

# Native Peoples of North America

History 630

Dr. Alexander Olson

Spring 2016



**History 630: Native Peoples of North America**  
**Western Kentucky University - Spring 2016**  
**Online Graduate Seminar**

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**Course Description**

*"Contact was not a battle of primal forces in which only one could survive. Something new could appear."*  
-Richard White, *The Middle Ground* (1991)

For much of the twentieth century, Indian sovereignty and modernity were viewed by many people as incompatible. Tribes deemed assimilated into American culture were at risk of termination by the federal government, which put pressure on scholars sympathetic to the sovereign rights of native nations to avoid acknowledging indigenous modernities. In recent decades, historians and activists have reversed this trend and rejected longstanding anthropological models of indigenous cultures as bastions of traditionalism. As a result, the historiography of the field has undergone a sea change, with greater emphasis on stories of hybridity, complexity, modernity, and change. Alongside accounts of settler colonial violence in the United States and Canada, these new histories offer a portrait that is more complicated than simple conquest or resistance. Accordingly, this course argues that native peoples were important and powerful players in shaping North American modernity. Through readings, essays, and discussions, this course will develop the tools for integrating Native American historiography into your field exams, research, and teaching.

**Required Texts**

Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).  
Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).  
Scott Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).  
Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).  
Charles Wilkinson, *Messages from Frank's Landing: A Story of Salmon, Treaties, and the Indian Way* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).  
All other readings will be scanned and posted to Blackboard.

**Learning Outcomes**

1. As a graduate reading course, our primary goal will be to end the semester with a solid grasp of the major scholarly conversations on American Indian history and historiography, with an emphasis on how Native peoples of North America have shaped the modern world.
2. Develop and practice graduate-level analytical and writing skills in online discussions and other writing assignments.
3. Build capacities to teach American Indian history at the high school and college levels.
4. Utilize theoretical concepts like settler colonialism, indigeneity, borderlands, diaspora, and modernity to build and support historical arguments on American Indian history.
5. Draw connections to historiographical debates that you have learned about, or are currently learning about, in other graduate history classes.

## Assignments

1. **Readings**—All readings are due by Wednesday each week so that you can fully participate in discussions on Blackboard.
2. **Starting Point Essay**—worth a total of 100 points (10% of grade). This assignment requires you to write a two-page essay (1-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced) describing, to the best of your recollection, what you learned about Native American history from your high school and college classes (prior to graduate school). Were historical topics on Native Americans included in your U.S. history or world history classes? If so, how would you characterize these lessons and what key details do you remember? Based on these lessons, as well as your general knowledge, what would you say are the two or three most important themes in Native American history? Please do not do additional research for this assignment; the goal is to pool our experiences to build a collective diagnostic of how Native history is presented in American high schools, colleges, and popular culture. **Due: January 29.**
3. **Historiographical Essay #1: Rethinking Empire**—worth a total of 200 points (20% of grade). Write a six-page essay drawing from the readings for weeks 1-6 and exploring the tensions in the concepts of “colonialism” and “empire” in the examples we have discussed. How do the findings of Hämäläinen, Witgen, and others challenge straightforward narratives of discovery and conquest? **Due: March 4.**
4. **Historiographical Essay #2: Hybrid Lives**—worth a total of 300 points (30% of grade). Write an eight-page essay drawing on the readings from weeks 8-14. According to these authors, what are some of the challenges of identifying clear boundaries between nations, races, and cultures? How do the readings in this course challenge expectations that Native American history unfolded in opposition to “modernity” and the market? **Due: May 10.**
5. **Create Your Own Syllabus**—worth a total of 100 points (10% of grade). Sketch a brief outline for a U.S. History class that integrates some themes and concepts from this semester’s work. Then, write a two-page reflection on how our readings and discussions might influence your approach to teaching about the role of Native Americans in U.S. History. Please work with me to develop an alternative version of this assignment if you do not plan to pursue a career in teaching. **Due: May 10.**
6. **Participation**—worth of a total of 300 points (30% of grade). Contribute at least four posts to the Blackboard discussion board each week. There will be one thread posted each week on Wednesday. You must write at least one 400-600 word original post (due by Wednesday at 11:59pm) and three responses to your classmates’ posts (due by Friday at 11:59pm). At least two of your replies must be posted on Thursday or Friday (after everyone has had a chance to write their initial posts). This means you cannot simply post all three of your responses on Wednesday, but instead need to check back later in the week. Each thread is worth 20 points. Since this is a graduate course, I expect graduate-level work on the board, or, in other words, thoughtful posts that show careful, critical, and respectful engagement with the readings as well as the posts of your classmates. Please see the “Online Policies” section below for additional guidelines.

