

NATIVE AMERICAN & INDIGENOUS STUDIES AT PENN

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Current as of October 2023

Please note: Some NAIS courses from earlier lists are no longer available due to faculty retirements.

Please check the official Penn course schedule during the registration period for each semester to find the most accurate and up-to-date list of courses offered and descriptions.

Also check the NAIS website at: <http://nais.sas.upenn.edu/nais-courses>

ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTH 0020. Anthropology, Race, and the Making of the Modern World.

Anthropology as a field is the study of human beings - past, present, and future. It asks questions about what it means to be human, and whether there are universal aspects to human existence. What do we share and how do we differ? What is "natural" and what is "cultural"? What is the relationship between the past and the present? This course is designed to investigate the ways anthropology, as a discipline, emerged in conjunction with European (and later, American) imperialism, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the will to know and categorize difference across the world. We will probe the relationships between anthropology and modern race-making by investigating how anthropologists have studied key institutions and systems that structure human life: family and kinship, inequality and hierarchy, race and ethnicity, ritual and symbolic systems, gender and sexuality, reciprocity and exchange, and globalization and social change. The course fundamentally probes how the material and ideological constellations of any given moment shape the questions we ask and the knowledge we produce about human existence.

ANTH 1410. Public Policy, Museums, Cultural Heritage. Dr. Leventhal.

This course will focus upon and examine the ethics of international heritage and the role that Museums play in the preservation of identity and cultural heritage. The mission of this course will be to inform and educate students about the role Museums within the 21st century. What is the role and position of antiquities and important cultural objects in Museums? How should Museums acquire these objects and when should they be returned to countries and cultural groups? Examples from current issues will be included in the reading and discussions along with objects and issues within Penn Museum.

ANTH 1490. Introduction to Native American and Indigenous Studies.

This course offers a broad introduction to the new cross-disciplinary field of Native American and Indigenous Studies. Students will study both theoretical interpretations and practical approaches to Indigenous research and decolonizing methodologies in diverse worldwide settings, while also examining the lingering impacts of settler colonialism. Readings bridge the disciplines of anthropology, history, folklore, art, law, and science, with an emphasis on academic works that productively intersect with Indigenous knowledges. Students will also watch a selection of films by Indigenous filmmakers, and attend lectures by a selection of Indigenous guest speakers and/or NAIS faculty advisors, who will highlight their unique experiences and research projects with Indigenous communities. Special case studies will focus on: new directions in collaborative research; issues in museum representation and repatriation; heritage site protection and Indigenous archaeology; legal interventions and protections for Indigenous rights; and innovative projects in language restoration and cultural recovery.

NEW- ANTH 2150. The Ancient Maya: Integrating Material, Text, and Image. Anth Faculty.
(cross-listed as ARTH 2200, LALS 2150)

Ancient Maya studies is one of the most dynamic and innovative fields in world archaeology today. Emerging as a true historical archaeology only in the past three decades, the decipherment of Maya script now provides a powerful complement and counterpoint to both traditional excavation data and new remote sensing technologies. Equally, the reading of images, and their interaction with texts and artifacts, forms a vital part of our interest in the broader humanistic concerns of worldview and the transcendent--where our primary interest lies in gaining access to past mentalities. This course will provide a comprehensive introduction into current knowledge of the Ancient Maya, with a recurring methodological focus on how different types of evidence are integrated to assemble a persuasive "portrait of the past." This scope of this process is unique in the ancient Americas, since only the Maya offer us the opportunity to read their own descriptions of the world two millennia or more in the past. Geographically, we will be looking at the greater Yucatan Peninsula, which today covers parts of southeastern Mexico, the whole of Guatemala and Belize, and the western extremities of Honduras and El Salvador. Since archaic times (before 1200 BCE) this has been occupied by speakers of the Mayan language group, and millions of people identified as Maya by that means continue to do so today (despite popular notions to the contrary, they have never "disappeared").

ANTH 2307/2607. Contemporary Native Americans.

