

Fall 2021

COMM 400

Decolonizing Communication: Indigenous Voices and Activism

#20616R Monday/Wednesday 12:00-1:50

Professor: Dr. Randy Lake

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Hours: TBA

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E-mail: rlake@usc.edu (This is the most efficient way to reach me. I check my email regularly during the weekday, when I am in the office. However, weekends and evenings are much more sporadic so, if you email me at these times, please do not expect an immediate reply. Because improper email format is unprofessional, inappropriate, and communicates a poor image of its sender, please use proper grammar, letter format, and “netiquette” when communicating with me.)

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.

This course examines indigenous peoples’ struggles in three overlapping contexts: politics, society, and culture. We 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 indigenous efforts to protect the Amazon. We will consider social issues ranging from the boarding school experiences of native children to Indian casinos, to sports mascots, to Truth and Reconciliation commissions. Finally, focusing on the central experience of cultural genocide, we 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.

Objective

To learn about colonialism in a variety of contexts and indigenous peoples' rhetorical efforts to resist and overcome. Student progress relative to this objective will be assessed via the methods and tools described under "Assignments."

Required Texts

- 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.
- Daniel M. Cobb. (2003). *Say We Are Nations: Documents of Politics and Protest in Indigenous America since 1887*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P.
- Other materials as assigned

Assignments

- Indigenous Media Analysis: A modest (4-5 pp.) paper that discusses news coverage in an indigenous media outlet (radio, magazine, newspaper, website, blog, social media account, etc.), and compares it to dominant media coverage (125 points; 12.5%)
- Rhetorical Analysis: A modest (4-5 pp.) paper that employs Bitzer's concept of the "rhetorical situation" to analyze one of the texts in the Cobb textbook (or, with approval, another primary native voice) (125 points; 12.5%)
- Course Paper/Project/Performance: May take a variety of forms but should focus on efforts to advance native interests and uplift indigenous communities; may be completed individually or in a group (250 points; 25%)
- Journal: Brief written responses to the week's topic/materials (150 points; 15%; 10 @ 15 points ea.)
- Group Discussion: Your task is to become expert on one session's readings and then lead class discussion. You might divide up the class into small groups and assign each group questions to work on or show some media samples and have the class analyze them using the ideas from the readings, or anything else that will get the class thinking and talking about the readings. You must turn in a one-page summary to Blackboard, providing three key ideas from the readings and five questions for class discussion. Hopefully, this will be done in teams; once enrollment stabilizes, we'll work out arrangements and dates. (125 points; 12.5%)
- Final Exam (comprehensive; 150 points; 15%)
- Homework/Participation: Includes contributions in class, any reports that may be assigned, and any unannounced quizzes that may be given during the semester. The quality of your contributions is more important than the quantity. (75 points; 7.5%)

Grading Policy

All assignments must be the student's original work and cannot have been used previously or concurrently in any other course. All assignments must be attempted and turned in to pass the course. 1000 total points can be earned in the class. Points will be given for each assignment, in the assumption that 90-100% of the points possible are comparable to an A; 80-89% are comparable to a B; 70-79% are comparable to a C; 60-69% are comparable to a D; and less than 60% are comparable to an F. In addition, points in the upper third of each range are comparable to a plus (+), while points in the lower third are comparable to a minus, indicating relatively stronger or weaker work. Final course grades will be calculated by

summing total points earned and converting to a letter grade; conversion may employ the same curve (900-1000 = A, 800-899 = B, 700-799 = C, 600-699 = D, with appropriate pluses and minuses), but the instructor reserves the right to employ a different curve.

