

Feminist Perspectives on Indigeneity and Settler Colonialism

WGSS 292P

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-12:45

Instructor: Dr. Stina Soderling

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 1-2pm, Thursdays, 10:30-11:20, or by appointment

Office: South College, W473

How is settler colonialism – the process of (violently) displacing Native populations and claiming land by a colonizing population – related to gender and sexuality? And how does it connect to, and differ from, other forms of coloniality and postcolonialism? This course will examine recent writings in Native feminism and settler-colonial studies, in conjunction with social movements' engagement (or lack thereof) with indigenous and gender justice and decolonization. We will pay attention to how feminist and queer theory has and has not engaged with Native Studies, and to points of contact between these theories and activist work. While the course will primarily focus on current and recent events, we will put these in historical context by engaging a longer history of activism and resistance.

Syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor or by class consensus.

Required text

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*

Accessibility

I am committed to fostering a classroom environment that supports the full participation of all students. We all learn in different ways: some learn by reading, some by writing, some by talking and listening, some by actively doing. Most of us learn through a combination of mechanisms. In this course, you will be challenged to step into the learning process in various ways, such as those listed above. If you have individual learning needs and have ideas for how to make this course a better learning experience, please let me know.

If you have a documented learning disability, or think you might, and would like to request special accommodations, please contact Disability Services (<http://www.umass.edu/disability/>). I am always open to hearing about your needs and suggestions; however, you are in no way obligated to share any information about a disability with me or any other instructor, unless you yourself decide to do so.

Teaching philosophy

My teaching philosophy is grounded on feminist and anarchist principles, and I hold that learning can be a collaborative and liberatory experience. I believe that as thinking, feeling beings, we all have something to offer in the learning process. In practical terms, this means that I ask us all to work together to make this course a meaningful experience for everyone involved. While I lay out guidelines and suggestions in this syllabus, they are all up for discussion, with three important exceptions: 1) any student accessibility needs, such as accommodations from Disability Services, shall be met; 2) all class participants must follow the academic integrity policies of the University of Massachusetts; and, most important of all, 3) all participants must strive to treat all class members with respect.

Department writing tutor

A wonderful resource offered by WGSS is a department-specific writing tutor. This semester, Faune Albert holds this position. She is available to meet about your writing assignments, either during drop-in office hours or by appointment. Her weekly office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 10-2 and Thursdays from 2-4 in South College W414. You can also reach her via email, at falbert@umass.edu. I warmly recommend meeting with a writing tutor; I find that it improves student writing greatly.

On Title IX and mandated reporting

WGSS classes are a place where issues of sexual violence and other sexual misconduct are discussed as a matter of course. It's not a taboo subject, and feminists have long worked to develop theory and activism around sexualized violence, including rape, dating violence, child sexual abuse, and the like. If you want to discuss your own personal experiences of sexual violence in a class, we don't consider that a "report" covered by Title IX (although if you want faculty help and support in reporting sexual violence, we are here to help you do that). Other available resources on campus for addressing sexual violence include both confidential and non-confidential resources – non-confidential resources will keep your concerns private but will report your concerns to the Title IX coordinator or the Dean of Students Office, who will provide you with different options to assist you. Confidential resources will keep your concerns confidential and will provide you support, assistance in addressing safety concerns as well as other services such as providing you with an advocate. The resources can be found at www.umass.edu/titleix/

On names and pronouns

There is a long history of dialogue and activism around how we address one another, with respect to both names and pronouns. Students should be referred to by the name they prefer, and with the proper pronunciation, by faculty and other students. I will gladly honor your request to address you by the name you prefer and gender pronouns that correspond to your gender identity. Please advise me of your name's proper pronunciation, and any names or pronouns not reflected by the record in Spire early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Computer policy

I ask that you do not use a computer in class. It's distracting for both you and the class (including the instructor). Research shows that students retain less information when taking notes on a laptop than by hand.

