Introduction to Native American & Indigenous Studies

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Agenda

Introduction to Native American & Indigenous Studies

Week 1 - Keywords: Indigeneity/Indigenous, Native

Week 2 - Keyword: Land

Week 3 - Keyword: Sovereignty

Week 4 - Keywords: Nation, nationhood

Week 5 - Keywords: blood, tradition

Week 6 - Keywords: colonialism, decolonization

Week 7 - Keyword: Survivance

Week 8 - Keyword: Knowledge

Week 9 - Keywords: Literature, Art

Week 10 - Keywords: Queer, 2-Spirit or, previously (derogatory), berdache

Week 11 - Keyword: Resistance

Week 12 - Keyword: Race

Woodrow "Woody" Wilson Crumbo

(Potawatomi, 1912-1989)

Left: *Peyote Bird* (mid-cent); **Above:** *The Eagle Dancers* (1935)

tempera on paper, 18 1/2 x 35 1/2 in

gouache/opaque watercolors 66 x 50.5 cm

"This Land"

- Land has both material and metaphorical power for Native communities because many indigenous cosmologies are inextricably linked to their land bases. The importance of land stretches far beyond its role as the space on which human activity takes place; for Natives it is a significant source of literal and figurative power. Within Native studies, land has been theorized as the living entity that enables indigenous life. Not surprisingly, Native lands are targeted for resource extraction and con- tinue to be subject to colonial expropriation.
- The history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism-the founding of a state based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery, and a policy of genocide and land theft. Those who seek history with an upbeat ending, a history of redemption and reconciliation, may look around and observe that such a conclusion is not visible, not even in utopian dreams of a better society.
- Writing US history from an Indigenous peoples' perspective requires rethinking the consensual national narrative. That narrative is wrong or deficient, not in its facts, dates, or details but rather in its essence. Inherent in the myth we've been taught is an embrace of settler colonialism and genocide. The myth persists, not for a lack of free speech or poverty of information but rather for an absence of motivation to ask questions that challenge the core of the scripted narrative of the origin story


What If The U.S. Honored Its Native Treaties?
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IF NATIVE TREATIES WERE HONORED
NATIVE LAND
UNITED STATES
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This Land

- Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" celebrates that the land belongs to everyone, reflecting the unconscious manifest destiny we live with. But the extension of the United States from sea to shining sea was the intention and design of the country's founders. "Free" land was the magnet that attracted European settlers. Many were slave owners who desired limitless land for lucrative cash crops. After the war for independence but preceding the writing of the US Constitution, the Continental Congress produced the Northwest Ordinance. This was the first law of the incipient republic, revealing the motive for those desiring independence. It was the blueprint for gobbling up the British-protected Indian Territory ("Ohio Country") on the other side of the Appalachians and Alleghenies. Britain had made settlement there illegal with the Proclamation of 1763.

"However our present interests may restrain us within our own limits, it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits and cover the whole northern, if not the southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar form by similar laws." – Thomas Jefferson, 1801

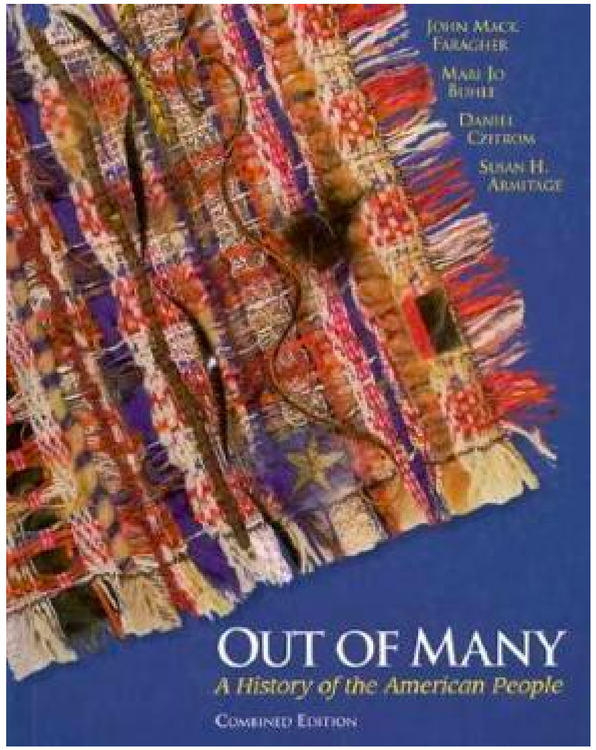
- Origin narratives form the vital core of a people's unifying identity and of the values that guide them. In the United States, the founding and development of the Anglo-American settler-state involves a narrative about Puritan settlers who had a covenant with God to take the land. That part of the origin story is supported and reinforced by the Columbus myth and the "Doctrine of Discovery." According to a series of late-fifteenth-century papal bulls, European nations acquired title to the lands they "discovered" and the Indigenous inhabitants lost their natural right to that land after Europeans arrived and claimed it