Points are assigned by applying the following criteria to the work being judged. My assumption is that each grade subsumes the requirements for the grade(s) below it, e.g., that B work meets and exceeds the requirements for C work, as follows:

- “A” signifies superior work that demonstrates original insight into the theories and materials presented in class, the application of these theories and materials, and comparisons among these theories and materials; an unusually clear and comprehensive understanding of course materials; and an articulate, polished, and correct communication style. This grade is difficult to achieve; it requires superior study habits and writing skills, and superior performance on all assignments and in attendance and participation.
- “B” signifies excellent work that demonstrates a better-than-average comprehension of the course material, as evidenced by greater detail and thoroughness in exposition, and by organized and solid, if flawed, writing or speaking. Even average students often can achieve this grade through hard work, such as utilizing a study group effectively, making a point in class of seeking clarification of difficult ideas or ideas they don’t understand, conferring with the instructor during office hours, writing and revising multiple drafts of papers, and so on.
- “C” signifies adequate work and is considered to be average. It is given for work that demonstrates a basic familiarity and understanding of the course materials, as evidenced by an ability to summarize main points correctly, to identify key figures and main ideas from memory on examinations, and to convey understanding in basic, readable prose. This grade should be achievable by any student with decent study habits and good time management skills.
- “D” signifies deficient work that demonstrates an inadequate grasp of the course materials, as evidenced by unfamiliarity with, confusion about, or misunderstanding of key ideas, persons, and events on examinations, and hastily and poorly written assignments. This grade is often a sign of inadequate study or application, and also may be a sign of a problem in attendance or participation that contributes to inadequate study.
- “F” signifies failing work that demonstrates an unacceptably poor familiarity with or grasp of the course materials, as evidenced by an inability to identify even basic ideas, person, and events on examinations and seriously deficient writing. This grade may indicate an unacceptable lack of participation in the class, such as excessive absences would produce. This grade may be assigned to any work that fails to meet the stated requirements of the assignment, no matter how well done this work otherwise might be. This grade will be assigned to any work that violates the academic integrity standards and policies of the School or University. A grade of “F” in any part of the course should be taken as a sign of a problem in need of remedy.

Please bring any grade discrepancies (e.g., you were not given credit for a correct answer on an examination question) to my attention immediately. In the event of a grade disagreement (e.g., you believe that your answer should be counted as correct, or that you deserve a higher grade on an assignment), please: (a) wait 24 hours; and (b) submit your

complaint/rationale to me in writing. Only those who submit an acceptable written justification will receive credit where credit is due.

Participation and Attendance

This class emphasizes collaborative learning, in which we jointly ask questions of the material and each other and explore possible answers. Lectures will be the exception rather than the rule, may not cover all important aspects of the readings, and may cover materials not in the readings. Thus, it is very important that you be present and prepared to participate appropriately in each class not only as a discussant but also as an audience for others. Also, because some of the issues we'll cover are controversial, we undoubtedly will encounter disagreement. Disagreement need not—and should not—be disagreeable. The best policy is to always T.H.I.N.K. before you speak by ensuring that your comment is: Thoughtful, Helpful, Interesting, Necessary, Kind.

Roll will be taken in every class. More than two absences for any reason may affect your course grade adversely, as much as 50 points per absence, which could even cause you to fail the course.

Arriving late, leaving early, and other activities not conducive to learning—such as turning off a ringing cell phone or leaving the room to answer it—are extremely disruptive, and you may be considered absent that day.

Technology: “Topless,” or “Off the Grid”

Some time ago, the [Wall Street Journal](#) reported, “In Silicon Valley itself . . . some companies have installed the ‘topless’ meeting—in which not only laptops but iPhones and other tools are banned—to combat a new problem: ‘continuous partial attention.’ With a device close by, attendees at workplace meetings simply cannot keep their focus on the speaker. It’s too easy to check email, stock quotes and Facebook. While a quick log-on may seem, to the user, a harmless break, others in the room receive it as a silent dismissal. It announces: ‘I’m not interested.’ So the tools must now remain at the door.” Research supports this policy, including a study called [“Why you should take notes by hand – not on a laptop”](#); a *New Yorker* piece called [“The Case for Banning Laptops in the Classroom”](#); and the studies of the late Stanford professor (and USC Annenberg graduate) Cliff Nass, demonstrating the dangers of multitasking (summarized in a [NPR segment](#)). Or, read Nicolas Carr’s piece in the *Wall Street Journal* last year called [“How Smartphones Hijack Our Minds: Research suggests that as the brain grows dependent on phone technology, the intellect weakens.”](#) The *Los Angeles Times* published a similar article on this “off the grid” policy in 2015. Most recently, and even more importantly, a [new \(July 2018\) study](#) in *Educational Psychology* reveals that technology use during class is detrimental to long-term retention (as measured by lower exam scores), not only among users but among all students. Hence, like smoking, using technology harms not only you but, second hand, those around you.