This course explores the origins, effects, and experiences of resistance and survivance among the Indigenous peoples of North America: Native Americans in the United States and First Nations peoples in Canada. Topics include: Indigenous identity; the resonance of colonial policies in modern politics; homelands and natural resources; representations of Indians in popular culture and media; Indigenous cultural expression; religious freedom and repatriation legislation; tribal recognition and sovereignty; modern resistance movements; and more, from 1900 to the present. Students will examine how Native histories and human rights issues have been represented and negotiated – and are still being negotiated – by Indigenous individuals, tribal nations, academics, the general public, and the state. Students will also learn about specific federal programs and legislation – such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, federal recognition, the Indian Arts and Crafts Law, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, etc. – that were designed to govern/protect/define Indigenous identities and rights. The historical textbooks will provide a framework for a linear recounting of social and political events in particular decades and regions. Other texts will consist of films, interviews, and autobiographical materials composed by and with Indigenous activists and tribal leaders.

ANTH 2308. Ethnohistory of the Native Northeast.

Ethnohistorical research, by definition, incorporates ethnographic study and documentary research from both anthropological and historical perspectives. This approach emerged during the mid-20th century as a means to authoritatively document and mediate Native American land claims and federal recognition cases. This course will focus on representations of Native American people in Philadelphia and the greater northeast, on memorial statuary designed to shape public memory, and on the resonance of colonial encounters in public understandings of Indigenous people today. Topics include: the foundations of ethnohistory as a discipline; Indigenous oral traditions and wampum diplomacy; historical contexts of monument-building; and decolonizing methods to illuminate the shifting dynamics of gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, and conflict. We will engage in critical interrogations of information preserved in documents, material objects, historical monuments, photographs, news articles, archives, and museum collections. Students will develop skills and strategies for interpreting primary and secondary sources, and for better understanding and contextualizing the social, political, and cultural conflicts recorded and communicated in colonial records, historical monuments, and popular memories.

NEW- ANTH 2317. The Politics of Matter and the Matter of Politics. Dr. Lyons.

What is nature? What is culture? What kinds of practices and actors constitute what we call science? Who and what constitute the sphere we refer to as politics? A number of theoretical developments in cultural anthropology, political theory, critical geography, and feminist science studies have problematized the modernist ontological divide between Nature and Culture and a whole series of binary oppositions (such as objects/subjects, matter/form, bio/geo) that follow from it. Taking inspiration from this literature and placing it in conversation with Native and Indigenous scholarship and a series of contemporary socio-environmental struggles occurring in Latin America and beyond, this course will discuss the conceptual-methodological tools that a concern with politics of matter has generated. The epistemic and political implications of these tools go beyond their analytical usefulness as innovative devices to explore novel phenomena. They complicate well-established fields of inquiry, such as political ecology and economy, environmental studies, ethics, social justice, and modern politics; and, indeed, the singular ontology that these fields may inadvertently and explicitly sustain. We will explore how it is that things, stuff, matter, 'nature' came to fall outside modern politics as such, and the kinds of ethico-political repercussions that problematizing this division may produce.

NEW- ANTH 2327 Dispossession and Territorial Recovery Among Indigenous Peoples in South America. Anth. Faculty. (cross-listed as LALS 3260)

This seminar will focus on contemporary dynamics of dispossession, territorial claims and territorial recovery involving indigenous peoples in South America. Drawing on cases from different countries (particularly from Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Colombia), we will examine, in historical perspective, processes of territorial dispossession, socio-environmental conflicts, collective action, and struggles for territorial recovery and recognition set against the policies of settler colonial nation-states and economic activities that tend to evict people from their lands. More specifically, we will focus on actions carried out by indigenous peoples and movements to fight territorial dispossession, recover and protect their lands. Particular attention will be paid to the period marked by the growing visibility of the indigenous movements in South America, from 1970s to the present. The perspectives and strategies of indigenous peoples and movements regarding their territorial rights and projects of living well will be considered within the broader framework of identity, ethnicity and land issues. In that sense, the course will draw connections to the actions carried out by landless peasants and other groups. By devoting our attention to different contexts through the region, we will be able both to understand specific situations and identify underlying dynamics.