### **Grading Scale**

- A (90-100%) – Exceptional work: outstanding achievement of requirements
- B (80-89%) – Strong work: strong and significant achievement of requirements
- C (70-79%) – Good work: meets basic requirements
- D (60-69%) – Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of requirements
- F (0-59%) – Unacceptable work: failure to meet requirements

### **Online Policies**

Even though this is an online graduate course, students should not expect that it will be less demanding than a traditional face-to-face graduate course, or that you will be able to complete the coursework in your spare time and at your own pace. Keeping up with the material is essential to doing well in this course, and will involve a considerable amount of reading and regular, active participation on the discussion forums during the course of each week. Online courses generally require more self-discipline than face-to-face courses, since you will need to take responsibility for structuring your time effectively and meeting all deadlines in the absence of physical meetings.

With that in mind, students should expect to spend roughly 10 hours per week on this course, and more if you are a slow reader or writer. Be sure that you are prepared for a graduate-level workload before beginning this course; if you fall behind, it is very difficult to catch up. If you do run into problems during the semester, be sure to talk to me as soon as possible. Your workload for a typical week in this course will include several articles or book chapters totaling roughly 100-160 pages. During the week, you will also contribute posts to the discussion forum on Blackboard and respond to other students' posts; it is best to think of these as short writing assignments, since they will require substantial time and effort. This course includes longer writing assignments as well.

The technology requirements for this online class are modest, but you must make sure you are able to meet them at the start of the semester. You will need access to a computer with a reliable internet connection in order to use Blackboard and to write and submit your assignments. You should also have a plan for an alternate way to connect to the internet (e.g. a public library or coffee shop with wireless access) in case of emergency; computer problems are not a valid excuse for late work, so plan ahead and be sure to make backups of your work. If you are unfamiliar with Blackboard, visit the Online Orientation for Online Learners at <http://www.wku.edu/online/orientation/index.php> before the course begins. If you have any problems at all using any of the online tools for this course (like the discussion forums), contact me as soon as possible.

### **Late Assignments Policy**

Late assignments are strongly discouraged and will not be accepted without prior permission of the instructor. Extensions are granted only in exceptional circumstances. Please contact me if you are facing a serious issue that will impede your ability to complete course assignments on time.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Acts of plagiarism or any other form of cheating will not be tolerated and that anyone committing such acts risks punishment of a serious nature. Please be sure to read the relevant section of the WKU Student Handbook [www.wku.edu/handbook/academic-dishonesty.php](http://www.wku.edu/handbook/academic-dishonesty.php).

## Schedule

**Note:** All readings are due by Wednesday each week so that you can fully participate in discussion. Each week's discussion prompt will be posted by Wednesday at 8:00am in the "Discussion" tab of Blackboard. All essays should be submitted through the "Tests & Quizzes" tab of Blackboard.

### Week 1—January 25-29—Identity and American History

- Jean O'Brien, "Introduction," in *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xi-xxvi.
- Scott Lyons, "Identity Crisis," in *X-marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 35-71.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see "participation" guidelines).  
Starting Point Essay due on Friday, January 29.

### Week 2—February 1-5—New Worlds

- Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 1-21 and 111-211.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see "participation" guidelines).

### Week 3—February 8-12—Illusions of Empire

- Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 215-314.
- Kathleen DuVal, "An Empire in the West, 1700-1777," in *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 103-127.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see "participation" guidelines).

### Week 4—February 15-19—The Comanche Empire

- Juliana Barr, "Introduction," in *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 1-15.
- Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Empire of the Plains," in *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 141-180.
- Brian DeLay, "Plunder and Partners" and "The Politics of Vengeance," in *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexico War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 86-138.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see "participation" guidelines).

### **Week 5—February 22-26—Rethinking Conversion Stories**

- Allan Greer, “Beautiful Death” and “Catherine and Her Sisters,” *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3-24 and 125-146.
- Juliana Barr, “Civil Alliance and ‘Civility’ in Mission-Presidio Complexes,” in *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, 2007), 119-158.
- Quincy Newell, “The Varieties of Religious Experience: Baptized Indians at Mission San Francisco de Asís, 1776-1821,” *American Indian Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 412-442.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see “participation” guidelines).

### **Week 6—February 29-March 4—Kahnawà:ke**

- Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 1-65.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see “participation” guidelines).

Historiographical Essay #1 due on Friday, March 4.

### **Week 7—March 7-11—Spring Break—No readings or discussions**

- No assignments for this week.

### **Week 8—March 14-18—Gender and Family in the Borderlands**

- Jennifer Brown and Theresa Schenck, “Métis, Mestizo, and Mixed Blood,” in Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury, *A Companion to American Indian History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 307-320.
- Anne Hyde, “Fort Vancouver’s Families: The Custom of the Country,” in *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln, 2011), 89-145.
- Gwenn A. Miller, “‘The Perfect Mistress of Russian Economy’: Sighting the Intimate on a Colonial Alaskan Terrain, 1784-1821,” in Ann Stoler, ed., *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 297-322.
- Michel Hogue, “Between Race and Nation: The Creation of a Métis Borderlands on the Northern Plains,” in Benjamin Johnson and Andrew Graybill, eds., *Bridging National Borders in North America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 59-87.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see “participation” guidelines).

### **Week 9—March 21-25—Plantations**

- Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), xi-130.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see “participation” guidelines).

### **Week 10—March 28-April 1—Out of Georgia**

- Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 131-197.
- David Chang, “Owning and Being Owned: Property, Slavery, and Creek Nationhood to 1865,” *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 17-38.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see “participation” guidelines).

### **Week 11—April 4-8—X-Marks**

- Scott Lyons, *X-marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 1-34 and 72-109.
- Charles Wilkinson, “The History of Federal-Tribal Relations” and “Governmental Authority in Indian Country: Tribal Sovereignty and the United States Constitution,” in *Indian Tribes as Sovereign Governments* (Oakland: American Indian Lawyer Training Program, 2004), 3-50.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see “participation” guidelines).

### **Week 12—April 11-15—Recognitions**

- James Clifford, “Identity in Mashpee,” in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 277-346.
- Jean O’Brien, “Claims in Texts about Indian Extinction Fail Even As They Are Being Made” and “The Continuing Struggle Over Recognition,” in *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 145-206.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see “participation” guidelines).

### **Week 13—April 18-22—Spectacles of Citizenship**

- Frederick Hoxie, “Crows and Other Americans,” in *Parading through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 344-378.
- Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996), 1-35.

#### **Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see “participation” guidelines).

### **Week 14—April 25-29—Conflict and Collaboration**

- Charles Wilkinson, *Messages from Frank’s Landing: A Story of Salmon, Treaties, and the Indian Way* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

**Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see “participation” guidelines).

**Week 15—May 2-6—Refusals and Resignations**

- Scott Lyons, *X-marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 111-189.
- Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 147-176.

**Assignments**

Participate in Blackboard discussion board (see “participation” guidelines).

**Finals Week**

**Tuesday, May 10:** Deadline for Historiographical Essay #2

**Tuesday, May 10:** Deadline for “Create Your Own Syllabus” assignment