Contemporary Indigenous Education in North America
Faculty:
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Course Description:
In the past, formalized schooling in Indigenous communities was a tool of colonization and cultural genocide, forcing Native peoples to assimilate to western norms, values, and knowledge. However, contemporary Indigenous communities have managed to reclaim and reshape education for Native youth, utilizing innovative methods and technologies, as well as drawing upon generations of traditional and indigenous knowledges to create environments that promote academic achievement alongside culture. In this course we will focus on the ways Native communities are asserting their educational sovereignty, through cultural relevant/responsive curriculums, language immersion schools, indigenous charter schools, traditional ecological and scientific knowledges, and more.

We will also look at the experiences of Native students in western institutions of higher education, and how the skills gained in college and graduate school are contributing to nation building in communities, teacher education, and how Native peoples are utilizing social and new media to educate each other and the general public on issues close to Indian Country. While Indigenous peoples are often falsely painted as people of the past, or only highlighted in the context of ongoing struggles, this course will highlight the resilience, strength, and vibrancy of contemporary Native communities, through the lens of education.

Learning Outcomes:
By the end of the course, students will have a clearer understanding of:
- Indigenous education history and context (assimilation—self determination)
- Native educational disparities
- Indigenous research methods in education and the role of researcher positionality
- The ways Indigenous communities are reclaiming and reshaping education in numerous contexts and approaches
- The role of Indigenous knowledges in contemporary Indigenous education
- How understandings of Indigenous education reflect larger issues of colonialism, decolonization, and Native cultural revitalization.

The specific skills that students will use and develop in order to achieve these intellectual goals are:
§ Reading critically a variety of media—from books, book chapter, journal articles, blogs and websites.

§ Producing scholarship and creative work in different forms ranging from essays that require the students to both reflect on assigned reading and their lived experience, to a final research project proposal exploring an issue in Indigenous education.

§ Integrating knowledge from different disciplines in order to develop a new understanding of the educational issues in Native communities.

§ Participating in in-class and online discussions to further explore issues raised in the assigned reading.

**Credit-Hours notice:** Over 14 weeks, students will spend 2.5 hours per week in class (35 hours total). Required reading for the seminar meetings is expected to take up approximately 7 hours per week (98 hours). In addition, writing and researching response essays, course facilitation preparation, and the final project is estimated at total of approximately 40 hours over the course of the term.

Your final grade will be calculated and based on:

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points/%</th>
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<td>Attendance and participation</td>
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<td>Positionality Paper</td>
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<td>Paper #1 (w/5 pts for peer review)</td>
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<td>Final Project</td>
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**Course Requirements:**

Your final grade will be based on: attendance and participation in class discussion (25%), a positionality paper (5%), two response papers, one with peer review (35%), and the final project (35%).

**Attendance and Participation (25%):**
This course only meets once a week, and as such attendance and participation are very important. This portion of your grade will be calculated with a combination of physical attendance in class, as well as weekly posts to Canvas discussion boards.

**Attendance:**
Since our course only meets 13 times, attendance to class is of utmost importance. You must notify Professor Keene via email if you are missing class,
and while illness and other unforeseen circumstances occur, all absences should be excused with a dean’s or doctor’s note. If you miss more than one class, your grade will begin to be affected, more than two classes may put your passing the course in jeopardy.

Canvas discussion posts:
Each week, by Tuesday at Midnight, you need to post 2-3 questions/reflections about the week’s reading. Think of these as discussion starters for class the next day— In these responses, you may choose to engage a single text on its own, or draw connections between several readings. Suggested questions to guide your responses: What do you see as the most valuable contribution, thesis, or idea from this material? What aspects of the author’s findings or argument do you find especially useful, well-argued, problematic, confusing, or unconvincing? How does this connect to some of our key ideas or themes in the course?

The goal of these responses is not simply to demonstrate that you have carefully read and considered the readings with a critical eye (that is assumed) or to provide summaries. You should use them as an opportunity to share candid impressions, questions, and things that you find puzzling or contradictory. Be sure to read your classmates posts—you are welcome to respond to their questions and posts, and this will count towards your quota of 2-3 comments/questions for the day. These homework posts are not a useless exercise, but rather a way for me and your weekly facilitators to direct the class material and discussion in a way that will best serve your interests. Each week is worth 1 point of your participation grade, for 13 points total.

Positionality Paper (5%): This short paper (1-2pgs) asks you to understand your own relationship to the topic of the course, and help the instructor to better shape the content and direction of the course. What are the events and experiences in your own life that shape your understanding of Native peoples and education? How does your own identity/identities influence or intersect with your understandings? This paper will be graded C/NC.

Response Papers (35%): These papers are expected to incorporate both your own reflections and intellectual responses to the reading assigned. They are opportunities for you to use the readings as a springboard to express thoughts, grapple with ideas, and formulate intellectual reactions to the course material. Feel free to draw on and further develop some of your Canvas posts for these short essays. You may also bring in supplemental outside material where appropriate. Write this short essay as though it were a commentary for a newspaper or academic journal—don’t write as though you are speaking directly to me, but to a wider audience who may not have read these particular materials.
Each paper, which should be approximately 3-4 pages, double spaced, is due to me via email before 5:00pm on the due date:

**Essay 1:** 2/26  
**Essay 2:** 3/19

**Final Project (35%):** Due May 9th, by Midnight (Proposal for creative projects due April 11)

**OPTION 1: Research Project Proposal**

As we will come to understand through course readings, the history of research in Indigenous education has not historically been a positive one, and there is a need for more research grounded in communities and in the service of supporting Indigenous self-determination. Through this final project, you will have a chance to design a research project that brings together readings from the course, outside research, indigenous methodologies, and a pressing question in Indigenous education. In addition, the skill of designing a concise, well-developed research proposal is one that will carry through many other courses, fellowship and grant applications, and graduate school. The proposal will consist of:

- Statement of problem, including background and context  
- Conceptual framework, citing both theoretical literature and other similar cases/studies  
- Proposed research, including setting, participants, methods of data collection and analysis, your positionality  
- 8-10 pages

**OPTION 2: Resource Packet for teachers/schools/communities**

Teachers, schools or universities, and community members often express a need for clear, organized materials to help them develop curriculum, make policy changes, understand place-based contexts, or understand how to interact with local tribal communities. This final project would be working alone or in groups of up to three to develop a well-reasoned, organized packet of resources and information on a particular topic of importance to the course. The options are endless, but examples include:

- Native mascots in schools: Why they are harmful and resources on how to begin the process of change  
- Allowance of Native students to wear feathers and regalia at graduation or wear long hair despite “violations” of school dress codes  
- Place-based information: Who are the Indigenous peoples local to a particular region? What is the proper language to address the community?
What resources exist for teachers and community members to engage with the tribe(s) respectfully and correctly? Who are the tribal leaders?
- How should schools teach about Thanksgiving? What language is appropriate? Why are “feasts” with construction paper headdresses inappropriate? What books and resources are recommended for teachers?
- How can non-Native teachers better engage Native students and topics in their classrooms?
- Oh no my school did a racist thing now what: a step by step guide for addressing incidents of racism against Native peoples

A strong project would include a table of contents, will be well supported and well cited, offer research backing up claims, possibly a FAQ/Q&A format, as well as examples of previous cases with appendices (newspaper articles, court documents, etc), contact information for advocacy groups, tribal leaders and community members, scholars, and websites, books, and articles for more information.

**OPTION 3: Alternative Project**

I want the final project to be useful for students, so if you have another idea, I'm fully open to hearing about it. Last year students proposed creating a guide for new Native students navigating Brown, a research paper on the history of a Native boarding school, creating a lesson plan for a culturally grounded classroom lesson, writing a policy memo about the inclusion of local indigenous communities in schools...so the options are endless (and if you like these ideas you can use them!).

**Students choosing options 2 or 3 need to submit a 1 page proposal by April 11th with information about topic, partners (if any), and any questions or concerns.**

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE:** Wednesday, May 7, by midnight

**Classroom Policies:**

**Attendance:** You must notify me via email if you are missing class, and while illness and other unforeseen circumstances occur, all absences should be excused with a dean’s or doctor’s note. As we only meet once a week (13
times!), if you miss more than one class, your grade will begin to be affected, more than two classes may put your passing the course in jeopardy.

**Late Submissions:** All assignments have an automatic two-day grace period. On time and early papers are always encouraged and will have the professor’s fresh eyes on them, but students also have two days to turn in the paper, no questions asked. After that, an automatic one grade (A to B, B to C, etc) is dropped on the paper, and the student will need to meet with Professor Keene to work out a plan. I encourage you to plan ahead with your schedule, comparing the syllabi for your courses now, to see when you have conflicting assignments or difficult weeks. If things look impossible, please talk to me with plenty of advance notice.