NEW- ANTH 3310. Historical Ecology. Anth. Faculty.

The relationship between the human beings and the environment is complex, dynamic, and contentious. Historical ecology addresses this relationship over the long term through the physical signatures and patterns of past human activity that are embedded in landscape. In some preindustrial cases, humans caused environmental degradation and societal collapse. In other situations, people transformed, created, and managed resources for sustainable lifeways over centuries and increased biodiversity. This seminar will examine the Myth of the Ecologically Noble Savage, the Myth of the Pristine Environment, domestication of landscape, biocultural diversity, the alliance between native peoples and Green Politics, and the contribution of past societies to appropriate technology, sustainable development, and biodiversity through the historical, ethnographic, and archaeological record.

ANTH 3328/3528. Performing Culture, Native American Arts.

This course engages with anthropological studies of culture as a performative process. Cultural performances (whether routine or theatrical) are sites for the formation, expression, and transmission of social and cultural identities. Readings and case studies will draw attention to concepts of embodiment and emplacement and negotiations of position and identity. Students will examine and experiment with

various aspects of cultural performance, including speech, conflict, ritual, theater, music, games, dance, art, sport, and film. Topics include: the politics of cultural display; tourism and exoticism; folk and street performances; art as survivance; authentic vs. invented traditions; cultural appropriation; museum representation; cultural violence, etc. The course will include a particular focus on Native American and First Nations Indigenous artists and artistic performances that convey distinct cultural values, aesthetic choices, and ritual expressions intended to convey and communicate understandings of relationships with the natural world, with humans and non-humans, and with otherworldly forces.

NEW- ANTH 3360. The Peopling of the Americas. Dr. Schurr. (cross-listed as LALS 3360)

The peopling of the Americas is a question that has intrigued scholars and laymen for over 500 years. The origin of Native Americans was also a seminal issue during the emergence of American Anthropology as a discipline at the turn of the 20th century, with research on this topic animating current studies of ethnohistory, indigenous archeology, post-colonialism and repatriation. The proposed course will review the scholarship dedicated to describing this long history from an interdisciplinary perspective. It will explore their roots in the expansion of modern humans into Eurasia, evaluate the new archeological and genetic research that has fundamentally altered our understanding of the migration history and diversity of indigenous peoples in the American continents, and examine issues of identity, ethnicity and cultural heritage in contemporary Native populations that extend from this knowledge. The course will further draw on the instructor's fieldwork experience working with indigenous communities in Alaska, Canada, the Lower 48, Mexico and the Caribbean, as well as native Siberians in Russia, where the cultural and biological roots of ancestral Native American populations lie.

ANTH 3368. Anthropology of Museums.

Who owns the past? How do museums function as sites where issues of identity, memory, place, and power intersect? This course investigates the relationships among museological collectors, curators, visitors, texts, and objects, by particularly investigating representations of Indigenous peoples, histories, and heritage that emerged during the era of salvage anthropology. How did antiquarian impulses inspire the collecting of exotic curiosities? What are the arguments around the ownership, display, and repatriation of human remains and cultural property? Students will review the social relations that influenced collecting processes, and develop critical analyses of museum exhibitions, while also learning about Indigenous interventions, innovative displays, and decolonizing approaches. Students will participate in virtual and/or in-person museum field trips (to the American Philosophical Society, Canadian Museum of History, National Museum of the American Indian, and other locales). Through hands-on studies of select objects in the Penn Museum collections, students will learn how to apply restorative methodologies to recover object histories and reveal new stories about heritage items, tourist collectibles, and other materials mingled together in museum collections.