Accordingly, no electronic devices, including laptops, tablets, and phones, are allowed in class at any time except as an accommodation for a registered disability, or otherwise approved by me. There will be times when we will want to use them, so please bring them to class but also turn them off before class. You can expect to be called out publicly for violating this policy not because your instructors are unreasonable, unhip dudes but because the policy is in your own best interest.

Academic Integrity

The Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism is committed to upholding the University's academic integrity code as detailed in the SCampus guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the academic integrity code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor.

If you have any doubts about what is and is not an academic integrity violation, please check with me. The University presumes that you are familiar with its standards and policies; should you be found to have committed a violation, ignorance of these standards and policies will not be accepted as an excuse.

University Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.

equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations.

dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu

Daily Schedule

This schedule is tentative and dependent on a number of considerations; some revisions undoubtedly will be necessary as we proceed.

Week 1

Monday: Introduction to the Course

Section 1: Colonialism and Decolonization

Wednesday: Introduction

- Read Zinn, “Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress”
- Read Cook, “Columbus Day: American Holocaust and Slave Trader” (<http://www.americanindiansource.com/columbusday.html>)

Week 2

Monday: Historical Context: Removal

- Read Zinn, “As Long as Grass Grows or Water Runs”
- Read Black, *American Indians and the Rhetoric of Removal and Allotment*, Chs. 2-3

DUE Journal #1

Wednesday: Historical Context: Allotment

- Read Black, “Remembrances of Removal: Native Resistance to Allotment and the Unmasking of Paternal Benevolence”

Week 3

Monday: NO CLASS

DUE Indigenous Media Sources

Section 2: Los Angeles/California

Wednesday: Indigenous LA

- Watch *Smoke That Travels* (<https://vimeo.com/189570347>)
- Browse “Mapping Indigenous LA” (<https://mila.ss.ucla.edu/>) and explore the three “Story Maps”

DUE Journal #2

Week 4

Monday: Missions of California

- Read “Pre-Mission History of Tataviam” (<http://www.tataviam-nsn.us/heritage/history/pre-mission/>), “Social and Political History” (<http://www.tataviam-nsn.us/heritage/history/social-and-political/>) and “Historical Timeline” (<http://www.tataviam-nsn.us/heritage/history/historical-timeline/>).
- Read Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontier* (selections)

Wednesday: Chicana Culture

- Read “Californio” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Californio>)
- Read Arellano, “Why Do Chicanos Love the Aztecs?” (<https://www.ocweekly.com/why-do-chicanos-love-the-aztecs-6424260/>)

DUE Indigenous Media Analysis

Week 5

Monday: Indians: Real and Unreal

- Read Deloria, Jr., “Indians Today: The Real and the Unreal”
- Read Deloria, “Introduction: American Indians and American Identity”

Section 3: Stereotypes and Modern Culture

Wednesday: Hollywood Indians

- Watch *Reel Injun* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNZBpn9asng>)
- Read Kelly, “Representations of Native Americans in the Mass Media”
- Read Tavare, “Hollywood Indians” (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jay-tavare/native-american-actors_b_846930.html)

Week 6

Monday: Hollywood Indians, cont.

- Watch *The Searchers* (available to rent at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hT5km0jxg_E)
- Read Sharett, “Through a Door Darkly: A Reappraisal of John Ford’s ‘The Searchers’”
- SUGGESTED: Watch *Stagecoach* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0ATQyUTpd4;> available on Amazon Prime)

DUE Journal #3

Wednesday: Hollywood Indians, cont.