**Plagiarism/Academic Honesty:** Any breach of academic integrity will not be tolerated and will be reported immediately. Infringement of the academic code entails penalties ranging from a zero on the assignment, to reprimand, suspension, dismissal, or expulsion from the University. Students should refer to the Brown Academic Code for more information: [https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/degree/policies/academic-code](https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/degree/policies/academic-code)

**Grade policy:** All grades are final, and students can track their progress throughout the semester on Canvas. There will not be any make-up or extra credit assignments offered. Incompletes may be negotiated with a dean’s assistance in extreme circumstances.

**Accessibility and Accommodations:** Students gain access to academic learning in a variety of ways. Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu. Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the deans in the Dean of the College office.

**Names and Pronouns:** If you use a different name or gender pronoun than the one under which you are officially enrolled, please inform me. Students are expected to respectfully refer to each other by correct names and pronouns during class discussions.

**A note on course readings:** All additional readings will be available via links on the syllabus or uploaded to Canvas in PDF format. In addition, all readings on the course syllabus are authored or co-authored by an Indigenous scholar or scholars unless indicated. This is a very intentional act, meant to re-center
Indigenous voices and perspectives in an educational climate where they were intentionally erased.

**Week 1 (1/24): Syllabus, Introductions, and expectations**

Who are the Indigenous Peoples of North America? What are sovereignty and self-determination and how does it affect education in Indigenous communities? This week we will focus on an overview of the communities we will be discussing over the course of the semester, including American Indian nations in the US, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, First Nations, Inuit, Metis, and more, laying out the roadmap, goals, and expectations for the course.

Readings:


**Week 2 (1/31): Historical and Current Contexts**

In order to understand the state of contemporary Native/Indigenous education, we first must understand the historical context of Native education in the US and Canada, primarily the long, painful history of government-run boarding schools (called “residential schools” in Canada). How was Western education used as a tool of assimilation/colonization? How have communities in the US and Canada continued to work toward reconciliation of this history? We will also examine the current state of education in Indian Country, looking at (and problematizing) statistics and trends on achievement, graduation, and college enrollment.

Readings:


Lomawaima, K.T. (1999). The unnatural history of American Indian Education. In "Next Steps: Research and Practice To Advance Indian Education" (Pages 2-28)


Choose 1-2 themes to read from “Survivors Speak” (findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada) (3-10 pages each): http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Survivors_Speak_2015_05_30_web_o.pdf


Explore the following websites:


Boarding School Healing Project (US): http://www.boardingschoolhealing.org/


Optional readings:

**Week 3 (2/7): Theoretical foundations**

This week we will explore several theoretical frames for the understanding of Indigenous education, including the concepts of decolonization, education as Native Nation Building, and Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education.

**Positionality Paper Due 2/5**

Readings:


"Framing the conversation" (pgs 11-29) in Brayboy, B. M. J., Fann, A. J., Castagno, A. E., & Solyom, J. A. (2012) *Postsecondary Education for American*


**Week 4 (2/14): Educational research in Indigenous Communities**

The history of research in Native communities is closely tied with imperialism and colonialism, this week we will begin to unpack the legacies of this research, and discuss how Indigenous researcher in education are re-framing the conversation and moving forward with indigenous methodologies (methods that draw upon Indigenous ontologies, values, and relationships, and work toward goals of self-determination for Indigenous peoples). We will also discuss the concept of positionality and understanding power relationships between researcher and community members.


“Walk Softly and Listen Carefully”: Building research relationships with Native communities [National Congress of American Indians]:

**Week 5 (2/21): Indigenous Knowledges in Education**

“Indigenous Knowledges” or “Indigenous Knowledge Systems” or “Traditional knowledge” refer to local, cultural knowledge that is often placed in contrast to
“western” knowledge supported by school systems in the US and Canada. This week we will also break down some of the stereotypes of Native students and learners in the classroom. These conversations will be foundational for many of our discussions of indigenous-created schooling spaces that draw upon IK/IKS/TK, especially next week with culturally relevant/grounded/sustaining pedagogies.