ANTH 5110. Ethics, Archaeology, Cultural Heritage. Dr. Leventhal. (cross-listed as LALS 5110)

This seminar will explore some of the most important issues that are now a central part of archaeological, anthropological and historical research throughout the world. The identification and control of cultural heritage is a central part of the framework for research within other communities. Issues for this course will also include cultural identity, human rights, repatriation, colonialism, working with communities and many other topics. Field research today must be based upon a new series of ethical standards that will be discussed and examined within this class. Major topics include: cultural heritage - definitions and constructs, cosmopolitanism and collecting, archaeology and looting, cultural heritage preservation, museums - universal and national, museum acquisition policies, cultural identity, international conventions (including underwater issues), national laws of ownership, community based development, cultural tourism, development models, and human rights.

ANTH 5940. Indigenous Theory & Decolonizing Methodologies.

This course will delve into some of the innovative theoretical approaches and interpretations, rooted in long-standing Indigenous ontologies, that are emerging within the inter-disciplinary field of Native American and Indigenous Studies. Decolonial projects highlight Indigenous conceptions of materiality, kinship, and landscape, while also critically examining the impact of colonizing ideologies, and undoing antiquated and biased colonial settler interpretations. Students will learn practical methods for deploying Indigenous theory and decolonizing methodologies in diverse research settings. Course readings and interviews with Indigenous knowledge-keepers will feature innovative socio-cultural, ethnohistorical, museological, and archaeological research projects that emphasize processes of consultation and collaboration. Individual case studies will focus on: ecological knowledges; territorial sovereignty; community-based archaeological research; and the reclamation and preservation of cultural heritage. The goal is to understand how academic research can be more inclusive of, and more responsible to, Indigenous communities.

ART HISTORY

ARTH 2740. Facing America. (cross-listed as AFRC 2740, CIMS 2740, LALS 2740)

This course explores the visual history of race in the United States as both self-fashioning and cultural mythology by examining the ways that conceptions of Native American, Latino, and Asian identity, alongside ideas of Blackness and Whiteness, have combined to create the various cultural ideologies of class, gender, and sexuality that remain evident in historical visual and material culture. We will also investigate the ways that these creations have subsequently helped to launch new visual entertainments, including museum spectacles, blackface minstrelsy, and early film, from the colonial period to the 1940s.

EDUCATION

EDUC 5232. Indigenous Education and Language Revitalization. Ed. Faculty.

How do indigenous epistemologies, ways of knowing, being and relating influence education? What does culturally and linguistically relevant schooling mean in indigenous contexts? What are the policies, ideologies and discourses that wax & wane in relation to the history of indigenous education? What does decolonizing and indigenizing schooling look like? How do indigenous education and language revitalization interact with notions of inter-culturalism/multiculturalism? What are the roles of communities in language revitalization and educational processes? This course explores the diverse experiences of indigenous education and language revitalization in many different regions of the world, including the Peruvian Andes. The course will incorporate perspectives from anthropology, linguistics, sociolinguistics, and policy studies and welcomes an interdisciplinary community of learners.

EDUC 9205. Research Seminar: Language Policy and Education. Ed. Faculty.

Seminar participants are introduced to concepts, theories, and methods in the field of language planning and policy, which they then apply in developing their own library-based research on specific language planning cases from around the world. Cases may include: official language decisions, instructional medium choices, literacy initiatives, gender-neutral language reforms, foreign/heritage/second language pedagogy and policy, indigenous language revitalization efforts, or other language-related decisions and policies at international, national or local levels. Prerequisite: Permission needed from instructor.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HSPV 7470. Conservation of Archaeological Sites. Dr. Matero.

This seminar will address the history, theories, principles, and practices of the preservation and interpretation of archaeological sites and landscapes. The course will draw from a wide range of published material and experiences representing both national and international contexts. Topics will include site and landscape documentation and recording; site formation and degradation; intervention strategies including interpretation and display, legislation, policy, and contemporary issues of descendent community ownership and global heritage. Depending on the site, students will study specific issues leading toward the critique or development of a conservation and management program in accordance with guidelines established by ICOMOS/ ICAHM and other official agencies.

