

# HIST 389 002: Introduction to Indigenous Histories of North America (Native American History)



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“You are on Indian land”  
Intervention by Bunky Echo-Hawk (Yakama Nation)  
2007

## Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the histories of Indigenous peoples in what became known as North America from the period before encounter, through the creation of the United States, and into the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. We will focus on the diversity of experiences that different communities and individuals had throughout this period (as well as in the diversity among the peoples who have become known as “Indian” and those who have become known as “Americans”).

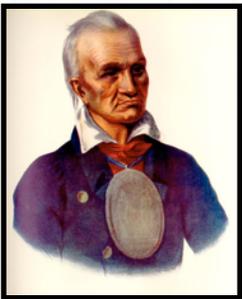
Art/Cultural Critic and all-around super-smart guy (who also happens to be Comanche), Paul Chaat Smith argues that

“no reasonably sentient person of whatever background could seriously dispute the overwhelming evidence that Indians are at the very center of everything that happened in the Western Hemisphere (which, technically speaking, is half the world) over the past five centuries, and so that experience is at the heart of the history of everyone who lives here. That sounds like hyperbole, but actually it understates things. Contact between the two disconnected halves of the world five centuries ago changed the planet and created the world we live in today, so, really, the Indian experience is at the heart of, or pretty damn close to, the history of everybody, period.”

I tend to agree, so this is the jumping off point for our class this semester.

Indigenous history is an exciting and dynamic field. In addition to examining historical events and developments, this course will also introduce students to the scholarly field by focusing attention on foundational questions and ideas as well as some of the newest and most interesting debates. Specifically, our goals for this semester are:

- 1) Develop an appreciation for the histories people here experienced prior to encountering non-Indigenous interlopers (in other words, before Columbus in 1492)
- 2) Develop an appreciation for the complexities of encounter (and all the ways encounter functioned--ecologically, epidemiologically, spiritually, legally, socially, economically)
- 3) Recognize the ways exchange, adaptation, resistance, accommodation, and survival worked within and through cultures of colonialism and imperial expansion across time
- 4) Begin to grapple with the history of United States expansion, the continuing existence of Indigenous sovereignty, and the tensions therein
- 5) Consider the philosophy and practice of “doing history”



**Required Texts**

There are four primary texts in this course. To supplement these texts we will read additional selections (articles, chapters, and documents). The additional readings, as well as the primary texts, comprise an integral component to the course and should be read thoroughly.

- LeAnne Howe, *Shellshaker* (2001)
- Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative* (2008)
- Theda Perdue and Michael Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (2008)
- Jace and Laura Weaver, *Red Clay 1835: Cherokee Removal and the Meaning of Sovereignty* (2015)

(Reacting to the Past Game Book) **On Blackboard**

- Additional Readings available for download on Blackboard

**Graded Work**

Participation	50 points	Critical Response Essay	50 points
Attendance	50 points	Reacting to the Past Essays	95 points
Book Review Assignment	40 points	Take-Home Midterm Exam	90 points
Thought Journals	25 points	In-Class Final Exam	100 points
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500 points</b>

**Exams**

The midterm exam will be a take-home exam. I will provide a writing prompt and ask that you answer the prompt as fully and completely as possible. Your response should be 2-3 pages in length. You will be required to cite your sources.

The final exam will follow an essay and short answer identification format. These questions are drawn from lecture materials and course readings. Students will receive study guides prior to the exam period.

**Book Review**

Each student will write a book review (2 full pages), of one of our readings for the semester, LeAnne Howe's *Shellshaker*.

The review should:

- 1) Identify the author of the work
- 2) Clearly and accurately summarize the author's argument/point-of-view, or the plot of the novel
- 3) Discuss the manner in which the author supports her argument, or how the plot and characters develop
- 4) Cite specific examples of the evidence used to support her argument, or important moments in the plot of the novel
- 5) Critique the book. What are its strengths and weaknesses

The review should be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1" margins, error-free.

