SOCIOLOGY 476 (Topics in Sociological Analysis)  
Indigeneity and Settler Colonialism  
Spring 2022, Tuesdays, 2:30 – 5:20 pm

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Land Acknowledgement: The Northwestern campus sits on the traditional homelands of the people of 
the Council of Three Fires, the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa as well as the Menominee, Miami and 
Ho-Chunk nations. It is still home to a vibrant and thriving Native community.

In this seminar, we examine settler colonialism as a political, social, cultural and economic formation, 
and Indigenous resistance, resilience and resurgence, focusing on the US in historical, comparative 
and global perspective.

Settler colonialism is a distinctive form of social organization, which emerges within a global context of 
empires and colonial domination of peoples of the Americas, Africa, Oceania and Asia by Europeans 
and their descendants, in which settlers “come to stay” (Veracini 2010) and seek replacement of 
indigenous peoples, rather than the extraction and transfer of wealth to the “home” country (Bacon and 
Norton 2019). It is a constituent part of modernity. As Glenn (2015) has argued: “The settler goal of 
seizing and establishing property rights over land and resources required the removal of indigenes, 
which was accomplished by various forms of direct and indirect violence, including militarized genocide. 
Settlers sought to control space, resources, and people not only by occupying land but also by 
establishing an exclusionary private property regime and coercive labor systems.”

We need increased recognition of Indigenous values, worldviews, and lifeways, as much sociological 
work omits the Indigenous perspective, and consequently sociological explanations are often ill-fitting or 
insufficient in understanding the “fourth world” of Native nations and their relations with settler societies. 
Notably, we seek to engage with analyses of inequality, power and difference that reflect the distinctive 
Indigenous experience within U.S. settler colonialism: “Native peoples were colonized and deposed of 
their territories as distinct peoples – hundreds of nations – not as a racial or ethnic group…”  
(Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, p.xiii).

The readings are multidisciplinary – covering sociology, Native studies, other social sciences and 
history, and we incorporate the works of diverse Indigenous scholars, philosophers and thought 
leaders. Topics covered include: indigenous perspectives on time, power and knowledge; key concepts 
for studying groups; overviews of the literatures on empire and colonialism and the entanglements of
social science with settler colonialism; the emergence and co-constitution of modernity, empire, settler colonialism, states and indigeneity; property, dispossession and capitalism; biopolitics, reproduction, sexuality, gender; the US as a settler colonial formation; political contestation over settler colonialism and indigenous rights; native sovereignty, representation, decolonization and Indigenous justice.

As with many aspects of social science (and life in settler colonial states generally), Indigenous perspectives have been erased, ignored, and disregarded. Calls for the decolonization of sociology as a discipline, and within the classroom, are often met with increased inclusion of diverse perspectives on syllabi and reading lists. This course challenges this view of decolonization, going beyond the inclusion of Indigenous authors and instead asking: What is Indigenous sociology? We challenge long-standing core principles and theories of social thought to explore how concepts of group, people, state, and nation are understood in the Indigenous world.

Sociology 476 is organized as a seminar, in which students are active participants in discussions of readings. Seminar discussions will constitute the heart of the course. Students will help to shape the agenda for class. Students will also decide on direction for in-class discussions by writing lead entries and replies on a class discussion/blog site on Canvas. At the beginning of class, lead bloggers will propose an agenda for discussion, to which we can add or modify. Our first order of business will be to clarify what is the argument being presented, answer questions of fact about the topic and get our definitions straight. Then we move into an evaluative phase of discussion, in which we will both appreciate and criticize the works we have read. Finally, we will try to summarize what we think about the particular topic under discussion.

**Indigenous Ways of Knowing:**

Many Native peoples believe ‘wisdom sits in places’. This means that knowledge is a manner of being -through which language is its mechanism, ‘empathy its cause’, and place its boundary. Reality is not universal, it is communal. We create reality, just as it creates us. Indigenous ways of knowing are not about what we know, but how we know. Each place has its wisdom, unique to that communal reality.

This course has been structured not only to give students a primer in critical areas of Native Studies, Sociology of Indigenous Peoples, and settler-colonialism, but to also reflect Indigenous ways of knowing. As a practical matter, this means the course will be flexible. Readings will be adjusted based on student interests, and requirements will be flexible to meet student needs. Philosophically, this means we will use the class to explore our communal creation of reality.

The general requirements are: (1) participating in class discussions; (2) writing two lead blog entries and participating in the class discussion board; and (3) writing a final paper. Course requirements offer each student the opportunity to explore the themes of the seminar with respect to their own disciplinary and research concerns.

**Course Requirements: Constitutes approximately 20% of your grade**

(1) **Participation in seminar discussions:** Regular attendance and active engagement in discussions on the part of all members of the seminar is crucial to the success of the enterprise. A core principle of Indigenous ways of knowing is that knowledge is created by groups, not individuals. Together our wisdom is more than the sum of its parts. Each week, we will discuss possible readings for the next
class, and decide on which areas we wish to focus. The list of readings is one set of possibilities, but it will change, contract, and expand, based on our communal goals. Please come into each seminar prepared to express your opinions and voice your views in acts of comradely contention with each other on all aspects of our intellectual endeavors.

