

Rethinking Pocahontas: An Introduction to Native American Studies

AMST 240 Meets Mon & Wed, 12:30-1:50pm

Prof. Kiara M. Vigil

109 Morgan Hall, x5607

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3 & by appointment

Course Description

From Longfellow's *Hiawatha* and D.H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* to Disney's *Pocahontas* and James Cameron's *Avatar*, representations of the indigenous as "Other" have greatly shaped cultural production in America as vehicles for defining the nation and the self. This interdisciplinary course introduces students to the broad field of Native American Studies, engaging a range of texts from law to policy to history and literature as well as music and aesthetics. Film and literary texts will also provide grounding for our inquiries. By keeping popular culture, representation, and the nature of historical narrative in mind, we will consider the often mutually constitutive relationship between American identity and Indian identity as we pose the following questions: How have imaginings of a national space and national culture by Americans been shaped by a history marked by conquest and reconciliation with indigenous peoples? And, how has the creation of a national American literary tradition often defined itself as both apart from and yet indebted to Native American cultural traditions? This course also considers how categories like race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion have defined identities and changed over time with particular regards to specific Native American individuals and tribal nations. Students will be able to design their own final research project that may focus on either a historically contingent or contemporary issue related to Native American people in the United States that is driven by a researchable question based on reading a Native author's work from the Kim-Wait/Eisenberg collection of Native American Literature at Amherst College.

Unit Topics & Themes

1. Overview: History, Narrative, and Cultural Representations.

→ Foundational texts: Philip Deloria's *Indians in Unexpected Places*, Beth Piatote's *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature*, and Nicolas Rosenthal's *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles*

2. Native American Literary History

→ Students choose a book from the Kim-Wait/Pablo Eisenberg Collection in the College's archives for reading, writing, and a presentation.

3. Contemporary Native portraits of Indian Country

→ *Rez Life* by David Treuer

4. Native Americans & Film: "Playing Indian" in American Culture

Reading: Michelle H. Raheja. *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty and Representations of Native Americans in Film Documentaries: Imagining Indians* (1992) and *Reel Injun* (2009)

→ Case studies: *The Searchers* (1956), *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *Smoke Signals* (2002)

Core Texts can be purchased at Amherst Books in downtown Amherst or online

- Philip J. Deloria. *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004) ISBN 978-0-7006-1459-2
- Beth H. Piatote. *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature* (Yale University Press, 2013) ISBN: 9780300171570
- Nicolas G. Rosenthal. *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012) ISBN: 978-0-8078-3555-5
- David Treuer. *Rez Life: An Indian's Journey Through Reservation Life* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2012) ISBN: 9780802119711
- Michelle H. Raheja. *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (University of Nebraska Press, 2010) ISBN: 9780803211261
- Students will also choose a book from the KWE Collection on Native American History and Literature to read and write about. This assignment will also be one step in their preparation for a final research paper on a topic of their choosing.

Films* & Film reviews/readings

- 1) *The Searchers* (1956) John Ford. → Also read Susan Stebbins' review pp30-36 in *Seeing Red: Hollywood's Pixeled Skins: American Indians and Film* edited by LeAnne Howe, Harvey Markowitz, Denise K. Cummings (Michigan State University Press, 2013); Chapter 5: "The Representation of Conquest: John Ford and the Hollywood Indian, 1939-1964" in *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (University Press of Kentucky, 1998) edited by Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor. (pp73-90), and the Prologue from Colin Calloway's *One Vast Winter Counter: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark*.
- 2) *Dances with Wolves* (1990) Also read 1) Review by James Riding In (pp89-95) in *Seeing Red* 2) Chapter 10: "'Going Indian': *Dancing with Wolves*" by Robert Baird (pp153-169) in *Hollywood's Indian* 3) Shari Huhndorf excerpt from *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (2001).
- 3) *Smoke Signals* (1998) Directed by Chris Eyre. Associated readings: 1) This Is What It Means to Say *Smoke Signals: Native American Culture Sovereignty*" by Amanda J. Cobb, (pp206-227) in *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* 2) "Indians Watching Indians on TV: Native Spectatorship and the Politics of Recognition in *Skins* and *Smoke Signals*" by Joanna Hearne (pp41-72) in *Visualities: Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film and Art* edited by Denise K. Cummings. 3) "*Smoke Signals* as Equipment for Living" by

Jennifer Meness (pp94-112) in *American Indians and the Mass Media* edited by Meta G. Carstarphen and John P. Sanchez. 4) “Mediating the Native Gaze: The American Indian Youth’s Cinematic Presence in Chris Eyre’s Films” by Ludmila Martanovschi (pp145-161) in *Mediating Indianess* edited by Cathy Covell Waegner.

- 4) Documentary: *Reel Injun* (2009) directed by Neil Diamond, Catherine Bainbridge, and Jeremiah Hayes.

*Films are available on reserve at the library, but we will also screen some sections of the films during class hours. Please consult the syllabus for screening dates and times.

Online resources

MOODLE will include lots of links to different media sources pertaining to the major themes of this course. The following may also be helpful as you plan and conduct research for your final paper.

“Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs” <http://www.goia.wa.gov/Tribal-Information/Map.htm>

“Indians of the Midwest, Past and Present” <http://publications.newberry.org/indiansofthemidwest/>

“National Museum of the American Indian” <http://www.nmai.si.edu/>

“National Congress of American Indians” <http://www.ncai.org/>

Course Content Note

At times this semester we will be discussing historical events that may be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students. If you ever feel the need to step outside during one of these discussions, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may always do so without academic penalty. (You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually.)

If you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to this material, either with the class or with me afterwards, I welcome such discussion as an appropriate part of our coursework.

Expectations, Requirements, & Assessment

1. Participation: All students are expected to take notes on the core texts as you read and to be prepared to actively participate in our weekly discussions. For units 1, 2, 3, and 4 please prepare approx. 1-2 discussion questions that we will use as a class in order to critically analyze the reading. You will find that our MOODLE site has discussion post areas for these weeks. Each forum includes specific reminders about how many questions to post and what you should be writing in response to in order to prepare for our next class meeting. The dates for these posts refer to the class meeting for which that reading and post is DUE. However, since we will meet every Monday and Wednesday morning you will need to post your discussion questions BEFORE these class meetings. For example, for the readings due Monday you can post any time before 10 pm on Sunday whereas for our Wednesday classes you will need to plan ahead in order to post any time before 10 pm on Tuesday. Since all of these required posts are already on MOODLE please plan accordingly in order to complete the reading with time allowed for thinking about and crafting your discussion questions via MOODLE.

Additionally, students are expected to be prepared and prompt for every class, and be present in class unless they have extenuating circumstances and have communicated with me beforehand. Perhaps this absence policy seems strict, but since I plan on attending every class I do hope that everyone will be able to do the same. Of course, people get sick and other things happen. All I ask is for you to communicate with me in person or via email or phone as soon as possible. Also, since this is not a lecture course but run more like a seminar it is important that students actively participate in discussion, both in terms of speaking and taking notes, and in listening to one another. In addition, this will primarily be a “screen free” classroom, so please have cell phones turned off and do not use laptops or touch pads, etc., unless we have agreed upon this for special circumstances. **Class participation is worth 30% of your final grade.**

2. Current Events Wiki: This is primarily a history class, although we will read a more contemporary memoir. In addition to the assigned readings students are also asked to spend time each week keeping up to date on current events in “Indian Country.” In other words, please devote time to reading articles from either or both *Indian Country Today* (available online at: <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/>) and/or *Indian Country News* (available at: <http://www.indiancountrynews.com/>). Both these news outlets will give you easy access to current stories written by and about Native people in the U.S. and rest of the world. In addition, we will have a course wiki where students will post an update or synopsis regarding some of the more relevant, unexpected, or especially engaging news stories that they read about during the week. There will be 9 required wiki entries over the course of the semester, but you are welcome to write more. If possible try to draw connections between what you are reading online and the material that we are discussing in class. I *may* also use information from your wiki posts for discussion prompts and other in-class assignments. The main aims of this class wiki is to enable us to work collaboratively and creatively as we analyze news from Indian Country and attempt to put what we are learning about the present in relation to the past. **Wiki entries will count toward your class participation grade.**

3. Response paper: Each student will submit a 5 page typed, double-spaced, response paper based on a book of their choice from the Kim-Wait/Eisenberg Native American Literature collection. Papers may articulate the author’s main argument, methodology, use of evidence, and your own

engagement with the text. Do you agree with his/her main points? How does this reading contribute to Native American Studies as a field and your knowledge of the course material thus far? Papers might also have a thesis that focuses on a topic or issue raised by this text that you would imagine pursuing in greater depth later in the semester while researching your final paper. These papers should be well-organized and thoughtfully written. Please take advantage of the writing center staff as needed to refine your prose and feel free to meet with me prior to submitting the final draft of your paper. A rough draft of the paper is due (via email) **by 8pm Friday March 3** to me & a fellow classmate for feedback. A final draft of the paper is due to me via email by **8pm on Friday March 10. This paper is worth 20% of your final grade. Please note that this assignment will be graded in lieu of a midterm exam.**

4. Research Paper: All students will be required to work on a research project over the course of the semester. However, you will begin thinking about and working towards your research topic with the start of the semester. As we read each book and you post discussion questions consider whether there are issues that merit deeper examination. Are researchable questions emerging as you read, write, and speak about these texts for our class? In addition, students will choose one book from the Kim-Wait/Eisenberg Collection of Native American History and Literature books at the College to read and report on to the class. Based on reading this book you will begin to identify research questions, issues, and debates that they will develop into a more focused proposal. After handing in the final paper proposal assignment to me and Missy Roser students will work in a library session to begin researching their topic. Over the final weeks of the term students will continue doing research on a past or present issue as they strive to answer their research question(s) that arose out of the reading they chose from the KWE collection. More detailed instructions for this project will be given out during the second week of class. Again, please take advantage of my office hours in order to meet with me regarding any stage in your process of researching and writing this final paper. I encourage (and anticipate) you to write an outline and rough draft, which you share with me prior to handing in your final paper at the end of the semester. You are also encouraged to utilize the College Writing Center to get help on any stage of this paper. **This project is worth 40% of your final grade and includes the project description assignment.** Final Papers are due **May 11** during exam week.

5. Student Presentations: During our two final class meetings—each student will give a well-organized (brief, 5 minute) overview of his/her research project. You will present: what question(s) drives your research? What methods are you using and why? What are the sources that you have consulted and what is a poignant example of something you have learned that will greatly contribute to the shape of your argument? What more will you need to do to complete the final paper? Students will be equally responsible for being engaged audience members for each other's presentations, offering written and verbal feedback to assist one another in moving forward in the research and writing process needed to complete the final paper assignment.

Presentations will be graded and are worth 10% of your final grade

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Class Schedule & Activities

History & Narrative: Moving from Stereotype to Expectation

Week 1

Monday First Day of class (Jan 23)

- a) Introductions & overview of the syllabus
- b) Discussion: Indian as a “Keyword” by Robert Warrior in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (2007) and Avatar-Pocahontas “mash-up.”
- c) Paired Reading & discussion: “The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Women in American Culture” by Rayna Green

→For Thursday please read the Introduction to Deloria’s *Indians in Unexpected Places* and bring in a discussion question to share with the class. It’s not a long introduction but you should read it closely and carefully.

Wednesday *Indians in Unexpected Places* Introduction & Setting ground-rules for discussion (Jan 25)

- a) Pairs report: share questions and thoughts in response to Green’s article
- b) Class Activity: Practicing material culture analysis
- c) Discussion: Phil Deloria’s Introduction. Consider: what theories and methods does he draw upon and why? What “keywords” does he use and what can we do with these? What is the aim of this book in terms of Native American Studies and beyond? What makes a good discussion question?
- d) Class Wiki assignment introduced and discussed

Week 2

Monday Narratives concerning violence (Jan 30)

Everyone reads and posts 1-2 discussion questions on MOODLE in response to the Chapter 1 “Violence” chapter from Deloria

Wednesday Indians and the American imagination (Feb 1)

Chapter 2 “Representation” in Deloria

→Wiki entry #1 due: Friday Feb 3

Week 3

Mon: (Feb 6)

Indians and Sports “Athletics” in Deloria & Modes of seeing Indians in *Unexpected Places*
“Technology” in Deloria

Wed: (Feb 8)
The Sound of Indian “Music” & Conclusion in Deloria

→Wiki entry #2 due: Friday Feb 10

Week 4

Mon (Feb 13)
Class meeting in College Archives & Special Collections to work with **Mike Kelly** and materials from the Kim-Wait/Pablo Eisenberg Collection of Native American History and Literature books. Choose your book and begin researching the author, publisher, audience, etc.