### Attendance and Participation

Because this is a lecture/discussion course, attendance and active participation are crucial to its success. Students should not miss class without a university-recognized excuse. If students miss more than 2 total classes without excuses, they will receive an “F” for the course. Active participation is equally important, as we will learn as much from one another as we will from the course materials.

### Thought Journals

Students are required to write five, 1-2 page journal entries (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1” margins) throughout the semester. The reading journals are due on the days indicated in the syllabus. Late entries will be accepted, but will lose 20% of the grade for every day that is it overdue.

- The reading journal is designed to help you internalize and reflect on the course readings. It is also intended to help you prepare for the in-class discussion, our exams, and our critical response essays.
- The journals should address three main points:
  - 1) Important points from the reading. What specific events, facts, or ideas stood out to you. Be sure to bring an extra copy of your entries to class to facilitate our discussion.
  - 2) Questions you have about the author, his/her research or perspective, OR important quotes from the text – did the author state anything in a particularly interesting or poignant way
  - 3) Your (informed) opinion about the quality of the writing and the utility of the piece for our course.

**\*\*\*Second Thoughts\*\*\*** -- At one or two points throughout the semester I might ask you to revisit your thought journals and reflect on them in the context of our class discussion. The “second thought” will follow the same format as the original thought journal.

### Critical Response Essay --- Stories and Doing History

In this paper, I'd like you to select one of the essays we've read from *The Truth about Stories*, as well as two other readings from the first weeks of the course. Construct an essay that provides an answer to this question: What does it mean to “do” Indigenous history? Consider also, these follow-up questions: Is doing Indigenous history different from doing other kinds of history? What are the potential promises and pitfalls of this kind of work?

The paper should 500-750 words--typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1” margins, error-free.

### Reacting to the Past Hermitage Debate Assignments and Constituency Reports

During Unit Four of the course we will be playing an involved role-playing game following the “Reacting to the Past” methodology. Each of you will be assigned a role and you’ll engage with primary and secondary sources to craft speeches, letters, and other documents. Each student will be required to do 2-3 of these (and they will vary from student to student).

Additional information forthcoming.

### Approaching the Class

In order to make my expectations as clear as possible, I provide the following guidelines:

#### 1. Respect the classroom environment by respecting me and your fellow students

I consider it my duty to provide an environment that is conducive to learning for those students who are engaged and interested in learning. I therefore have the following policy: You must enter or exit the room only before the beginning of class, during the mid-class break (40/50-minutes into the session), or at the end of class. It is disruptive to have students coming and going during the session.

I really don’t *want* you to text during class. I understand that it is becoming increasingly difficult to imagine spending an entire class session without communicating with your friends (OMG r u 4 realz?!?), but I think it is impossible to text and take notes simultaneously. If you can, then by all means, please go right ahead. But if you spend all our class time texting AND simultaneously struggle with the material, I might be less than enthusiastic in my effort to provide additional assistance.

#### 2. Take responsibility for your education and for your success in this course

I consider it my job to provoke you to think in new ways about your world, and ultimately to come to your own conclusions about the questions I am raising. I do not consider it my role to provide you with all the information you need to understand the issues we are exploring. Lectures, reading and discussions are the core of the course, but you should go beyond this in discussing these issues with other students or with me in office hours, finding additional information in the library or on the web, etc. I strongly urge you to ask questions, challenge interpretations, and participate in an informed way in our discussions.

#### 3. Remember what the point of being at university is

Your work in this class and your time at the university is your chance to enhance your skills of communication, argumentation and interpretation. It is up to you to take advantage of the opportunities here by working, reading, engaging and taking responsibility for your education. Use the resources at your disposal: the professors, instructors and students in this class, but also the library and computer resources on campus, the many lectures and events, etc.

