

History Seminar 506: 401
Inuits to Incas: Native American History Seminar
Tuesdays, 9:50- 12:50
Spring 2017

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Office hours: Mon & Thurs, 11:15-12:00

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Traditionally, Native Americans have been seen either as savage enemies or as pure and utterly powerless victims; only relatively recently have scholars made significant progress in learning to understand indigenous people as people, and in seeing their story from their point of view. You yourselves are about to become part of that great leap forward as the latest generation of historians. After spending years reading and studying the historical works of others, you will be writing history yourself. In the past, you have written most of your term papers by pulling together secondary sources and synthesizing their perspectives. In this case, you will do actual research as historians do it, searching out primary materials and assessing their import. You may have absolutely no intention of becoming a professional historian, but the skills you will hone in the course of such a project will be useful in almost any career you may choose: you will practice taking independent action in finding and choosing primary materials, and then use your critical thinking and writing skills.

Specifically, you will be using an original document or set of documents in the context of existing secondary literature to posit an answer to a specific question you formulate about the document's maker or era. There are (at least) four stages in such a project.

- 1) Narrowing your field of interest. Remember, this is *your* project. It should be interesting to you, building on areas you already know something about but stretching your mind at the same time.
- 2) Reviewing the secondary literature. This part of the work may well be familiar to you as seniors, but I will be more than happy to guide you if the task seems formidable.
- 3) Finding and evaluating at least one primary source document. Finding primary sources in Native American history is indeed difficult to do. There are, however, more than enough published primary sources available for you to work with, and there are even archival sources available locally.
- 4) Writing a series of drafts. All good published work has been through a series of drafts. Your essay will be treated as if it were going to be published. You can rewrite it as many times as you like, but you are required to submit it twice.

In the first half of the semester, we will be reading rare narratives written by Native Americans. In general, Native American history has been studied by "reading between the lines" of sources produced by Euro-Americans. In this case, we will be making a special effort to read indigenous testimonies, and I will encourage you to find similar sources for your own work. In the second

half of the semester, you will largely be working independently on your chosen project, though you must adhere to a tight sequence of deadlines and will be in constant communication with me.

REQUIRED READINGS

Craig Womack, *Drowning in Fire*
Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*
Fernando Alva Ixtlilxochitl, *The Native Conquistador*
William Apess, *A Son of the Forest*
Charles Eastman, *Indian Boyhood*
Rigoberta Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*

BASIS OF EVALUATION

Participation	50%
Research papers	50%

“Participation” grades will be based on attendance, active discussion of the readings in class, your initial short paper, seriousness of purpose, ability to meet interim deadlines, and the usefulness of your presentation of your own work and critique of your fellows’

Research paper grades will be based on the quality of your final product. Your paper should be between 20 and 30 pages.

COURSE OUTLINE

January 18

Introduction. Discussion of the major themes and the nature of our sources.

January 25

Finding common ground with our subjects
Craig Womack, *Drowning in Fire*

February 1

The Inca world
Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*

February 8

The Aztec world
Fernando Alva Ixtlilxochitl, *The Native Conquistador*

February 15

The Northeastern woodlands
William Apess, *A Son of the Forest*

February 22
The Great Plains
Charles Eastman, *Indian Boyhood*

March 1
Revolutionary testimonies of modern times
Rigoberta Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*

March 8
RESEARCH PROPOSALS due
Your proposal must include a single question, the primary source[s] you intend to use, and an annotated bibliography of relevant secondary works. You must come prepared to make a five-minute presentation about the state of your own research and to critique one other student's proposal. (I will distribute a round-robin list.) Professor will return these proposals to you with comments BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR BREAK.

SPRING BREAK

March 22
No class: professor at a conference in England. You should devote this day to continuing to research.

March 28
FIRST PAGE AND DETAILED OUTLINE due
These outlines will be workshopped with your peers.

April 4
Individual meetings with the professor (Group A). This individual consultation is mandatory, and you should be well prepared for it.

April 11
Individual meetings with the professor (Group B). As above.

April 18
FIRST DRAFT due (15 pages minimum)
You will receive feedback from the professor and from a peer editor in the class.

April 25
Last class: PRESENTATIONS due
Students will present their work to each other.

ALL FINAL DRAFTS DUE May 3 at noon by email attachment.