(2) Participation in class discussion forum/blog: Constitutes approximately 20% of your grade

(a) Two lead blog entries addressed to readings of the relevant week (for weeks 2 through 9), to be posted by Monday at noon (Central Time). We will evaluate lead blogs (as excellent, good, or fair).

Other seminar members will respond to at least one of the questions or claims of the lead blog, and post this to the discussion board by Tuesday at noon (Central Time). We will not grade replies, but will keep track of their completion.

Everyone should read all posts before class Tuesday.

Instructions for discussion board engagement:

Lead bloggers: Each week, selected students will serve as lead bloggers. Lead bloggers will write a blog entry for that week’s readings, to be posted by Monday at noon CT. The lead bloggers will engage with the required pieces, briefly re-expressing the authors’ argument and saying what you learned. Then, you can discuss at least one thing you think the author got wrong, or underplayed or ignored; say what difference this makes to their argument and to our understanding of the phenomenon in question. Finally, what is your own opinion about the topic or argument? Your comments should be about 1-2 pp. long. Try to include at least one carefully constructed discussion question in your entry, that is, a question with which your peers can easily engage.

Other seminar members: Respond to at least one of the questions or claims of the lead blog, and post this to the discussion board by Tuesday at noon CT.

(3): Final Papers: Constitutes approximately 60% of your grade

The course challenges predominant sociological themes and perspectives using Indigenous thought. This paper presents the opportunity to engage with this type of critical analysis in your area of research or interest. Students will have wide latitude with their final papers. These could take many forms. Papers could be scholarly interrogative essays that address particular debates related to seminar readings. Students could choose to write material that ends up in a dissertation or another publication. Students may also consider co-authoring a research paper intended for publication. Students should discuss their ideas with Ann or Beth.

All papers should be written in your own authorial voice, well-documented (with appropriate text citation and references), and engaged with themes, problems, topics, and difficulties posed by the thinkers and texts addressed in this seminar. You are free to bring in empirical material with which you are engaging in your own research projects. Paper is due in Canvas by June 7, 2022.

The paper constitutes approximately 60% of your grade.
**Course readings:** Class readings will be decided though class discussions. The current proposed list includes parts of several books, and a number of articles. Published articles and almost all of the books are available through Northwestern library’s online access. Readings not available online through Northwestern libraries will be posted to the Canvas course website under the “Modules” tab, and are marked with an asterisk in the syllabus. Assignments are also posted under “Modules” for the relevant week.

**The schedule of readings is open to revision by seminar participants.**

The recommended readings are in no way comprehensive; they are simply pieces that we have found helpful and/or provocative.

It is likely we will be reading good portions of the following books, which we encourage you to purchase, if you are able, through (non-Amazon) online booksellers such as [https://bookshop.org/](https://bookshop.org/). If you aren’t able to purchase them, you can use the online access offered by NU Libraries.


**A Note from Beth:** My Co-Worker, Mitaka Ki (Mita for short), is a licensed medical alert dog. She is trained to detect and alert to subtle changes in blood chemistry. She accompanies me everywhere, but when we are out she is frequently working, so please do not be offended if she doesn’t visit you. If you are allergic, or would like to have Mita kept away from you, please let me know. Also, we all get distracted once in a while. Mita is just a dog, so forgive her if she periodically gets distracted or forgets what she is doing. *Please DO NOT feed her or pick her up*.

**Academic integrity:** Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide". All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your
written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/index.html

**Accessibility:** Northwestern University is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university’s established accommodation process (e: accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; p: 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

**Communication:** This course will use the Canvas course management system (http://www.it.northwestern.edu/education/learning-management/login.html). You are responsible for logging in, checking regularly for posted announcements, and obtaining readings and assignments from the site. You will receive course announcements that will be sent to the students’ registered campus email address. In addition, we usually communicate with you by email, so please check every weekday. You are responsible for checking your registered email accounts regularly.

The easiest way to reach either of us – besides in class and during office hours – is via email. We try to respond to emails promptly, within 48 hours (excepting weekends and university holidays/vacations), though this is not always possible. If you are emailing about the course, please put the name or number of the course in the subject line of your email; to help us identify and respond to your emails more quickly.

**COVID-19 Classroom Expectations Statement**

Students, faculty, and staff must comply with University expectations regarding appropriate classroom behavior, including those outlined below and in the [COVID-19 Code of Conduct](https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/index.html). With respect to classroom procedures, this includes:

- Policies regarding masking and social distancing evolve as the public health situation changes. Students are responsible for understanding and complying with current masking, testing, Symptom Tracking, and social distancing requirements.
- In some classes, masking and/or social distancing may be required as a result of an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation for the instructor or a student in the class even when not generally required on campus. In such cases, the instructor will notify the class.
- No food is allowed inside classrooms. Drinks are permitted, but please keep your face covering on and use a straw.