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## Tentative Schedule

### UNIT 1: DIFFERENCE AND DOING HISTORY (AND MAYBE A STRANGE LIKENESS OR TWO)

#### WEEK 1 - Introduction: The People without History?

Aug. 28: Class Introductions, Goals, and Expectations

Aug. 30: Who are we talking about? How did they get here? Where is here?

**Readings:** “You’ll Never Believe What Happened” in King, *The Truth about Stories*; “Americans without Tears” in Smith, *Everything You Know About Indians Is Wrong*; “Blazing New Trails or Burning Bridges: Native American History Comes of Age,” *Western Historical Quarterly* (9, no. 1, (Spring 2008)

#### WEEK 2 - History and “Ethnohistory”

Sept. 4: History and “Two Worlds”

Sept. 6: What is Settler Colonialism? **Thought Journal #1 DUE**

**Readings:** “Preface, Introduction, & Afterward” in Buss & Genetin-Pilawa eds., *Beyond Two Worlds*; “You’re Not the Indian I Had in Mind” in King, *The Truth about Stories*; “Teaching American History as Settler Colonialism” in Sleeper-Smith, et al., *Why You Can’t Teach United States History without American Indians*; Maya Mikdashi, “What is Settler Colonialism?”, *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37(2) (2013)

#### WEEK 3 - Stories about Place and “Place-Stories”

Sept. 11: Ethnohistory and “Beyond Two Worlds”

Sept. 13: Wisdom Sits in Places -- **Thought Journal #2 - DUE**

**Readings:** “Stalking with Stories” in Basso, *Wisdoms Sits in Places*; “Hauntings as Histories” in Thrush and Boyd, *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence*; and “What Is a Monument to Massasoit Doing in Kansas City? The Memory Work of Monuments and Place in Public Displays of History” in *Ethnohistory* 61(4)

**WEEK 4 - A Strange Likeness**

Sept. 19: Watch -- "We Shall Remain: After the Mayflower"

Sept. 20: Race and the Writing of (Hi)Stories    **Class Cancelled - Dr GP will be in Taos, NM for the Indigenous Cities Symposium**

**Readings:** "Race" and "Writing" in *Shoemaker, A Strange Likeness*; "A Million Porcupines Crying in the Dark" in *King, The Truth about Stories*

**UNIT 2: HISTORIES BEFORE "HISTORY"****WEEK 5 - Changes in the Land**

Sept. 25: Rethinking "Prehistory" -- **Critical Response Essay - DUE**

Sept. 27: The Ecological Indian and the Politics of Scholarly Debate

**Readings:** "The View from Walden" in Cronon, *Changes in the Land*; "Buffalo" in Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*; MariJo Moore, "Vine Deloria's Reaction to Sheppard Krech's book The Ecological Indian" *News from Indian Country*, May 31, 2001; Kimberly TallBear, "Shepard Krech's The Ecological Indian: One Indian's Perspective"; "Beyond The Ecological Indian" in *Native Americans and the Environment*, ed. Harkin and Lewis

**WEEK 6 - Bones, Blood, and NAGPRA**

Oct. 2: Who is Native? Who gets to decide?    **Midterm Exam distributed**

Oct. 4: Native Mascots and Why they Matter.

**Readings:** New Washington Post poll on Washington NFL team mascot; Responses; "A Road to Now" podcast, episode 5

**WEEK 7 - Rise and Fall of the "American" Bottom**

Oct. 9: **Class Cancelled - Tuesday classes do not meet due to Fall Break**

Oct. 11: Cahokia and the Shatterzone -- **Midterm Exam DUE - No class meeting, Dr G-P in Oaxaca for American Society of Ethnohistory**

**Readings:** “Made in America” in *1491*; “A Day in Cahokia, A.D. 1030” in *I Wish I'd Been There*

### UNIT 3: CONTACT AND ENCOUNTER

#### WEEK 8 - Enter Columbus

Oct. 16: “Hi. Nice to Meet You. You Know.....Or Not.”