This Land

- The Columbus myth suggests that from US independence onward, colonial settlers saw themselves as part of a world system of colonization. "Columbia," the poetic, Latinate name used in reference to the United States from its founding throughout the nineteenth century, was based on the name of Christopher Columbus. The "Land of Columbus" was-and still is-represented by the image of a woman in sculptures and paintings, by institutions such as Columbia University, and by countless place names, including that of the national capital, the District of Columbia. 7 The 1798 hymn "Hail, Columbia" was the early national anthem and is now used whenever the vice president of the United States makes a public appearance, and Columbus Day is still a federal holiday despite Columbus never having set foot on the continent claimed by the United States.
- Historians of the US, hoping to have successful careers in academia and to author lucrative school textbooks, became protectors of this origin myth.
- With the cultural upheavals in the academic world during the 1960s, engendered by the civil rights movement and student activism, historians came to call for objectivity and fairness in revising interpretations of US history. They warned against moralizing, urging instead a dispassionate and culturally relative approach. Historian Bernard Sheehan, in an influential essay, called for a "cultural conflict" understanding of Native-Euro-American relations in the early United States, writing that this approach "diffuses the locus of guilt."
- In striving for "balance," however, historians spouted platitudes:
  - "There were good and bad people on both sides."
  - "American culture is an amalgamation of all its ethnic groups."
  - "A frontier is a zone of interaction between cultures, not merely advancing European settlements."

How We Talk About Genocide

- Some claimed (and still claim) that the colonizer and colonized experienced an "encounter" and engaged in "dialogue," thereby masking reality with justifications and rationalizations-in short, apologies for one-sided robbery and murder. In focusing on "cultural change" and "conflict between cultures," these studies avoid fundamental questions about the formation of the United States and its implications for the present and future. This approach to history allows one to safely put aside present responsibility for continued harm done by that past and the questions of reparations, restitution, and reordering society.
- Multiculturalism became the cutting edge of post-civil-rightsmovement US history revisionism. For this scheme to work-and affirm US historical progress-Indigenous nations and communities had to be left out of the picture. As territorially and treaty-based peoples in North America, they did not fit the grid of multiculturalism but were included by transforming them into an inchoate oppressed racial group, while colonized Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans were dissolved into another such group, variously called "Hispanic" or "Latino."
- The multicultural approach emphasized the "contributions" of individuals from oppressed groups to the country's assumed greatness. Indigenous peoples were thus credited with corn, beans, buckskin, log cabins, parkas, maple syrup, canoes, hundreds of place names, Thanksgiving, and even the concepts of democracy and federalism. But this idea of the gift-giving Indian helping to establish and enrich the development of the United States is an insidious smoke screen meant to obscure the fact that the very existence of the country is a result of the looting of an entire continent and its resources.



