NAIS 3XX Analyzing Indigenous Gender: Explorations of Agency and Empowerment

Writing Intensive Course

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“The status of indigenous women differs from one community to another and from one region to another. Yet, their concerns often coincide because of their indigenous status. The experiences of and challenges facing indigenous women throughout the world are often similar in terms of poverty, human rights violations, lack of access to education, health care and socio-economic development” (U.N. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women).

“Indian women were often positioned as political, social and economic intermediaries between their people and the newcomers. Women married traders, bridged cultures, and worked to resolve disputes, ensuring sustenance and survival for both their people and the Europeans in an era increasingly complicated by the demands of Western intrusion” (Holding our World Together, Brenda Child)

1. COURSE DESCRIPTOR:

This course explores indigenous women through the lens of gender, which is not defined biologically, but instead is shaped through social roles, political rules, and community expectations. It identifies the ways in which indigenous women’s personal and political experiences continue to impact agency and empowerment in both their personal and public lives. Course materials will explore historical and contemporary perspectives through Native American and Latino/a authors and scholars, as well as others, as the professor’s expertise and research allows. The primary focus, however, is on indigenous communities of Native North American/Canadian tribal groups, and Central and South American tribal/community groups. Prerequisite: Intro to Native American and Indigenous Studies NAIS 1XX

2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To complicate the biological constructs of “maleness” and “femaleness”
- To better understand how indigenous communities define and practice gender
- To provide clear and compelling examples grounded in historical and contemporary contexts that illustrate how gender considerations and practices impact specific communities
- To help the student comprehend and be able to articulate the impact of gender on individuals' historical and contemporary agency, and how the ability to express agency has shaped people's lives in various geographical settings.
### LEARNER OUTCOMES:

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<tr>
<th>KNOWLEDGE &amp; SKILLS</th>
<th>*UNIVERSITY GOAL ALIGNMENT CODES</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (EVIDENCE) (Products and Performance—Higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy)</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT METHODS/CODES</th>
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| Student will be able to identify and apply key aspects of gender analysis | 1a, 3b | Concepts and Reflections  
- Analysis level posted on “My Heritage”  
- Synthesis level written in-class after “postings” discussion | CQ, E |
| Students will understand academic terminology used to describe gender and human sexuality cross-culturally, as well as the ability to apply these concepts in research discussions. | 3b, 3d |  
- Weekly Quizzes  
- Self-Reflection to sort through and understand contexts for terminology  
- Essays applying concepts learned | CQ, SR, E |
| Students will be able to synthesize inter-disciplinary academic sources on the topic of indigenous gender constructions. | 2a, 2b, 2c |  
- Develop proposal for research paper  
- Gather library sources (annotated bibliography)  
| Students will participate effectively in written and oral intellectual dialogues centered in gender, bringing to others their discoveries and/or realizations. | 2b, 2d |  
- Final Essay on one component of RP  
- Self-reflection on learning about “gender”  
- Oral Presentation on one aspect of RP | E, SR, P |

Modules for Analyzing Indigenous Gender: Explorations of Agency and Empowerment

I. Gendering individuals, institutions and social processes
This module provides an introduction to how we fit into the world as gendered beings, contributing and responding to social cues, expectations and norms. This section of the course will access readings not only from the list, but will look at statistical information from socio-political entities such as the Tomas Rivera Institute, United Nations Reports, Pew Research Institute for People and the Press, The United States Department of Labor, The Department of Justice, etc.

II. Biological, cultural, historical and political gender frameworks
This discussion-based module will engage your critical writing skills and will produce several key short essay responses that we will reflect on as a class. We will explore such bio-cultural historical events such as the Chicago Worlds Fair, Native American Boarding School curriculum development, and the Eugenics movement and its impact on gendering masculinity for cultural groups.

III. Categories of “woman,” “man” and “other” across social groups, cultures and historical periods
This module will continue the exploration of categories of gender and the impact of familial, community and global socializing as it relates to gender roles. We will look at cultural transition ceremonies, family expectations, spiritual teachings, political movements for equality, Maslow’s Hierarchy (belonging and acceptance), scientific “truths,” etc.

IV. Understanding how gendered processes empower us to act as agents of personal and social change. This module will allow us to reflect on the community engagement projects you will be working on, your readings associated with those projects, your presentations, in-class reflections, etc. The culminating event for our class will be a “talking circle” where we come face-to-face to discuss the impact of our work and articulate the possibilities of us, both individually and collectively, acting as “agents of change” in our world.

Class Process/Key Assignments:

25% Class participation, Homework Assignments, Quizzes and In-class Writing

The class format is designed to encourage and reward you for keeping up with the readings and coming to class prepared with comments and questions. Class participation will include regular attendance, informed and thoughtful contributions to discussion, in-class writing, reflection exercise, participation in group exercises and periodic quizzes. You are expected to attend every class session and to let me know the reason for absences, preferably ahead of time. More than three unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade. I will take attendance at the beginning of class. I will periodically assign short (hopefully fun and creative) assignments designed to enrich understanding of the readings. I will also ask you to hand in short written responses, what English professor Peter Elbow refers to as “low stakes writing” to help you synthesize the course material and generate your own analysis. As needed, there will be periodic unannounced quizzes. Rather than a threat or penalty, these assignments help you to keep up on class work, demonstrate your own critical thinking and receive regular feedback.
15% Critical Reflection Paper, 2-3 pages

This assignment asks you to demonstrate your understanding of key concepts and arguments in the readings by applying them to your experiences with community service learning and critically analyzing how your social position shapes these experiences. You can choose one or two key events or interactions with the community group that you are working with and reflect upon how your own values, beliefs, and practices shaped these. The assignment helps you to develop skills in thinking self-reflexively about how your social position engenders certain kinds of perspectives and how these shape your interactions in the world.

40% Community-based Research and Service Learning Project (Parts A & B 20% each)

Students will work together in groups and in partnership with community organizations to design a project which encompasses an analysis of gender roles. This assignment is designed to help you synthesize and apply the readings toward understanding and changing your own social worlds, to foster collaborative learning, to develop public presentation skills and to get you out of the classroom and into the local community! You will analyze your project in both oral and written form as follows:

A. Prospectus: You will write a plan for completing your community-based research project, including the topic, goals, implementation, contribution by each individual member, collaboration with a local community organization, schedule and background readings.

B. Class Presentation: You will work with a group of about 2-3 students to present your project to the class, ideally community members will opt to be part of your audience. I encourage you to use visual aids, multimedia, role plays, etc. to make your presentation original and engaging. You can regard the group presentation as an opportunity for you to present the arguments and findings from your research paper (see below) while drawing connections between your topic and the work of your classmates. You will work collaboratively but receive an individual grade for your part.

20% Final Paper (5-7 pages) Your final paper will include two parts. First, you will prepare a report on the findings of your community-based research that you will share with your organization. Second, you will critique the project, analyze its strengths and weaknesses, reflect on your own participation and learning and relate your findings to arguments in the readings. You are expected to cite relevant background sources, but rather than conducting extensive library research, you should consult with your community group on the kinds of information that would be most helpful to them. For the analytical section, you should concentrate on applying and synthesizing the assigned course readings and class discussions to your project. We are not having a final exam so this research report must demonstrate your mastery of the course readings. You will each receive an individual grade for your paper.

Reading List


Fur, Gunlog. “‘Some Women Are Wiser than Some Men’: Gender and Native American History.” In *Clearing a Path*. 75-103.


