

**American Indian Studies Program/History 546:
Writing Tribal Histories**

Spring 2008

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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.

- Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (Norton, 2005)
- Patty Loew, *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal* (Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2001)
- Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the early American West* (Harvard University Press, 2006)
- Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Duke University Press, 2004)
- Christian McMillan, *Making Indian Law: The Hualapai Land Case and the Birth of Ethnohistory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007)
- 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 this 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

Readings: Ned Blackhawk, History Section, Native Americans of North America, *2003 Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*
http://encarta.msn.com/text_761570777___250/Native_Americans_of_North_America.html; and “Recasting the Narrative of America: The Rewards and Challenges of Teaching American Indian History,” *Journal of American History* (March 2007)
<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/93.4/blackhawk.html>

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