Contacting the instructor

The best way to contact me is in person. I hold weekly office hours on Tuesdays from 1:00 to 2:00pm and Thursdays from 10:30 to 11:20am; if these times do not work for you, I am happy to set up a meeting at a different time. If you cannot make it to a scheduled meeting outside of office hours, you are expected to notify me at least 24 hours in advance. If you miss two scheduled meetings without giving proper notice, you may not schedule any other meetings outside of office hours for the duration of the semester.

I use email sparingly. Please allow for 3 weekdays for a response; I do not answer emails on weekends. I do not answer via email questions the answer to which can be found in the syllabus. If you email about a matter that is best addressed through a conversation, I may ask that you come to office hours or set up a meeting.

Good to know

Part of learning is working together on difficult issues. This is often especially the case in WGSS courses. We will all make “mistakes” this semester; this does not mean that we are failing. I encourage you to step into spaces that might make you uncomfortable, while knowing that the community of the class, and me as an instructor, are here to support you.

If you are at all struggling in this course, come talk to me! It is my job to facilitate your participation and performance in this course, and you do not “bother” me by asking for help. I have office hours weekly, and we can also schedule a meeting at a different time. I encourage you to attend office hours to check in with me, even if you are not struggling. That way, we can figure out together how to make this semester as beneficial as possible for you.

Expectations

This is a small, conversation-based course, and it is my hope and intention that we will make this class together. Thus, I expect that you will show up to as many class meetings as possible, and do so prepared to engage.

Attendance: You may miss three class meetings without it affecting your grade. It is up to you how you use these absences, and you do not need to tell me why you were not in class. *If you are scheduled to present material in class, do let me know in advance if you will not make it to that class meeting.* For each additional absence, your grade will drop by 2 points. *More than 8 absences will lead to a failing grade for the course.*

Of course, life does not always follow a neat semester schedule, and there might be reasons, expected or unforeseen, that prohibit your full participation and attendance in the course. In such circumstances, I encourage you to make an appointment to talk to me as soon as possible, so that we can figure out a plan. *I will never ask for doctors' notes or other medical documentation.* Such documents may contain very private information, and you are under no obligation to share it with me. I trust that you will be honest about your needs and circumstances, and you do not need to divulge sensitive information.

Participation: Much of our learning will take place in conversation with each other. It is therefore crucial that you not only attend class, but also participate. There are many ways to participate in the course: partake in class discussion, bring in questions about the readings, bring in relevant outside material, partake in group work. In order to participate fully in class, it is vital that you have carefully read the assigned texts. You will be evaluated on the extent to which your comments relate to, and critically engage with, the assigned materials. Occasionally, there might be small homework assignments, which are counted toward your participation grade.

Assignments

The assignments are designed to enrich class conversation, and provide us all with more insight and context. For this reasons, reading reflections and definitions must be presented and submitted the day that we are discussing the reading you have researched or written about.

Reading reflections: For 10 course meetings, you will write a 1-2 page reading response. These should be analytical, not mere summaries or opinion pieces. The main focus should be on the readings for that day, but you are welcome to draw on earlier readings or outside events. Bring your responses to class the day we discuss them; I will ask students to share their responses at the beginning of class.

Reading introductions and discussion questions: For one class meeting, you will sign up to provide a 5-to-10-minute introduction to the readings, and at least three discussion questions. Your introduction could include: background on the author; overarching argument; important subarguments; definitions of key terms; how the reading relates to what we have read so far.

Media analyses: For 3 class meetings of your choosing, read/listen/watch media coverage on a topic that you deem related to what we are discussing in class that day (in extraordinary cases, you may write about a topic related to a previous class session; please check in with me about this beforehand). In an oral presentation, answer the following questions: What is the topic you followed? What has happened? How is it related to class? What sources did you use, and what biases do they have? Also include at least one discussion question for class. Hand in or email me the source, so it can be shared with classmates.

Group research project: The final project is a group research project, resulting in a 5-10 page paper or another final product deemed equivalent. Your group can research: one prominent Native feminist, a Native Feminist movement (eg Idle No More), a concept (eg resurgence). Presentations of project will be held in April.

Symposium attendance: Attend at least one event at the 5 College Native and Indigenous Studies Symposium, date TBA (in April). *If your schedule does not allow for this, you must talk to me before the end of add/drop to agree on an alternate event to attend.*

Extra credit: Beginning-of-semester office hours. In addition to regularly scheduled office hours, I will hold extended office hours during the first three weeks of the semester. In my experience, students who engage in a dialogue with the instructor early on in the semester do better throughout the course, and attending office hours is a possibility to begin that dialogue. *5 extra credits.*

Grade points

Attendance: 15 points

Participation: 20 points

Reading reflections, 3 points each: 30 points

Reading introduction: 5 points

Symposium attendance: 5 points

Group research project: 25 points

Total: 100 points

Semester outline

Tuesday, January 23 – Introductions

Thursday, January 25 – Initial thoughts and key concepts

Maya Mikdashi, “What Is Settler Colonialism?”

Kaitlin Curtice, “Giving Presence and Voice to Indigenous Peoples”

Tuesday, January 30 – Heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism

Andrea Smith, “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy”

Recommended:

Mab Segrest, "On Being White and Other Lies: A History of Racism in the United States"

Thursday, February 1 – Heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism, continued

Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, Angie Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy"

Tuesday, February 6 – Introducing contemporary Native Feminist thought

As We Have Always Done, chapters 1 & 2

Thursday, February 8 – Introducing contemporary Native Feminist thought, continued

Feminism for Real excerpts: Jessica Yee, introduction; Louis Esme Cruz, "Medicine Bundle of Contradictions"; Theresa (TJ) Lightfoot, "So What if We Didn't Call It 'Feminism'?"

Tuesday, February 13 – Gendered and sexualized colonialism

As We Have Always Done, chapters 5 & 6

Thursday, February 15 – Gendered and sexualized colonialism, continued

Audra Simpson's "The Chief's Two Bodies"

or

Audra Simpson, "The State is a Man"

Tuesday, February 20 – Violence against Indigenous Women

As We Have Always Done, chapter 11

Violence on the Land, Violence on Our Bodies

Thursday, February 22 – Group project work date

Tuesday, February 27 –

Andrea Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism" in *Queer Indigenous Studies*

Mark Rifkin, excerpts from *When Did Indians Become Straight?*

Thursday, March 1 –

Corey Snelgrove, Rita Kaur Dhamoon, and Jeff Corntassel, "Unsettling Settler Colonialism"

Recommended:

Kauanui, J. Kēhaulani and Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism Then and Now"

Tuesday, March 6 –

Eva Garroutte, *Real Indians*, excerpts: preface and chapter 3: "What If My Grandma Eats Big Macs?"

Thursday, March 8 –

As We Have Always Done, chapter 4

Coulthard excerpt here?

Tuesday, March 20

Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, chapter 1: "Indigenous Interruptions"

Thursday, March 22

Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, chapter 5: “Borders, Cigarettes, and Sovereignty”

Tuesday, March 27

Angela Davis, “On Palestine, G4S, and the Prison-Industrial Complex”

Shiri Pasternak, “An Autobiography of Territory,” from *Grounded Authority*

Thursday, March 29

Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*, excerpts

Tuesday, April 3

Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, excerpts

Thursday, April 5 –

As We Have Always Done, chapters 8 & 9

Tuesday, April 10 –

Robin Wall Kimmerer, excerpts from *Braiding Sweetgrass*

Nora Murphy, excerpts from *White Birch, Red Hawthorn*

Thursday, April 12 –

Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, “Protectors of the Future, Not Protestors of the Past: Indigenous Pacific Activism and Mauna a Wākea”

Tuesday, April 17 – no class, Monday schedule

Thursday, April 19 –

As We Have Always Done, chapter 10

Tuesday, April 24 –

As We Have Always Done, chapter 3

Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, conclusion

Thursday, April 26 –

As We Have Always Done, chapter 12 & conclusion

May 1 – no class, May Day