

## **AMST 470/570**

### **American Indian Sovereignty: Land, Governance, Identity**

Dr. Kara Thompson  
W: 6:00-8:50  
College Apartments 5

#### **CONTACT**

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#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Kahnawà:ke scholar Audra Simpson asserts that “nothing is simultaneously so certain and yet so fraught with precariousness as the practice of sovereignty—globally or locally.”<sup>1</sup> Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination cannot be disentangled from U.S. & European colonization and governmentality. Political sovereign status was conferred on Native/Indigenous peoples who predated the very discursive practices that now define and regulate them. And as Native peoples agitate for external, nation-to-nation recognition of their sovereign status, they challenge and—in some cases—reproduce the very relations of power that compromise their sovereignty. But *sovereignty* is also a category of politics, activism, culture, identity, and social justice that *matters* (to riff on Lenape scholar Joanne Barker’s influential book) to Indigenous peoples in the Americas and the Pacific. It matters and manifests differently and multiply across diverse regions and tribes; there is no singular theory of, or approach to, sovereignty. Some Native/Indigenous peoples argue that sovereignty and the related politics of recognition and inclusion are necessarily limiting frameworks that tacitly accept an imagined narrative of European, Euroamerican, and white settler conquest.

Overall, this class offers an introduction to sovereignty as a political & philosophical concept. We will study some of the legislative histories that set tribal nations into a permanent relationship of “domestic dependence” in the U.S. federal political system. We will also learn about allotment history; the reservation system; and Indian gaming. We will explore art, literature, and other cultural forms as acts and exercises of sovereignty. We’ll focus on (only some of the *many*) environmental injustices exacted by settler colonialism on Native/Indigenous lands. And finally, we’ll read works by scholars and activists who outline the hetero- sexism and patriarchy of settler politics.

A few things you should know: Our main objective will be to establish a basic working knowledge of sovereignty, and how it matters and manifests for the specific peoples and contexts we will study. And this means: This course will move (too) fast across centuries, regions, and tribal contexts, but such are the constraints of a semester. Also and related to this: Our readings, lectures, and discussions will primarily focus on Indigenous peoples in North America (and largely what is now the United States at that). Your research, presentations, and writing projects will offer opportunities to expand the scope or change the focus, geographically and otherwise.

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<sup>1</sup> “Under the Sign of Sovereignty: Certainty, Ambivalence, and Law in Native North America and Indigenous Australia.” *Wicazo Sa Review* 25, no. 2 (2010): 107–24; 107.

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And finally a plea: Please don't take this course if you are not willing to *read*, carefully and thoroughly, before class each week. A lack of preparation, even for one meeting, will undermine our intellectual exchange and sense of community. If you have trouble staying on track in reading-intensive classes, this might not be the class for you.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

\*With the exception of Weekly Pages, which I explain in detail below, I will distribute explicit guidelines for each assignment as deadlines approach. This is a basic overview so you know what to expect.

### Participation: 30%

This seminar demands high level of individual and collective engagement. Class meetings emphasize analysis of assigned readings. In order for the seminar to be effective, all students must have the reading assignments completed and be prepared for in-depth discussion. The class requires your thoughtful and continuous participation; therefore, regular attendance is mandatory. You are required to attend a talk on March 23 (see the reading schedule). Your absence—unless you have a major conflict which you discuss with me well in advance—will negatively affect your grade.

### Flash Presentations: 20%

Each of you will offer **two** flash presentations this semester, which consists of a 5 to 7-minute presentation (max.) on a topic related to our readings that week. I've already listed the topics on the reading schedule with the notation "FP," but as you will soon learn, new issues and topics related to Native/Indigenous sovereignty arise every day, so we may change this up a bit as we go along. Please sign up for both presentations no later than our second seminar meeting.

### Weekly Pages: 20%

You are required to write at least 1000 words each week. Think of these pages as a short essay and/or critical response to the readings for the week. You can also write about a concept you're grappling with, or you may connect the week's readings and concepts to previous discussions. Write thoughtfully. Your ideas can be messy, in process, not fully formed, but your prose should be clean and clear.

Every Monday by midnight, you will post your pages to Blackboard. You get two points for turning in ~1000 words by the deadline; you get one point if your word count is weak or late. If you don't turn in anything at all, you get a zero for the week. You get one free pass during the course of the semester, since as we all know, some weeks are just intractable. I won't provide comments each week, but I will read your pages.

### Final Project Zine: 30%

Either collaboratively or individually, you will create a zine that focuses on a specific topic related to Native/Indigenous sovereignty. You will make copies to distribute to the rest of the class.

## **Community**

Our seminar space, unless otherwise directly, will be screen free: No laptops, phones, nor any devices in between. The only things we'll have in front of us are books, a course reader, and notes.

### **N.B.**

Email: I check my email regularly but not obsessively. Do not expect a response from me until at least 24 hours after your email was sent. If you don't receive a response within 24 hours, then please email me again to be sure I received the first email.

