

COMM 400: Native Speakers: Communication and Indigenous Peoples

Fall, 2018

Instructors:

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Course Description

The master narrative of European colonialism described indigenous peoples as uncivilized relics—"noble savages"—with only two choices: become civilized and assimilate into Western society or die off. Either way, the ending was the same: the disappearance of native peoples, who, in the United States, were called the "vanishing Americans."

Native peoples, however, have had other plans. Theirs is a history of pride, determination, and survival in the face of often brutal oppression, even genocide. They are still here.

This course examines the both the legacy of oppression and indigenous responses, from European settlement to the present. We will concentrate on the forms of communication that enable and justify oppression as well as the forms and strategies through which native peoples resist and assert their independence and rights. While focusing on the United States, we also will consider indigenous peoples in countries across the globe, including Canada, South America, and Australia.

Although these categories overlap, the course will consist of three basic units, covering indigenous peoples' struggles in (a) politics, (b) society, and (c) culture. The first unit will examine indigenous peoples' experiences with governmental authority, from treaty-making during European settlement to laws that removed tribes to reservations and forced assimilation, to native resistance movements, such as the "Red Power" movement of the mid-20th century and contemporary causes, such as #NODAPL and tribal efforts to protect the Amazon. The second unit will focus on the social context; we will discuss topics ranging from the boarding school experience of native children to Indian casinos, to sports mascots, to Truth and Reconciliation commissions. Finally, focusing on the central experience of cultural genocide, the third unit will consider the ways in which indigenous peoples have been represented, and have represented themselves, in a variety of cultural forms from film to fiction, art to advertising, memorials to museums. Throughout, the course will emphasize their rhetoric's capacity to empower indigenous peoples.

Readings

Ernest Stromberg, Ed. (2006). *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance: Word Medicine, Word Magic*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Casey Ryan Kelly and Jason Edward Black, Eds. (2018). *Decolonizing Public Address: American Indian Rhetoric and the Struggle for Self-Determination*. New York: Peter Lang.

Other materials as assigned.

For further information, contact Dr. Lake at rlake@usc.edu