

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:**

| KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS   | *UNIVERSITY GOAL ALIGNMENT CODES | PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (EVIDENCE) (Products and Performance—Higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy)  | ASSESSMENT METHODS/CODES |
|--|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Student will be able to identify and apply key aspects of <i>gender</i> analysis   | 1a, 3b                           | Concepts and Reflections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis level posted on “My Heritage”</li> <li>• Synthesis level written in-class after “postings” discussion</li> </ul>       | CQ, E                    |
| Students will understand academic terminology used to describe <i>gender</i> and human sexuality cross-culturally, as well as the ability to apply these concepts in research discussions. | 3b, 3d                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Quizzes</li> <li>• Self-Reflection to sort through and understand contexts for terminology</li> <li>• Essays applying concepts learned</li> </ul> | CQ, SR, E                |
| Students will be able to synthesize inter-disciplinary academic sources on the topic of <i>indigenous gender</i> constructions.  | 2a, 2b, 2c                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop proposal for research paper</li> <li>• Gather library sources (annotated bibliography)</li> <li>• Research Paper and Essay on Process</li> </ul> | RP, E                    |
| Students will participate effectively in written and oral intellectual dialogues centered in <i>gender</i> , bringing to others their discoveries and/or realizations.                     | 2b, 2d                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Essay on one component of RP</li> <li>• Self-reflection on learning about “gender”</li> <li>• Oral Presentation on one aspect of RP</li> </ul>     | E, SR, P                 |

**\*\*Key: \*CQ= Concept Quiz, \*E= Essay, \*SR= Self-Reflection, \*RP=Research Paper, \*P=Presentation**

## **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**

Ackerman, Lillian A. "Gender Equality in a Contemporary Indian Community." In *Many Faces of Gender: Roles and Relationships Through Time in Indigenous Northern Communities*. Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2002. 27-36.

Albers, Patricia C. In *The Women's West*. Edited by Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987. 35-50.

Behar, Ruth. "Sexual Witchcraft, Colonialism, and Women's Powers: Views from the Mexican Inquisition," in Asunción Lavrin, *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, University of Nebraska Press, 1989.

Cajune, Julie, producer. *Heart of the Bitterroot: Voices of Salish and Pend d'Oreille Women*. Npustin: Sound Traveler Legacy, 2007. (CD)

Candelaria, C. La Malinche, Feminist Prototype. *Frontiers*, 2, 1-6. 1980.

Connell, R.W. "Chapter 3: The Social Organization of Masculinity." *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California, 1995. Press, 67-86.

Donaldson, Laura E. "'But we are your mothers, you are our sons.' Gender, Sovereignty, and the Nation in Early Cherokee Women's Writing." In *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*. Eds. Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhdorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010. 43-55.

Farrer, Claire R. *Thunder Rides a Black Horse: Mescalero Apache and the Mythic Desert*. Second Edition. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1994; 1996.

Frink, Lisa, Rita S. Shepard, and Gregory A. Reinhardt. "Many Faces: An Introduction to Gender Research in Indigenous Northern North American." In *Many Faces* (cited above). 1-10.

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

Gilman, Sander. *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*, Cornell University Press. 1985.

Jacobs, Sue-Ellen, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang. *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997.

Johnson, Pauline. "A Red Girl's Reasoning." *The Singing Spirit* (cited above). 15-34.

Jones, William. "The Heart of the Brave." *The Singing Spirit* (cited above). 50-51; 59-85.

Klein, Laura F., and Lillian A. Ackerman, eds. *Women and Power in Native North America*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

Knittel, Janna. "Sun Dance Behind Bars: The Rhetoric of Leonard Peltier's Prison Writings." In *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance*. Ed. Ernest Stromberg. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. 110-128.

Lancaster, Roger. "Subject Honor, Object Shame." *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Edited by Rachel Adams and David Savran. Maldon, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002. 41-68.

Lang, Sabine. "Chapter 2: Early Sources: Missionaries and Traders, Physicians and Ethnologists," "Chapter 3: Twentieth-Century Research," and "Chapter Eighteen: Attitudes Toward Women-Men and Men-Women." *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998. 17- 46; 311-322.

Leacock, Eleanor Burke. "Chapter 7: Women's Status in Egalitarian Societies: Implications for Social Evolution." *Myths of Male Dominance: Collected Articles on Women Cross-culturally*. Chicago: Haymarket Press, 1981; 2008. 133-182.

Morgan, Jennifer L. "Some Could Suckle Over their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1550-1770," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser, v. 54 (1997): 167-92.

Niezen, Ronald. "Preface" and "A New Global Phenomenon?" *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. Xi-xviii; 1-29.

Oskison, John. "The Problem of Old Harjo." In *The Singing Spirit* (cited above). 125-135.

Paxton, Katrina A. "Learning Gender: Female Students at the Sherman Institute, 1907-1925." In *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*. Edited by Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006. 174-186.

Riley, Glenda. "Contact and Cultural Clash with Native Populations." *Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1825-1915*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984. 121-165; 285-297.

Roscoe, Will. *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2000.

Schwartz, Maureen Trudelle. "Chapter I: Comparative Views of Body, Personhood, and Effect" and "Chapter V: Becoming Navajo." *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman: Navajo Worldviews on the Human Body and Personhood*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997 . 3-12; 113-153; 246-263.

Smith, Sherry L. "Beyond Princess and Squaw: Army Officers' Perceptions of Indian Women." In *The Women's West* (cited above). 63-75.

Stoler, Ann Laura. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley: U. of California Press, 2002.

Taylor, Gary. *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Trexler, Richard C. "Introduction" and "Backgrounds." *Sex and Conquest: Gendered Violence, Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas*. Ithaca: Cornell University, 1995 . 1-11; 12-37; 181-198.

Twinam, Ann. *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America*, Stanford University Press, 1999.

Wynn/Rice Analyzing Gender Syllabus 2014

Van Kirk, Sylvia. "The Role of Native Women in the Creation of the Fur Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1830." In *The Women's West* (cited above). 53-62.

Wiegman, Robyn. "Unmaking: Men and Masculinity in Feminist Theory." *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theories: New Directions*. Edited by Judith Kegan Gardiner. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. 31-89.