Honor Code: This course will follow the policies described in the College of William and Mary Honor Code. If you have any questions about academic honesty, citation, or the relationship of the Honor Code to your work in this course, please let me know.

### Mobile Devices:

Off and stored in your bag. I will not tolerate errant rings/dings in class—these are extremely disruptive and disrespectful. Please, for the love of all that is good, do not text during class.

### Laptops:

Nope. You are required to purchase the books I have listed, as well as the Course Reader from Staples (which will be available by Friday, 1.22). Please email me or make an appointment if you need accommodations that require your laptop.

Students with Disabilities: If you need disability-related accommodations for your work in this course, please inform me as soon as possible. For assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs, contact Disability Services in the Campus Center, Room 109 or at 757-221-2510.

Because many disabilities cannot be easily diagnosed and certified by disability services, I strive for my courses to follow the principles of Universal Design, which is defined as “accommodation for the widest audience possible.” My ultimate goal is to structure the course in a way that accommodates most students while still meeting individual needs. This policy requires a commitment from you as well: first, to be communicative with me, and second, to support your peers.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS**

Key: CR = Course Reader  
 FP = Flash Presentation

WEEK	The PLAN*
1: Jan 20 <b>Introduction to Sovereignty &amp; Settler Colonialism</b>	Introductions; overview of the course and syllabus  Taiaiake Alfred, "Sovereignty" (emailed)  Joanne Barker, "For Whom Sovereignty Matters" (emailed)  Layli Long Soldier, "38" (emailed)
2: Jan 27 <b>Inherent Sovereignty and the Making of Federal Indian Policy</b>	Sidney Haring, 'The High Pretension of Savage Sovereignty' from <i>Crow Dog's Case</i> (CR)  Kristen Ruppel, "Nations In(di)visible" and "Appropriating the Trust" (CR)  C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa, "Confining Indians" (CR)  Landmark cases in Federal Indian Policy (links provided on our Blackboard site) Marshall Trilogy <i>Ex parte Crow Dog</i> <i>Lone Wolf</i> <i>U.S. v. Kagama</i> <i>Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe et al.</i>
3: Feb 3 <b>Citizenship and the Politics of Recognition: Part 1</b>	Audra Simpson, <i>Mohawk Interruptus</i> (all)
4: Feb 10 <b>Citizenship and the Politics of Recognition: Part 2</b>	Glen Coulthard, <i>Red Skin, White Masks</i> (Introduction, Chapters 1-3)
5: Feb 17 <b>Biopolitics</b>	Coulthard, cont. <i>Red Skin, White Masks</i> (Chapters 4, 5, Conclusion)  Idle No More (FP)  Joanne Barker, "The Specters of Recognition" (CR)  <b>Grad Clinic 8:00-9:00 pm</b> Michel Foucault, "Right of Death and Power Over Life" (CR)
6: Feb 24 <b>Indigenizing Agamben</b>	<b>Grad Clinic 6:00-7:00 pm</b> Giorgio Agamben, <i>Homo Sacer</i> (all)  <b>7:00-9:00 pm</b>  Giorgio Agamben, "Introduction" and "The Paradox of Sovereignty" (CR)  Mark Rifkin, "Indigenizing Agamben: Rethinking Sovereignty in Light of the 'Peculiar' Status of Native Peoples" (CR)  Begin Jodi Byrd, <i>The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism</i> ("Introduction:

	Indigenous Critical Theory and the Diminishing Returns of Civilization")
7: Mar 2 <b>Indigenous Critical Theory</b>	Byrd, cont. <i>The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism</i> (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and Conclusion)
8: Mar 9 <b>Spring Break</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>

9: Mar 16 <b>Terra Nullius: Settler Colonial Environmentalisms</b>	<p>Nicholas Brown, "The Logic of Settler Accumulation in a Landscape of Perpetual Vanishing" (CR)</p> <p>Traci Brynne Voyles, "Introduction: Sacrificial Land" and "Empty Except for Indians: Early Impressions of Navajo Rangeland" (CR)</p> <p>Sarah Jacquette Ray, "Endangering the Desert" (CR)</p> <p>Discussions of mineral and water rights, especially with recent Animas River disaster in Colorado and the EPA's treatment of the Navajo Nation (FP)</p> <p>Blackfeet Women Against Fracking (FP)</p> <p>Indigenous Environmental Network (FP)</p>
SPECIAL EVENT: March 23 at 5:00 p.m.	<p>Robert Davidson (Haida, Tlingit)</p> <p>This talk/artist presentation is <b>mandatory</b>. It begins one hour before our regular class time, so please plan accordingly. We will meet for seminar after the talk, and adjourn at 8:00 pm</p>
10: Mar 23 <b>Cultural Sovereignty</b>	<p>Bill Anthes, "Ethics in a World of Strange Strangers: Edgar Heap of Birds at Home and Abroad" (CR)</p> <p>Pawnee Seed Preservation Project (FP)</p> <p>Slim Buttes Agricultural Project (FP)</p> <p>White Earth Land Recovery Project (FP)</p> <p><b>**Visit Muscarelle Museum to view Bunky Echo-Hawk's print "Freshman 15" before this class meeting</b></p>
<b>Mar 19 Field Trip!</b>	National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C.
11: Mar 30	No seminar meeting (I will be out of town for a conference)
12: Apr 6 <b>Indigenous Poetics of Space</b>	<p>Mishuana Goeman, <i>Mark My Words</i></p> <p>Mapping Indigenous L.A.: <a href="http://mila.ss.ucla.edu/">http://mila.ss.ucla.edu/</a> (FP)</p>
13: Apr 13 <b>Capitalizing on Settler Colonialism</b>	<p>Jessica R. Cattellino, <i>High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty</i> (all)</p> <p>Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and the legalization of marijuana (FP)</p> <p>Joanne Barker, "The Corporation and the Tribe" (CR)</p>
14:	Sarah Deer, <i>The Beginning and the End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native</i>