Oct. 18: Conquest, Exchange, Adaptation -- **Thought Journal #3 - DUE - No class meeting, Dr G-P in San Antonio for the Western History Association**

**Readings:** Howe, *Shell Shaker*, 1-136

#### WEEK 9 - Contact Zones

Oct. 23: Love and Hate in Jamestown

Oct. 25: Microbes and Black Robes - Watch (and Consider) -- Black Robe -- **Thought Journal #4 - DUE**

**Readings:** Howe, *Shell Shaker*, 137-222

### UNIT 4: RED CLAY, 1835: CHEROKEE REMOVAL AND THE MEANING OF SOVEREIGNTY

#### Week 10 Reacting to the Past

Oct. 30: Game Setup and Discussion of documents

Nov. 1: Background Readings and Prep **Book Review DUE**

**Readings:** Red Clay Gamebook, pgs 43-57; Start reading Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Nation*, chap 1-5 (1<sup>st</sup> ½ of chap 5)

**Week 11 Reacting to the Past**

**Nov. 6:** Game session 2 Document discussion

**Nov. 8:** Game session 3 Document discussion (Hermitage documents)

**Readings:** For Nov. 6 Red Clay Gamebook, pgs 59-83, 132-134, 144-150, 151-153, 154-160, 161-164; For Nov. 8 pgs 84-86, 93-104, 116-124, 125-131, 135-143, 144-150, 162-164, continue reading Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Nation*, chap 1-5 (1<sup>st</sup> ½ of chap 5)

**Week 12 Reacting to the Past**

**Nov. 13:** Game session 4 Discussion of *The Cherokee Nation*, chap 1-5

**Nov. 15:** Game session 5 The Hermitage Debate Hermitage Debate Assignments DUE

**Readings:** Finish reading Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Nation*, chap 1-5 (1<sup>st</sup> ½ of chap 5)

**Week 13 Reacting to the Past**

**Nov. 20:** Game session 6 Cherokee National Council Meeting 1 1<sup>st</sup> Constituency Reports DUE

**Nov. 22:** Class Cancelled THANKSGIVING BREAK

**Readings:** Read and Prepare for Council

**Week 14 Reacting to the Past**

**Nov. 27:** Game session 7 Cherokee National Council Meeting 2

**Nov. 29:** Game session 8 Cherokee National Council Meeting 3 and Game Conclusion 2<sup>nd</sup> Constituency Reports DUE

**Readings:** Read and Prep for Council

**Week 15 Reacting to the Past**

Dec. 4: Debrief and Postmortem

Dec. 6: Watch We Shall Remain Trail of Tears - Thought Journal #5 - DUE

Readings: Finish Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Nation*

**Final Exam Tuesday, December 18, 10:30-1:15p**

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**Grading Scale:**

500-470 = A	384-365 = C
469-450 = A-	364-350 = C-
449-435 = B+	349-335 = D+
434-415 = B	334-315 = D
414-400 = B-	314-300 = D-
399-385 = C+	299-000 = F

**A Note about Academic Integrity:**

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely.

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

**A Note about Communication**

**Student privacy** is governed by the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** and is an essential aspect of any course. Email is a necessary part of life in the digital age. I will communicate with you via email throughout the semester and will use your Masonlive. I do not accept "I did not check my email" as a valid excuse. I check my email frequently and will strive always to respond to your questions and concerns as soon as possible. See <http://mason-live.gmu.edu> for more information.

**Disability Accommodations**

If you have a learning or physical difference that may affect your academic work, you will need to furnish appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will give you a form detailing appropriate accommodations for your instructor. In addition to providing your professors with the appropriate form, please take the initiative to discuss accommodation with them at the beginning of the semester and as needed during the term. Because of the range of learning differences, faculty members need to learn from you the most effective ways to assist you. If you have contacted the Office of Disability Services and are waiting to hear from a counselor, please tell me.