HISTORY

NEW- HIST 0600. The Foundations of the Early Modern Atlantic World 1450-1800. Hist.

Faculty.

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a solid knowledge of Atlantic history during the early modern period (XV-XVIII centuries). Through readings of primary and secondary texts we will discuss the cultural, religious, intellectual, and economic developments of Europe, Africa, and the Americas, as well as the connections, struggles, and mutual influences between the peoples of these three continents. Throughout the semester we will study several important topics: medieval precedents of early modern expansion; theories of empire; ideologies and systems of conquest and colonialization; the relevance of race and slavery to the understanding of the early modern Atlantic world; how different peoples perceived others and themselves; how European imperialism and colonialization affected the internal development of Africa and America; the role played by religion in the Atlantic world; persistence and continuity of Native cultures and beliefs during an age of expansion; the creation of new identities; the role played by African nations in the creation of the Atlantic world; and the creation of an Atlantic economy.

HIST 1122. Sinners, Sex & Slaves: Gender in American History to 1865. Dr. Brown. (cross-listed as AFRC 1122, GSWS 1122)

From the sixteenth century, when Native American populations flourished on the North American continent, to the Civil War, when North and South collided over the question of slavery, women have played a critical role in American society. This course traces the history of women and gender in America during this period with special emphasis on the importance of women's reproductive and economic roles to the emergence of ethnic, racial, regional, and socio-economic categories in the United States. Slides, lectures, and readings drawn from primary documents introduce students to the conditions of women's lives during the colonial and revolutionary periods and to the rise of women's activism in the nineteenth century. In addition, we will consider how dramatic changes in housework, wage labor, female access to public forms of power, and ideas about female sexuality make it difficult to generalize about what is commonly thought of as women's "traditional" or "natural" role.

NEW- HIST 1151. Race, Space and Place in American History. (cross-listed as AFRC 1151)

This course provides with a historical introduction to America's racial and ethnic groupings by examining the social, spatial and historical forces that have defined these groups. Weekly lectures and readings trace American racial formations, identities and experiences from the age of Columbus to the present day. Following the work of historians and geographers who emphasize the importance of space and place in constructions of racial and ethnic identity, most of the class readings chart the evolution of such identities within specific regions or communities. Early readings illuminate the origins of categories such

as "white," black, "Native American" and "Asian" by exploring the colonial encounters in which these identities first took shape; while later readings trace how these identities have been maintained and/or changed over time. Less a product of racial attitudes than of economic and political interests, early American conceptions of race first took shape amidst contests over land and labor that pitted European immigrants against the indigenous peoples of North America, and ultimately led to the development of racial slavery. Colonial legal distinctions between Christians and Heathens were supplanted by legislation that defined people by race and ethnicity. Over time these distinctions were reinforced by a variety of other forces. Distinctive from place to place, America's racial and ethnic groupings have been shaped and reshaped by regional economies such as the slave South, political initiatives such as Indian Removal and Chinese Exclusion Acts, a changing national immigration policy, and sexual and social intermixture and assimilation. Course readings will examine the links between race, region, labor, law, immigration, politics, sexuality and the construction and character of racialized spaces and places in America.

NEW- HIST 1162. The American West. Hist. Faculty.

This course explores the social and cultural history and current views of the many Wests we think we know. In 1872, President Grant established Yellowstone National Park, only the first of many national and state nature reserves in the west. Even while the Parks were widely celebrated, in 1876 Grant allowed miners and land speculators into the Black Hills, or Paha Sapa, land long considered sacred by the Lakota peoples and 'protected' for them as recently as 1868 Treaty of Laramie. From this pairing of events in the 1870s spring the many overlapping themes this course will address: Native peoples, their beliefs and material cultures, pressured by the arrival of scattered industries (gold rushes, silver and copper mining); irregular sources of industrial and banking capital from England, New York, Chicago, and elsewhere; the arrival of the US Army in 1851, then a break removing troops for the Civil War, then their renewed and constant appearance from 1866 on and the making and breaking of other treaties; the irregular scattering of land speculators and dirt farmers, even while the US government insisted the Sioux and Cheyennes, among other peoples, not disturb the passage of planters on the Oregon Trail, even as their hunting grounds were enclosed by the Union Pacific and North Pacific railroads by 1870. Naturalists, hikers, and artists arrived by rail to the western parks: Yellowstone, Yosemite (1890), and the Grand Canyon (1919). By 1900, American tourists went west to see wild West Indian Shows and wonder at the new parks. They ate at restaurants serving western food, wore western ware and cowboy boots, and listened to western music that finally reached its high point when folklorist Hal Cannon founded the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada, in 1984, still active today with offshoots in Durango, Montana, and Texas.