"Genocide" in international law

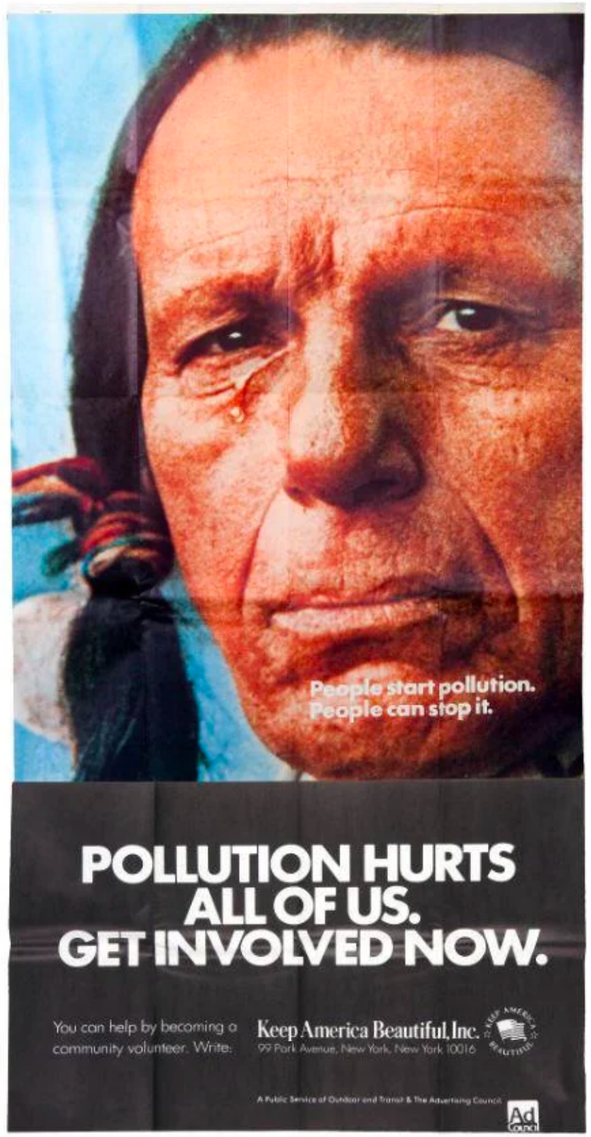
- The term "genocide" was coined following the Shoah, or Holocaust, and its prohibition was enshrined in the United Nations convention adopted in 1948: the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The convention is not retroactive but is applicable to US-Indigenous relations since 1988, when the US Senate ratified it. The terms of the genocide convention are also useful tools for historical analysis of the effects of colonialism in any era. In the convention, any one of five acts is considered genocide if "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group":
  - killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.
  - In the 1990s, the term "ethnic cleansing" became a useful descriptive term for genocide.
- US history, as well as inherited Indigenous trauma, cannot be understood without dealing with the genocide that the United States committed against Indigenous peoples. From the colonial period through the founding of the United States and continuing in the twenty-first century, this has entailed torture, terror, sexual abuse, massacres, systematic military occupations, removals of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories, and removals of Indigenous children to military-like boarding schools.
- In the case of the British North American colonies and the United States, not only extermination and removal were practiced but also the disappearing of the prior existence of Indigenous peoples-and this continues to be perpetuated in local histories. Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) historian Jean O'Brien names this practice of writing Indians out of existence "firsting and lasting." All over the continent, local histories, monuments, and signage narrate the story of first settlement: the founder(s), the first school, first dwelling, first everything, as if there had never been occupants who thrived in those places before Euro-Americans. On the other hand, the national narrative tells of "last" Indians or last tribes (think *Last of the Mohicans*).

