American Indian Studies Program/History 546:
Writing Tribal Histories

Spring 2008

Instructor: Professor Ned Blackhawk  
Office: 5115 Humanities
Mailbox: 5115 Humanities  
Office Hrs: W 9:30-11 and by apt.
Phone: 263-2394  
Email: ncblackhawk@wisc.edu

Course Description:
American Indian history has recently become one of the most honored and prolific fields of historical inquiry. Gone are the days when Indian peoples and their histories were seen as unimportant. Indeed, far from being “peoples without history,” as traditional historians long maintained, Indians are now seen as among the most adaptive and resilient groups in American history. This course investigates such adaptation from the perspective of particular Native communities and nations. Initially surveying some of the recent literature on tribal histories, this course will subsequently encourage students to fashion their own history of a particular tribal community, nation, or extended family.

Course Readings:
Six texts are required for this course and are available at the Rainbow Bookstore. A copy of each will also be placed on College Library Reserves.

- Steven J. Crum, *The Road on Which We Came: A History of the Western Shoshone* (University of Utah Press, 1994)

Course Requirements:
Designed as a research and readings seminar, this first half of the course meets twice a week to discuss common readings. During the second half, we will meet usually once a week to report on the status of our individual student research projects. As a seminar, discussion can only work with everyone’s participation. Attendance is therefore mandatory. Unexcused absences will be noted and will result in grade devaluation.

Students will be evaluated based on the following assignments:

1) **Paper #1:** a 5-page written response to Charles Wilkinson’s *Blood Struggle* will constitute 25% of the final grade. Each book response should evaluate the text’s central
purpose and identify three (3) particular moments that you believe to be most critical to
the book’s argument. Consider analyzing the author’s primary goals, assess the relative
strengths and weaknesses of his central arguments, and analyze three relevant examples
and moments in detail. Much more than mere summation, the book response should
demonstrate sustained engagement with the text’s overall arguments and effectiveness.
For help with paper organization, argument development, and general writing assistance,
students are encouraged to use the Writing Center in 6171 Helen C. White, 263-1992.
The Writing Center organizes classes and provides one-on-one guidance and feedback.
Paper #1 is due in class on February 7th. No late or emailed papers will be accepted.

2) **Weekly Reading Responses:** Beginning on Thursday, Feb. 14th, a 500-word
reaction piece/book review of each of the remaining 5 texts will be due every Thursday
until Spring Break. These reviews must engage on some level what you believe to be the
central purpose of each text, using evidence and examples from the body of the work as a
basis for your assessment and reaction. These five reviews will be graded collectively,
will be returned after the Break, and will constitute 25% of the final grade.

3) **Research Project Formation:** Prior to the submission of the final research
project, each student is expected to produce a general bibliography and a project outline
along with a preliminary thesis statement and/or paragraph. These will not factor into the
final grade and will be marked as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory
materials will be returned and will not receive credit until improved. All students must
also meet individually with the instructor to discuss their potential research topic.

4) **Research Project and Presentation:** A final presentation of the research project
will comprise 10% of the final grade. Each presentation should be no more than 15
minutes and should provide an overview of the research process—what materials were
used, how were they identified, what problems did they present—as well as the project’s
primary findings and conclusions. Maps, photographic reproductions, and other visual
aids are encouraged. The final project of 16-20 pages will constitute the remaining course
grade, 40%. Each project should introduce and examine an aspect of the history of an
American Indian community, nation, or extended family, situating these histories within
the larger thematic currents of the course. Each research project should be double-spaced,
properly formatted and referenced [footnotes and endnotes matter!] and handed in on
time. The use of photographic, documentary, and/or oral histories is encouraged. Students
can devise alternative formats for their final projects, but all students must develop a final
research paper topic in consultation with the instructor. Alternatives to written projects
may include: websites, academic poster boards, or bounded documentary histories, in
which the documents are at the center of the narrative. Other possible selections may
include video and/or documentary projects, but they also must be approved in
consultation with the instructor. Final projects are due May 14th at 4pm.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1**
January 22: Introduction and Organization: What is Indian History?
January 24: How and Why Do We Write Indian History: Powers & Perils of the Field


Part I
The Rise of Modern Indian Nations

Week 2
January 29: Video Presentation, Selections from Smoke Signals and Skins

January 31: The Crisis of Termination Amidst the Crisis of Reservation Impoverishment

Readings: Wilkinson, Blood Struggle, ix-173

Week 3
February 5: The American Indian Movement and the Movement for American Indian Sovereignty

February 7: “Different Now But Also the Same:” Contemporary Indian History (Paper #1 due in class)

Readings: Wilkinson, Blood Struggle, 177-268, 352-381

Week 4
February 12: The Indian Nations of Wisconsin

February 14: The Indian Nations of Wisconsin (Reaction #1 due in class)

Readings: Loew, 1-126

Part II
Reservation and Regional Tribal Histories in Focus

Week 5
February 19: Where and how to Begin a Tribal History?

February 21: Western Shoshone Political History (Reaction #2 due in class)

Readings: Crum, 1-189

Week 6
February 26: No Classroom Session: Individual Group Work on McMillen
Group A, Chapters 5-6; Group B, Chapter 7; Group C, Chapter 8; Group D, Chapter 9

February 28: The Legacy of Fred Mahone, Felix Cohen, and the Hualapi Case (Reaction #3 due in class)

Readings: McMillen, xiii-183

Week 7
March 4: Native Histories in the Pacific
March 5: Scheduled Individual Meetings, 9-11am
March 6: Hawaiian Resistance and U.S. Colonialism (Reaction #4 due in class)

Readings: Silva, Aloha Betrayed

Week 8
March 11: Indians in the Early American West
March 12: Scheduled Individual Meetings, 9-11am
March 13: Implementing Federal Indian Policy

Readings: Blackhawk, 1-15, 145-293 (Reaction #5 due in class)

Part III
Formulating Tribal History Research Projects

Week 9
March 25: 546 Alumni Session: Continued Investigations into Indian history
March 26: Scheduled Individual Meetings, 9-11am
March 27: Research Topic Discussion (Bibliographies and Topics Due)

Week 10 (Move to Weekly Seminar Meetings)
April 3: Discussion of Research Strategies and Paper Organization

Week 11
April 10: Wisconsin Historical Society Tour of Wisconsin Indian History Materials

Week 12
April 17: Thesis Statement Presentation (Thesis Paragraph Due)

Weeks 13-15
April 24: Final Presentations, 1-4
April 29: Final Presentations, 5-8
May 1: Final Presentations, 9-12
May 6: Final Presentations, 13-16
May 8: Final Presentations, 17-20

Final Research Project Due, May 14th by 4pm