If a student fails to comply with the [COVID-19 Code of Conduct](https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/index.html) or other University expectations related to COVID-19, the instructor may ask the student to leave the class. The instructor is asked to report the incident to the Office of Community Standards for additional follow-up.
To protect the health of our community, Northwestern University requires unvaccinated students who are in on-campus programs to be tested for COVID-19 twice per week. Students who fail to comply with current or future COVID-19 testing protocols will be referred to the Office of Community standards to face disciplinary action, including escalation up to restriction from campus and suspension.

**Gender Pronouns**
This course affirms all gender expressions and gender identities. We welcome you to correct us on your name or gender pronoun if a mistake is made. If you have concerns, please contact us in person or by email, whichever is most comfortable for you.

**Inclusivity**
This course strives to be an inclusive learning community, respecting those of differing backgrounds and beliefs. As a community, we aim to be respectful to all students in this class, regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation.

**Support for health and wellness**
Northwestern University is committed to supporting the wellness of our students. Student Affairs has multiple resources to support student wellness and mental health. If you are feeling distressed or overwhelmed, please reach out for help. Students can access confidential resources through the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Religious and Spiritual Life (RSL) and the Center for Awareness, Response and Education (CARE). Additional information on all of the resources mentioned above can be found here:

- https://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/
- https://www.northwestern.edu/religious-life/
- https://www.northwestern.edu/care/
Seminar Schedule

Part 1: Studying Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, States and Empires

week 1: Empire and colonialism in the Native mind – and Introduction to the Seminar
Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Required reading:

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014. *An Indigenous People’s History of the United States*. Beacon Press. Chapters: Intro, 1, 3. (This is a relatively easy read that offers crucial background for this class. If you are unfamiliar Native American history (or would like to be more familiar) we suggest you peruse the rest of the text.)


So that we can be clear on our terminology:

Thomas King, 2012. “Prologue: Warm Toast and Porcupines,” pp. ix-xvi in *The inconvenient Indian: a curious account of native people in North America*. University of Minnesota Press. (He is very funny, feel free to read it all.)

Recommended reading:


week 2: Indigenous perspectives on time, power, groups, and knowledge
Tuesday, April 12, 2022


Recommended reading:


Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa), 2003. The Soul of an Indian. Dover Publications. (Ohiyesa was a Santee Sioux born in 1858, was the first Native licensed to practice medicine, and the first Native whose writings were widely published. He has a crater on Mars named in his honor.)


week 3: Key concepts for studying groups (race, ethnicity, nation)

Tuesday, April 19, 2022


**Recommended reading:**


week 4: Overview of literatures on empire, settler colonialism, and states

Tuesday, April 26, 2022


**Recommended reading:**


Part 2. Indigeneity, settler colonialism and states in the global context of empire

week 5: Contact, indigeneity and the emergence of modern empires, states, and democracy
Tuesday, May 3, 2022

Everyone should read the introductions and conclusions to both Moreton-Robinson and Dahl, and several substantive chapters of at least one of the books.


Recommended reading:


Duane Champagne, 1992. *Social order and political change: Constitutional governments among the Cherokee, the Choctaw, the Chickasaw and the Creek.* Stanford University Press.


**week 6: Reproduction, Gender, and Sexuality**
	*Tuesday, May 10, 2022*


*Bonita Lawrence. “Regulating Native Identity by Gender” and “Reconfiguring Colonial Gender Relations under Bill C-31”.* Pp 45-81 in *‘Real’ Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood.* University of Nebraska Press.


**Recommended reading:**


1 Gender, Queerness, and Transness are understood differently by different groups of Indigenous peoples, and their traditional cultures differ distinctly from Western views; the impact of both racism and colonialism creates unique oppressions. It is not possible to cover all the various cultural understandings found in Native societies, but if you would like a primer told as a personal narrative you should read: Leanne Betasomosake Simpson, 2012. Chapters 1, 6-8. *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance.* University of Minnesota Press.
week 7: US as a settler colony and empire

Tuesday, May 17, 2022


*We also highly suggest “Missionary’s Killing Reignites Debate” (available on Canvas). It’s not an academic article, but it will blow your mind.

Recommended reading:


John Collier, 1945. “United States Indian Administration as a Laboratory of Ethnic Relations.” Social Research 12(1): 265-303. (John Collier was a sociologist, Commissioner for the Bureau of Indian Affairs under the FDR administration, author of the Indian New Deal which forms the basis for modern Indian policy, and a rather racist dude. Here he explains his thoughts on Indian affairs. Collier drafted the legislation that forms the basis of federal Indian policy today. It’s an inside look at the beliefs that have shaped the treatment of Natives by the modern American state.)


**week 8: Political Resistance to Settler Colonialism**

*Indigenous concepts of rights and representation*

*Tuesday, May 24, 2022*

“Vine Deloria Jr., selected readings


*Recommended reading:*


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**week 9: Toward Native Sovereignty? Or, can the settler colonial state be reformed? Is the answer decolonization – and what is that?**

*Tuesday, May 31, 2022*


Recommended readings:


