

# **WGSS 293S: Immigration and Settler Colonialism**

Fall 2017, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Professor Stina Soderling

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:15pm

Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:00-3:30pm and Thursdays, 11:30-12:30pm

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The past year has seen an upsurge in attention to, and activism around, immigration in and to the United States. At pro-immigration rallies, rhetoric of "We are all immigrants" are paired with singing "This Land Is Your Land, This Land Is My Land." But are we all immigrants? And whose land is this actually? This course will pair a feminist study of immigration with theories of settler-colonialism; that is, the study of North America as Indigenous land settled by (predominantly European) colonizers. Questions asked in the course include: How are feminists engaging with questions of immigration and dispossession? What are different theories of colonialism? When are immigrant and Native movements in conflict, and when do they work together? We will read scholarly texts, news sources, and social movement literature. With growing and ongoing struggles around both immigration and Native justice, we will also study contemporary activism, especially in the "Pioneer Valley."

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

## 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.

### 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/](http://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.

### Contacting the instructor

The best way to contact me is in person. I hold weekly office hours on Wednesdays from 2:00 to 3:30pm and Thursdays from 11:00 to 12:30pm; if this time does 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.

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). Bring a 1-page write-up to class; you will present this in class and also hand in a hard copy. In the write-up, answer the following: 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 two discussion questions for class. *Please email me no later than 24 hours before class to let me know you would like to present a media analysis, so that I can put your presentation on the schedule.*

Reading reflections: For 3 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. Each reading reflection should contain at least 2 questions for class discussion; you must raise these questions in class in order to get credit for the reflection. A passing paper will engage with the reading(s); provide an analysis; ask questions for class discussion; include a bibliography. It could also compare multiple readings, and/or

draw on previous readings or outside events. The following will automatically lead to a fail grade: derogatory comments about a group or an individual; a paper based on stereotypes (instead of fact, analysis and/or experience).

Definitions: You will sign up to define key terms 3 times over the course of the semester. For this assignment, do the class readings even more carefully than usual, pick out what you consider the key terms, and bring in definitions of these to class. Remember that words are often used in different ways depending on the contexts. How are the terms used in this reading? It might not be the same as the dictionary definition. It's okay to not be sure exactly how a term is used; bring in your best definition, and we will try to figure it out together, as a class.

Semester project: This can be done individually or in a group. You will research a group or project that addresses questions of immigration, Native justice, and/or settler colonialism. You are encouraged to start this early, and to bring in your preliminary research when we discuss related topics

Grades:

Attendance: 10

Participation: 20

Media analyses: 15

Reading reflections: 15

Definitions: 15

Semester project: 25

**Total: 100**

## **Course schedule**

### **Tuesday, September 5**

Introductions

### **Thursday, September 7 – What is settler colonialism?**

Maya Mikdashi, “What Is Settler Colonialism?”

Recommended

Ngọc Loan Trần, “Calling IN: A Less Disposable Way of Holding Each Other Accountable”

### **Tuesday, September 12 – Constructing whiteness, constructing Americanness**

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

### **Thursday, September 14 – Connecting immigration and indigeneity**

Gunlög Fur, “Indians and Immigrants: Entangled Histories”

“Happy Indigenous People's Day: Wendell Replaces Columbus Day”

Yvonne Abraham, “It's No Confederate Flag, But Our Banner Is Still Pretty Awful”

### **Tuesday, September 19 – Heteropatriarchy, White Supremacy, Settler Colonialism**

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

Aqdas Aftab, “Visibility or Complicity?”

**Thursday, September 21 – What does “legal” mean?**

Aviva Chomsky, “Where Did Illegality Come From?”

Amanda Sakuma, “Trump's New Immigration Plan Screws Over Women the Most”

**Tuesday, September 26 – Sovereignty: Borders**

Audra Simpson, “Borders, Cigarettes, and Sovereignty,” from *Mohawk Interruptus*  
*available through “Ares” in Moodle*

**Thursday, September 28 – Sovereignty: Voting**

Andrea Smith, “Voting and Indigenous Disappearance”

Recommended:

Edward Valandra, “US Citizenship: The American Policy to Extinguish the Principle of Lakota Political Consent”

**Tuesday, October 3 – Feminism and decolonization**

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

**Thursday, October 5 – Feminism and decolonization, con't.**

Cherríe L. Moraga, “A XicanaDyke Codex of Changing Consciousness” and “A Xicana Lexicon”

Recommended:

Cherríe L. Moraga, “From Inside the First World: On 9/11 and Women-of-Color Feminism”

**Thursday, October 12 – Puerto Rico and US imperialism: Guest lecturer Laura Briggs**

Marisol LeBrón, “Policing Solidarity: State Violence, Blackness, and the University of Puerto Rico Strikes”

**Tuesday, October 17 – Border imperialism**

Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, excerpts

**Thursday, October 19 – Border imperialism, cont.**

Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, excerpts, continued

**Tuesday, October 24 – Border imperialism, cont.**

Nandita Sharma, “Terror and Mercy at the Border”

**Thursday, October 26 – Palestine**

“Reclaiming Native History, from New Mexico to Palestine”

Recommended

Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*, “Introduction”

**Tuesday, October 31 – Palestine, cont.**

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

**Thursday, November 2 – Environmental racism, environmental colonialism**

Beata Tsosie-Pena, “Environmental Racism: A Letter from New Mexico to Flint”

Ari Laurel, “We Need to Be Talking About Standing Rock”

**Tuesday, November 7 – Environmental racism, environmental colonialism, cont.**

Yessenia Funes, “Pipeline Expansion in Northeast Threatens Tribe's Ceremonial Land”

**Thursday, November 9 – The myth of good behavior**

“Immigrants: We Get the Job Done,” from *Hamilton Mixtape*

Barbara Sosaita, “Immigrants, We (Don't Always) Get the Job Done”

*Additional reading TBA*

**Tuesday, November 14 – The myth of good behavior, cont.**

“Accomplices, Not Allies,” by Indigenous Action Media, in *Taking Sides*

**Thursday, November 16 – Breaking up with the United States**

“Confessions of an Undocumented African Immigrant”

*Additional reading TBA*

**Tuesday, November 28 – TBA**

**Thursday, November 30 – TBA**

**Tuesday, December 5 – TBA**

**Thursday, December 7 – TBA**

**Tuesday, December 12**

Last day, wrap-up