- Watch *Dances with Wolves* (available on Netflix; available to rent at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkWc4UrfyBc>)
- Read Lake, “Argumentation and Self: The Enactment of Identity in ‘Dances with Wolves’”

Week 7

Monday: NO CLASS

Wednesday: Australian Cinema

- Watch *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (available on Amazon Prime; available to rent at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNbPPVetLCw>)
- Read Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race*, “Prologue”
- Read Westmore, “Rabbit-Proof Fence: Exploring the Complexities and Horror of the Stolen Generations”

DUE Journal #4

Week 8

Monday: Hollywood Indians, redux

- Watch *Wind River* (available on Amazon Prime, Netflix; available to rent at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MXHP4UaYHY>)
- Read Blanton, “Survive or Surrender: The Rhetoric of Indigenous Land in *Hell or High Water* and *Wind River*” (Kelly & Black, Chapter 8, pp. 203-221)

Wednesday: Indigenous Cinema

- Watch *Smoke Signals* (available on Amazon Prime; available to rent at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYiiPQsJGVk>)
- Read Gilroy, “Another Fine Example of the Oral Tradition? Identification and Subversion in Sherman Alexie’s *Smoke Signals*”

Week 9

Monday: Mascots R Not Us

- Read Black, “The ‘Mascotting’ of Native America: Construction, Commodity, and Assimilation”
- Watch “Four Perspectives: Native American Mascots” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPRHh7HIYT4>) (BE SURE ALSO TO READ COMMENTS POSTED)
- Read Endres, “American Indian Permission for Mascots: Resistance or Complicity Within Rhetorical Colonialism?”
- Browse the “Utes Nickname Project” website (<https://institute.communication.utah.edu/projects/utesnicknameproject.php>)

DUE Journal #5

Wednesday: Food Decolonization

- Read Alvarez, “Colonization, Food, and the Practice of Eating” (<http://www.foodispower.org/colonization-food-and-the-practice-of-eating/>)
- Read Sullivan, “Native American Chefs Gather in New York City to Rewrite Thanksgiving History” (<https://www.vogue.com/article/native-american-indigenous-chefs-cooking-new-york-dimes>)
- Browse the I-Collective website (<https://www.icollectiveinc.org/>)
- Watch “North America’s Original Cuisine-Foodways with Jessica Sanchez, Episode 8” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAvPUBS3EFg&feature=youtu.be>)

DUE Journal #6

Week 10

Monday: NO CLASS

Wednesday: NO CLASS

Section 4: Indigenous Issues and Responses

Week 11

Monday: Life on the Rez

- Read Aaron & Guera, *Scalped*, #1-3
- Read Phippen, “The Suicide Emergency Among Canada’s First Nations” (<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/04/canada-suicide/477684/>)
- Watch both videos at “Honor the Treaties” (<https://sacredecology.com/honor-the-treaties/>)

DUE Film Analysis

Wednesday: Boarding School Blues

- Read/explore “Unspoken: America’s Native American Boarding Schools” (<https://www.kued.org/whatson/kued-local-productions/unspoken-americas-native-american-boarding-schools>); be sure to watch “Part 1: Origin of the Boarding Schools”
- Read Robertson & Henderson, “Ends/Begins” [Book 3 of *7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga*, pp. 67-96]
- Read *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, pp. 1-27, 92-112

Week 12

Monday: Education and Cultural Genocide

- Watch “Gord Downie’s ‘The Secret Path’” (<https://secretpath.ca/#Film>)
- Read Robertson & Henderson, “The Pact” [Book 4 of *7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga*, pp. 99-128]
- Read Morris, “Educating Savages”

DUE Journal #7

Wednesday: Boarding Schools, Truth, and Reconciliation

- Read/explore the *Witness Blanket* (<http://witnessblanket.ca/>)
- Read Lake, Hiebert, & Robbins, “Decolonizing Reconciliation: Art and Conciliation from the Ground Up Among Canadian Aboriginal Peoples” (Kelly & Black, Chapter 1, pp. 27-47)

Week 13

Monday: Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women

- Read Saramo, “Unsettling Spaces: Grassroots Responses to Canada’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women During the Harper Government Years”
- Read Clift, “Why Are So Many Native American Women Abused, Missing and Murdered?” (<https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/2/7/1833163/-Why-Are-So-Many-Native-American-Women-Abused-Missing-and-Murdered>)
- Read Robertson & Chomichuk, “Will I See?”

