of laptops in class for anything not related directly to class lectures or discussions will result in loss of the privilege for the class. I reserve the right to at anytime restrict the use of laptops for the entire class if this privilege is being abused.

**Timeliness**

Assignments must be submitted on time to receive full credit. I will deduct a ¼ of a grade for each 24 hours an assignment is late (i.e. B+ to B). Assignments submitted later then one week past original deadline without prior approval from me will be given credit at my discretion and generally earn no more than a minimum passing grade. Requests for extensions must be submitted at least 72 hours in advance to the assigned due date and will generally only be granted for extenuating circumstances. Late papers may not receive written comments.

**P/NP:** If you are taking the course P/NP, you must fulfill all course expectations and complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the course. Please let me know at the beginning of the class if you are taking it P/NP.

**Honor Code:**

This class will follow the policies as written in the Oberlin College Honor Code. Avoid plagiarism or quoting secondary sources without proper citation. If you have any questions about citations you may see me or a librarian or refer to the MLA or Chicago Style Handbooks.
The honor code requires that for each academic assignment you write the following statement and sign your name. “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.” For more information on the code see: http://new.oberlin.edu/conservatory/academic-resources-and-support/honor-code.dot

Students with Disabilities:

Please let me know if you need disability-related accommodations for this course. Support is available through academic services.

**Assignments and Grading**

1. **(15%)** Active participation in class discussions. You are required to discuss the reading material in class and be prepared to address the comments/questions of your peers. The issues raised by the class are almost always complex and it is expected that as a class we will disagree and rarely come to consensus, which is a positive and not a negative aspect of our discussions. Your participation then is key to a process which creates a dynamic learning environment where we learn from each other (what my tribal elders sometimes term “shared mutual learning”). I may also assign small impromptu in-class individual or group assignments (graded on check/check plus/check minus only) which will be included in your participation grade.

2. **(10%)** Journal Responses to weekly readings. Journals are to be fairly informal and function as space where you can critically engage with the readings as well as your personal reactions to the course readings/topics. You should generate 2-3 paragraphs responding/engaging each scheduled day’s class readings. It may also be useful to include your reading notes in the journal in addition to your paragraph entries. For example you may question the effectiveness of the author’s theory or methods or connect some point in the readings to a contemporary issue or experience of your own. The purpose of these journal readings is to help you contribute/generate class discussion and should not be viewed as exhaustive of the readings. Choose things from the reading that interest you. Journals may be hand-written (providing I will be able to decipher them) or typed (you decide). As Journals may be very subjective I will be grading them with check/check plus/check minus only. *I will check them periodically throughout the semester.*

3. **(15%)** Oral Presentations. Each student will be responsible for presenting one class meeting’s assigned readings in order to facilitate the class discussion. Although not required you may utilize any of the following multi-media formats to aid in presentations: film, visual slides, PowerPoint, material objects, music, visual art, or current news and events that relate to the readings. As presenter you may synthesize the main points of the readings and evaluate the author’s main arguments. You should not try to summarize the entire content of the readings; but instead draw from the main and provocative points as points for further discussion. I will require a typed outline, essay or other formally produced summary of your presentation as a tool for grading. *(To be discussed with me prior to your presentation).*
4. (25%) Midterm take-home exam. You will be required to write two short midterm essays (4-5 pages total) answering 2 questions from a group of 3 or 4 (provided by me) drawn from the first half of the course materials.

5. (35%) Final Paper. A final essay of 7-10 pages due at the end of the semester. This paper will be a longer research paper that requires you to utilize secondary resources (No less than five sources). You will choose a theoretical issue (socio-hist) or analyze a particular text or author that has interested you throughout the semester. Utilizing class materials I will ask you to create an outline/draft/working bibliography which reflects the interdisciplinary methods of Native Indigenous Studies. This may take the form for example of a literary critique or socio-hist essay discussing intersecting topics covered in class. (I will provide more details on the essay early and throughout the semester)

Course Schedule

Note: Schedule is subject to change at instructor’s discretion

“Truth, Power and Native/Indigenous Studies”

WEEK 1:

Wed. Sep 4 Introductions, course syllabus overview


WEEK 2:


“Indigenous Identities—Racial, Cultural, National”

WEEK 3


“Indigenous Identities and Gender”

WEEK 4


Devon Abbott Mihesuah (Choctaw), “Feminists, Tribalists, or Activists?,” pp. 159-71. From Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.)


“Identity and Language”

WEEK 5


“Boarding Schools and Education”

WEEK 6

Wed. Oct 9  

DVD: “Our Ancestors Don’t Speak English”
NO ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Fri.  

*** MIDTERM TAKE-HOME EXAMS ASSIGNED

“Federal Policy, tribal government and Indigenous Nation(s)”

WEEK 7

Mon. Oct 14  

Wed. Oct 16  
Andrea Smith, “U.S. Empire and the War Against Native Sovereignty,” pp. 177-91 (Conquest, 2005).

Fri.  

*** MIDTERM TAKE-HOME EXAMS DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS

Oct 19-26  
Fall Break—no classes

“Economic Development and Casinos”

WEEK 9

Mon.  

Wed.  
Renee Ann Cramer, “Common Sense of Anti-Indian Racism: Reactions to


“Land, Identity and Environmental Racism”

WEEK 10


**DVD:**” Homeland”

NO ORAL PRESENTATIONS

“Religious Freedom/Appropriation”

WEEK 11

(Conquest, 2005)

**DVD: “White Shamans, Plastic Medicine Men.”**
NO ORAL PRESENTATIONS


“Mascots”

WEEK 12


**DVD: “In Whose Honor”**
NO ORAL PRESENTATIONS


“Activism/Resistance Movements”

WEEK 13

Mon. Nov 25 Troy Johnson (Seminole), et. al., “American Indian Activism and


**DVD: “Alcatraz Is Not An Island”**

NO ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Fri. Nov 29 NO CLASSES-Thanksgiving Break

“Academics and Indian Epistemologies/Methodologies”

**WEEK 14**


Wed. Dec 4 Shawn Wilson, Research is Ceremony, pp. 62-96.

Fri. Dec 6 Shawn Wilson, Research is Ceremony, pp. 97-138.

“Revitalization and Recovery”

**WEEK 15**


**Class reflections and wrap-up**

Thurs. Dec 12 CLASSES END

Tues. Dec. 17, 11:00 AM ***FINAL PAPERS DUE (drop off too be arranged)