4 Eras of Genocide in US

1. the Jacksonian era of forced removal
2. the California gold rush in Northern California
3. the post-Civil War era of the so-called Indian wars in the Great Plains
4. the 1950s termination period

According to the origin narrative, the United States was born of rebellion against oppression-against empire-and thus is the product of the first anticolonial revolution for national liberation. The narrative flows from that fallacy: the broadening and deepening of democracy; the Civil War and the ensuing "second revolution," which ended slavery; the twentieth-century mission to save Europe from itself-twice; and the ultimately triumphant fight against the scourge of communism, with the United States inheriting the difficult and burdensome task of keeping order in the world. It's a narrative of progress. The 1960s social revolutions, ignited by the African American liberation movement, complicated the origin narrative, but its structure and periodization have been left intact. After the 1960s, historians incorporated women, African Americans, and immigrants as contributors to the commonweal. Indeed, the revised narrative produced the "nation of immigrants" framework, which obscures the US practice of colonization, merging settler colonialism with immigration to metropolitan centers during and after the industrial revolution. Native peoples, to the extent that they were included at all, were renamed "First Americans" and thus themselves cast as distant immigrants.

Connection to Land



- Unlike groups with racial minority status in the United States, Native peoples' right to land is marked in the U.S. Constitution and in treaties that explicitly address Native sovereignty and land rights. In addition, Native peoples, generally speaking, claim an ancestral and spiritual relationship to peoples that lived on the land before Europeans came to the Americas. Creation stories often vary by tribe, and while many Natives practice other religions— namely Christianity— relationships with the land retain a spiritual importance for Natives because it is recognized widely in Indian country that the land produced all the living things that allowed Natives to survive physically and theoretically on it. As Julian Burger explains, "The most important distinguishing feature of indigenous peoples is their shared respect for the land— Mother Earth."
- Since the majority of natural resources are on Native land, Native peoples have been disproportionately burdened with the environmental impact of resource extraction. As many scholars have noted, Native peoples have been devastated by environmentally destructive policies, including nuclear testing, uranium mining, and toxic waste storage.
- The image of the crying Indian, made famous by a 1971 "Keep America Beautiful" campaign, featured an Indian named Iron Eyes Cody (who was real ly Italian) dressed in iconographic buckskin and feathers and crying for the land. Images like this one contribute to the notion that Indians are closer to nature, a notion that is supported by both Indians and nonIndians. The ad referenced a perspective that can be traced back to the image of the "noble savage," a type of Indian that existed happily with nature before the arrival of Europeans. The noble savage served as a representation of man "before the fall," that is, of man before the trappings of civilization transformed social reality. The noble savage was to exhibit what civilized man had ruined, serving as a model for nature, as inherently good.

Rethinking Land

- In Legendary Hawai'i and the Politics of Place (2007), Cristina Bacchilega explains how indigenous relationships to place help rethink the empty moniker of land or space. She notes that in Hawai'i, land needs to be understood as an indigenous storied place, or nā wahi pana, space that draws on cultural memory and activates history in the pre sent moment and location
- In Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations (2005), Harvey and Thompson propose thinking about indigeneity as "belonging to a place" rather than "belonging in a place" in order to better contextualize the lives of modern Natives, particularly in light of how willful and coercive acts have caused people to leave their ancestral homelands.
- Here, a relationship to the land is opened up in a way that acknowledges the processes that require and facilitate movement without compromising the importance of Native relationship to lands.
- In Epeli Hau'ofa's article "Sea of Islands," he documents the existence of a Native Pacific indigeneity that was never about fixity but that was always in flux. Hau'ofa and Teaiwa together help us think about the theorization of "native lands" in relation to a fluid ocean that can be thought of as a homeland for Pacific Islanders.
- Native peoples have a spiritual relationship to the entire biosphere, not just the land. However, colonialism separates land from the rest of the creation as a marker of territorial expansion.
    - Land claims are often made on the basis of a temporal framework of prior occupancy rather than on a spatial framework of radical relationality to land. This temporal framework of prior occupancy is then easily co-opted by state discourses that enable Native peoples to address land encroachment by articulating their claims in terms of landownership.
    - In this framework, land becomes a commodity that can be owned and controlled by one group of people. According to Patricia Monture-Angus, indigenous nationhood is not based on control of territory or land but is based on the relationship with and responsibility for land.

Next class…

Keyword: Sovereignty

- *Native Studies Keywords* pp 3-58
- *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2015 American Book Award Winner), "Cult of the Covenant" pp. 45-55