Readings:


**PAPER #1 DUE 2/26**

**Week 6 (2/28): Culturally relevant pedagogy/Culturally sustaining pedagogy**

“Culturally relevant,” “culturally responsive,” and “culturally grounded” pedagogies have been the focus of much research and debate in educational settings. This week we will explore what these terms mean for Indigenous communities, and how scholars tie these concepts to sovereignty and self-determination in education for Native peoples.

Readings:


Optional Readings:

Week 7 (3/7): Teacher Education
How do we educate Native and non-Native students who will teach Indigenous students? What skill sets or understandings do they need? What are challenges in this process? Why is it important to have Indigenous teachers in Indigenous communities?


“The Ya Ne Dah Ah School” and “The Two-Plus-Two-Plus-Two Program” case studies from the Honoring Nations Project at Harvard: http://hpaied.org/honoring-nations/case-studies (15pgs each)

Week 8 (3/14): STEM and Indigenous education
This week asks us to understand the ways that science and science education can be re-centered around IK/Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and challenge the ways Indigenous students are taught about their ancestors and the ways they understood the universe and natural world.


Week 9 (3/21): Culturally grounded charter schools

How do Indigenous charter schools allow for culturally based education? What are some of the challenges of fitting an Indigenous school into a western, test-score driven, standards based model? What are some of the positive outcomes of the Indigenous charter school movement in the US?


“Number of Charters on Native American Reservations Grow” (Ed Week): http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/charterschoice/2013/08/number_of_charters_on_native_american_reservations_increases.html

“How charter schools are helping tribes keep Native languages alive” (Ed Week): http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/charterschoice/2014/09/how_charter_schools_are_helping_tribes_keep_their_native_languages_alive.html?r=1980757309&preview=1


Week 10 (3/28) NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

Week 11 (4/4): Environmental Education:
(Prof Keene Presenting in Wisconsin, Greg will teach class)

How do Native communities conduct environmental education programs? How might Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing the
non-human world be incorporated? How can environmental education work towards decolonization and cultural revitalization? How might environmental education outside of Indigenous communities be more inclusive? In this class, we will examine on how Native communities engage in environmental education and cultural revitalization efforts, with a focus on Greg’s work with the Menominee Nation.

Readings:


Week 12 (4/11): Language revitalization/Immersion schools

Students Choosing Final Option #2 or #3 must submit a final project proposal by 4/11

How are Native communities using schooling as a means to revitalize Native languages through immersion and language-based curriculums? What are the challenges in this work? Can and should schools save Indigenous languages? We will watch a film outside of class this week to inform our understandings, and in class will watch several clips of adorable Native kiddos learning in their languages.

Possible Guest Speaker: Jennifer Weston from the Wópanáak Language Reclamation Project
Movie: We Still Live Here (will schedule screening times/video check out outside of class) [http://www.makepeaceproductions.com/wampfilm.html](http://www.makepeaceproductions.com/wampfilm.html)

Readings:


Optional:


**Week 13 (4/18): Higher Education**

Up until this point we have largely focused on indigenous-created spaces for education, but what are the experiences of Native students in western institutions of higher education? What are the challenges and triumphs in college, access, transition, and reintegration? In addition, we will also discuss the system of Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) throughout the US, tribally controlled and operated institutions of higher education.


**Week 14 (4/25): Graduate School Experiences**

If education can be a tool of nation building in communities, what are the experiences of and challenges faced by Native students in graduate and professional school environments where they seek to gain skills to “give back” to their communities? There is very little research on Native graduate students, so this week we will examine narratives and experiences from research as well as first-hand accounts.


Tachine, A.; Keene, A.J.; Nelson, C. “Being (In)VISIBLE: Native women navigating the doctoral process”

Blogs of Indigenous women in graduate school:

“Moontime Warrior” (Ericka Lee):
“That deadly academic silence: outspoken Indigenous students & unsettling the Canadian university” http://moontimewarrior.com/2015/08/17/that-deadly-academic-silence/

“4 the love of the people” (Renee Holt):
Read: “Late nights and early mornings of a PhD program”
https://4loveofthepeople.wordpress.com/2015/11/04/late-nights-early-mornings-of-a-phd-program/
“applied critical thinking skills”
https://4loveofthepeople.wordpress.com/2013/06/29/applied-critical-thinking-skills/

“Native Appropriations” (Dr. Keene)

FINAL PROJECTS DUE Wednesday May 7, by midnight to Canvas