<p>Apr 20 <b>Native/Indigenous Feminisms</b></p>	<p><i>America</i></p> <p>Joanne Barker, "Gender, Sovereignty, Rights: Native Women's Activism against Social Inequality and Violence in Canada" (CR)</p> <p>Jaime Black's REDress Project for Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada (FP)</p> <p>Lisa Kahaleole Hall, "Strategies of Erasure: U.S. Colonialism and Native Hawaiian Feminism" (CR)</p> <p>J Kēhaulani Kauanui, "Native Hawaiian Decolonization and the Politics of Gender" (CR)</p>
<p>15: Apr 27 <b>Queering Sovereignty</b></p>	<p>GLQ special introduction: "Sexuality, Nationality, Indigeneity" (CR)</p> <p>Mark Rifkin, "Introduction" from <i>When Did Indians Become Straight?</i></p> <p>Jennifer Nez Denetdale, "Securing Navajo National Boundaries: Patriotism, Tradition, and the Diné Marriage Act of 2005" (CR)</p> <p>Kent Monkman (view work in class)</p>

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, 1998. **GRAD**

Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Coulthard, Glen. *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Deer, Sarah. *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*. University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

Cattelino, Jessica R. *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations (First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies)*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Duke University Press, 2014.

**COURSE READER:**

Alfred, Taiaiake. "Sovereignty," In *A Companion to American Indian History*, edited by Philip Deloria and Neal Salisbury. Wiley-Blackwell, 2004; 460–74.

Anthes, Bill. "Ethics in a World of Strange Strangers: Edgar Heap of Birds At Home and Abroad." *Art Journal* 71, no. 3 (2012): 58–77.

Barker, Joanne. "The Specters of Recognition." *Formations of United States Colonialism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014; 33-56.

---. "For Whom Sovereignty Matters." *Sovereignty Matters Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005; 1-32.

---. "The Corporation and the Tribe." *The American Indian Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2015): 243–70.

---. "Gender, Sovereignty, Rights: Native Women's Activism against Social Inequality and Violence in Canada." *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 259–66.

---. "Indigenous Feminisms" from *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous People's Politics* (forthcoming online)

DeCaroli, Steven. "Boundary Stones: Giorgio Agamben and the Field of Sovereignty." Matthew Calarco and Steven DeCaroli. *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life*. Stanford University Press, 2007. 43-69.

Denetdale, Jennifer Nez. "Securing Navajo National Boundaries: Patriotism, Tradition, and the Diné Marriage Act of 2005." *Wicazo Sa Review* (Fall 2009): 131-148.

Foucault, Michel. "Right of Death and Power Over Life." *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1*. New York: Vintage, 1990. 135-159.

Genetin-Pilawa, C. Joseph. "Confining Indians." *Crooked Paths to Allotment: The Fight Over Federal Indian Policy After the Civil War*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2014; 13-28.

Hall, Lisa Kahaleole. "Strategies of Erasure: U.S. Colonialism and Native Hawaiian Feminism." *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 273–80.

Harring, Sidney. “The High Pretension of Savage Sovereignty” from *Crow Dog’s Case: American Indian Sovereignty, Tribal Law, and United States Law in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge University Press, 1994; 1-24.

Kauanui, J Kēhaulani. “Native Hawaiian Decolonization and the Politics of Gender.” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 281–87.

Ray, Sarah Jacquette. “Endangering the Desert: Immigration, the Environment, and Security in the Arizona–Mexico Borderland.” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (2010): 710–33.

Rifkin, Mark. “Indigenizing Agamben: Rethinking Sovereignty in Light of the” Peculiar” Status of Native Peoples.” *Cultural Critique* 73 (2009): 88-124.

---. “Introduction.” *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. Oxford University Press, 2011; 3-43.

Ruppel, Kristen. “Nations In(di)visible” and “Appropriating the Trust” in *Unearthing Indian Land: Living With the Legacies of Allotment*. University of Arizona Press, 2008; 11-35 & 36-68.

Voyles, Traci Brynne. “Introduction: Sacrificial Land” and “Empty Except for Indians: Early Impressions of Navajo Rangeland.” *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.