DUE Journal #8

Wednesday: Direct Action I

- Read Sanchez & Stuckey, “The Rhetoric of American Indian Activism in the 1960s and 1970s”
- Read Lake, “Enacting Red Power: The Consummatory Function in Native American Protest Rhetoric”
- Read Indians of All Tribes, “Proclamation to the Great White Father and All His People”
- Watch “Taking Alcatraz” (Amazon Prime Video)
- Explore *American Indian Movement* (<https://www.aimovement.org/>)

Week 14

Monday: Direct Action II—Wounded Knee

- Read Lake, “Between Myth and History: Enacting Time in Native American Protest Rhetoric”
- Watch “Like Grass Before the Sickle” [from *The West*, Episode 8, “One Sky Above Us (1887-1914)”] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EdRT56WK7Q>)
- Watch “We Shall Remain - Episode 5: Wounded Knee” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Opbxnuw0Dw0>)

DUE Journal #9

Wednesday: Direct Action III—#NoDAPL

- Watch Unicorn Riot, “Black Snake Killaz: A #NoDAPL Story [2017] Full Documentary” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dWeg_jHdK0)
- Read Young, “The Rhetorical Persona of the Water Protectors: Anti-Dakota Pipeline Resistance with Mirror Shields” (Kelly & Black, Chapter 11, pp. 268-284)
- Explore “#NoDAPL Archive – Standing Rock Water Protectors” (<https://www.nodaplarchive.com/>)

Assignment: At <https://www.nodaplarchive.com/media.html>, choose three news stories from the same media source over three different weeks. Analyze whether coverage changes over time: Are protestors viewed more favorably? Less favorably? The same?

Section 5: Remembering the Past/Imagining the Future

Week 15

Monday: Memorials

- Read McGeough, Palczewski, & Lake, “Oppositional Memory Practices: U.S. Memorial Spaces as Arguments Over Public Memory”
- Watch “A Good Day to Die” [from *The West*, Episode 6, “Fight No More Forever (1874-1877)”] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60yLVrhksWk>)
- Watch “C-SPAN Cities Tour - Billings: Battle of the Little Bighorn” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2UzKRUGzJ0>)
- Browse photos in Dropbox folder “LBBNM”; there is a short (8 min.) video tour (“Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument”) of the site at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXR0cCtb008>, which may help you place the photos in relation

Wednesday: Museums

- Read Schoenberger, “What Does It Mean to Decolonize a Museum?” (<https://www.museumnext.com/2019/02/what-does-it-mean-to-decolonize-a-museum/?fbclid=IwAR3PCoP9kqMt6yy5e3kpf0b7PMgSDmLeYPBbIIdnl2TpF5VuCiSa-xUK8Ws>)
- Read King, *Legible Sovereignities*, “Introduction,” pp. 1-9; “The National Museum of the American Indian,” (Chapter 3, pp. 101-145)
- Explore NMAI website (<https://americanindian.si.edu/>)
- Watch “National Museum of the American Indian” (<https://www.c-span.org/video/?322110-1/discussion-national-museum-american-indian>)

DUE Journal #10

Week 16

Monday: Humor and Resistance

- Read Morris & Schmitt, “Indians Aren’t Funny: Native Stand-Up as Contact Zone” (Kelly & Black, Chapter 6, pp. 152-179)
- Read Deloria, “Indian Humor” (*Custer Died for Your Sins*, Chapter 7, pp. 148-168)
- Watch “Charlie Hill on the Richard Pryor Show-1977” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=545t5SvcyDo>)

Wednesday: Presentations DUE Course
Paper/Project/Performance

Final Exam