NEW- HIST 2401. Indians, Pirates, Rebels and Runaways: Unofficial Histories of the Colonial Caribbean. Hist. Faculty.

This seminar considers the early history of the colonial Caribbean, not from the perspective of European colonizing powers but rather from "below." Beginning with European-indigenous contact in the fifteenth century, and ending with the massive slave revolt that became the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), we will focus on the different ways in which indigenous, African, European and creole men and women experienced European colonization in the Caribbean, as agents, victims and resisters of imperial projects. Each week or so, we will examine the experiences of a different social group and their treatment by historians, as well as anthropologists, archaeologists, sociologists, and novelists. Along the way, we will pay special attention to the question of primary sources: how can we recover the perspectives of people who rarely left their own accounts? How can we use documents and material objects—many of which were produced by colonial officials and elites—to access the experiences of the indigenous, the enslaved, and the poor? We will have some help approaching these questions from the knowledgeable staff at the Penn Museum, the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, and the Van Pelt Library.

HISTORY & SOCIOLOGY OF SCIENCE

NEW- HSSC 5181 Botanic Empire: Plants and Colonialism 1700 to 1950. HSSC Faculty.

Tea, rubber, cinchona, sugar and myriad other plants that have and continue to shape our contemporary world have been moved, altered and exploited by modern empires. With the rise of new forms of Biopiracy, older connections between plants and imperialism are being rethought not just academically but in multiple new practical, commercial and political arenas. Looking back from this contemporary vantage point, this course will explore the sites, sciences and instruments through which plants and empire came to be so intimately entangled. Topics shall range from the histories of botanic gardens to botanic illustrations and agricultural experimental stations to botanic horror fiction.

NEW- HSSC 5207. Readings in Race & Science. HSSC Faculty.

What accounts for the persistence and resilience of racial conceptions in science? In this course we will look for answers to this and other questions by examining the historiography of race, colonialism, and science. The standard historiography has focused on the rise and fall of racial typologies in the north Atlantic and their contributions to troublesome political projects such as the Atlantic slave trade, Jim Crow policies, the eugenics movement, and the Holocaust. More recent histories have taken inspiration from postcolonial studies, standpoint theories, and indigenous studies to insist on a more global reckoning of race and science. If we focus on the southern hemisphere, for instance, we can see scientific racial conceptions enrolled for a different though not necessarily less innocent set of projects: the dispossession of indigenous lands and effacement of indigenous peoples, the glorification of race-mixing as a tool of nation building, and the cultivation of whiteness as a means to modernity. By examining classic and recent approaches to race and science we will grapple with the following questions: Is 'race' a product of 18th century French and English science? Or can we find earlier iterations in the idioms of conquest of Spanish America during the early modern period? Do the standard narratives concerning the history of racial conceptions in science change when looked at from the frame of the global south? Does race get 'buried alive' after WWII? And do recent developments in human genomics bring "race" back from the dead, albeit in an anti-racist form?

LINGUISTICS

LING 2401. Language in Native America.

This course is an introduction to linguistic perspectives on the languages native to the Americas (their nature and distribution, typological similarities and differences), with an emphasis on North America. The diverse languages of this region will be examined from the point of view of particular linguistic phenomena, such as phonology, morphology, and syntax; and in addition we will study their historical development and their place in culture, society, and thought.