Gender and the Law in Indian Country

Wed (Feb 15)
Piatote, *Domestic Subjects* Reading: Introduction and Chapter 1 “Entangled Love”

→Wiki entry #3 due: Friday 17

Week 5

Mon (Feb 20)
Piatote, *Domestic Subjects* Reading due: “Unnatural Children”

Wed (Feb 22)
Piatote, *Domestic Subjects* Reading due: “Preoccupations”

→ **Friday Feb 24:** Please email a possible research paper topic, described in a paragraph and including researchable questions and a description of possible sources **to Missy Roser and Prof. Vigil by 8pm**

Week 6

Mon (Feb 27)
Piatote, *Domestic Subjects* Reading: “The Long Arm of *Lone Wolf*” & Conclusion

Wed (Mar 1): Class meets in Frost Library for Research Session with **Missy Roser**

→ **Rough Drafts of KWE response papers are due via email to Prof. Vigil by 8pm Friday March 3**

A History of “Urban” Indians – Reimagining Indian Country

Week 7

Mon (Mar 6)

Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*-Intro, Chapters 1, 2, & 3

Mon (Mar 8)

Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country* – Chapters 4, 5, 6 & Conclusion

→**Friday Mar 10 Final Drafts of KWE response papers are due via email to Prof. Vigil by 8pm**

Spring Recess March 12-19, 2017

“Rez Life”: A Contemporary Portrait of Native America

Week 8

Mon (Mar 20)

Rez Life, chapters Introduction and chapter 2 (pp1-110) David Treurer

Wed (Mar 22)

Treurer, *Rez Life* Reading: Chapters 3 & 4 (pp113-212)

→**Wiki Entry #4 due: Friday March 24**

Week 9

Mon (Mar 27)

Treurer, *Rez Life* Reading: Chapters 5 & 6, plus Eulogies (pp213-319)

Wed (Mar 29)

Writing & Research Workshop: Bring in a “rough draft” of your Final Paper and what you’ve found so far, in terms of research, regarding your final research topic. ***Tutor** from the Writing Center will facilitate

Native Americans & Film

Week 10

Mon (April 3)

Raheja. *Reservation Reelism* -Intro & Chapter 1

Wed (Apr 5)

Raheja. *Reservation Reelism* -Chapter 2 & Chapter 3

→**Wiki entry #5 due: Friday April 7**

Week 11

Mon (Apr 10)

Raheja *Reservation Reelism*: Chapter 4 & 5 and epilogue

Wed (Apr 12)

Discussion: *The Searchers* and associated readings

→ **Wiki entry #6 due: Friday April 14**

Week 12

Mon (Apr 17)

Discussion: *Dances with Wolves* and associated readings

Wed (Apr 19)

Discussion: *Smoke Signals* and associated readings

→ **FINAL Wiki entry #7 due: Friday April 21**

Week 13 -Last week of classes

Mon (Apr 24) Tues: *Reel Injun* Discussion

Wed (Apr 26) Our last class: Student presentations—status report on your research paper* & course wrap up.

After our last class please complete course evaluations using the online form.

*Remember your presentation CANNOT be over 5 minutes long (which is approximately 2.5 pages typed, double-spaced).

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Research as an iterative process: Lots of reading, writing, and reflection

1. Readings and Discussion Questions:

As you read I want you to say “yes” 3 times before you say no to any text assigned for this class. 1st: say yes to reading the text fully and thoughtfully. Take notes! Keep track of your thinking in response to the reading. 2nd: be able to articulate the author’s argument. And 3rd: be able to discuss the usefulness and importance of the author’s argument, and what we can do with this, how does this text contribute to or challenge our understanding of American history and culture? Finally, for each of the core texts you’ll be required to post discussion questions in response to the readings IN ADVANCE of our class meeting to demonstrate your intellectual engagement with the text and to push our discussion forward. In other words, these discussion questions will be one arena in which you begin to *practice* identifying *researchable questions* in preparation for your final paper.

2. Choosing your book from the KWE collection

Working closely with Mike Kelly, head of Archives & Special Collections at Amherst, you will choose a text from this Native Literature and History book collection that you’ll read and write a response paper about. This book can be fiction or non-fiction and from any time period. Think carefully about the book you choose, since you will not only write about it but also mine this text for insights into major themes and possible questions that you will use as the genesis for your research project.

3. Writing a response paper on your KWE book

Your response paper will enable you to practice close reading skills and to put this book in conversation with the others that we have read as well as the wider print culture history of indigenous authors from the Americas. In addition, you’ll do research about the author, the publisher, and the ways this particular work has contributed to shaping American history and culture. By reading and writing about this book in this in-depth way you’ll be able to begin to develop an interest in broader topics and issues related to Native American history. Based on these interests you will begin to identify a question (or two) that are worthy of deeper inquiry: research!

4. Class workshop on your KWE book

Working in small groups students will offer peer editing and revision advice to one another in an effort to improve their writing AND as a means for investigating the major claims that the authors of their KWE book have made. As a whole class we’ll discuss the main themes and issues present in these different texts in order to identify researchable questions that can be used as a step in the work for your final research paper assignment.

5. Paper proposal
Following the workshop session and completion of a revised final response paper on your KWE book students will craft an original research proposal (or plan) that identifies the key questions and issues they want to research for their final paper.
6. Library Research Session
With help from Missy Roser students will begin doing research based on the question and topic they identified in their initial proposal. They will also be introduced to tools like zotero (for building a bibliography) and a range of pertinent databases.
7. Last two classes: Student presentations on “the state of your research”
By preparing a formal oral presentation students will evaluate what they have learned thus far by conducting your research. They will be able to articulate their methodology and also point to what more they will need to do (and learn!) in order to complete the final paper assignment. This is yet another necessary step in the research process.
8. Final research papers are due: Dec 18
Following the presentation, and based on the written and verbal feedback offered by classmates and the professor, students will move forward in their research. In addition to research students will continue working with each other, the professor, and writing center staff members to fine-tune their prose as they draft and revise their final papers.

Important Deadlines to keep in mind throughout the semester

Monday February 13: Class meets in the Archives & Special Collections (lower level of Frost Library) for an introduction to the Kim-Wait/Pablo Eisenberg Native American Literature Collection by Mike Kelly

Friday March 3: Rough (first) drafts of your KWE response papers are due to Prof. Vigil and one fellow classmate via email by 8pm. You should send each other feedback by Sunday March 5.

Friday March 10: Final KWE response paper are due to me via email at: kvigil@amherst.edu by 8pm.

Friday February 24: Final Research Paper Proposal due. This will be graded as one component of your final project. For more read below

- Please send me, via email, a detailed description of what you would like to write about for your final project. Of the utmost importance is the story of how you came to your researchable question. Be able to identify how the book you read from the KWE collection prompted you to identify a critical issue and question relevant to Native American history and/or Literature that you plan on using as the basis for your final research paper. Please be sure to cc Missy Roser at: mroser@amherst.edu (our library liaison). Missy needs to receive proposals in order to plan our library research session. Your proposal should include some ideas for archival (primary) and secondary sources, and be typed, double-spaced, and one to

two pages in length. Additionally, please include a proposed plan of action: what will you do first and why?

- The purpose of this assignment is to 1) get you thinking about and planning towards how to complete your final project and 2) to give me a sense of what everyone will be working on so that I can offer suggestions in terms of sources, approaches, etc. 3) to enable Missy and I to support the research and writing process and give each of you a sense of how to best use the remaining weeks of the semester to complete a draft of the project well before the final deadline.

Wednesday March 1: Library Research Session

Wednesday March 29: Rough drafts (a complete paper, if not fully polished and refined in terms of writing) due for in-class peer editing and revision workshop and class discussion for how the main issues and themes of your book may lead you to researchable questions for your final paper. This workshop will be facilitated by a professional tutor from Amherst College's Writing Center.

Wednesday April 26: Students give brief (5 min) but formal presentations about their research projects to report on the "state of their research." Classmates will offer feedback on the presentations to assist each other in completing the final paper.

Thursday May 11: By **12pm** please upload an electronic copy of your final paper to our Moodle site. Be sure you have included a bibliography that is properly formatted (Chicago Manual of Style or MLA formats are both acceptable) and that you are consistent with whatever citation method you choose to use.

Please be sure you have read and understood the Academic Regulations of Amherst College that pertain to the Code of Conduct which is available here: <https://www.amherst.edu/offices/student-affairs/community-standards/student-code-of-conduct>.

TAKE NOTE:

By taking this class you are on your way to earning a Five Colleges Certificate in Native American & Indigenous Studies!

Visit these websites for more information (or ask me) about the undergraduate certificate program across the Five Colleges.

UMass: <http://www.umass.edu/nativestudies/Undergraduate%20Program.html>

Five Colleges: <https://www.fivecolleges.edu/natam/certificate>

Readings and deadlines on this syllabus are subject to change as deemed necessary by the instructor and in consultation with students