

Sign, Symbol, Stereotype: Native Icons Revealed
UW Art History 600: Special Topics in Art History
Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00 - 2:15
L166 Elvehjem Building

Nancy Marie Mithlo, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Art
History and American Indian Studies
mithlo@wisc.edu (608) 265-8694
Office hours: Tuesdays 2:30 to 4:30 and by appointment

Course description:

Iconography - "the identification of images with specific symbolic content or meaning." Iconology - "to relate the symbolic meanings of objects and figures in art to the political, poetical, religious, philosophical, and social tendencies of the personality, period or country under investigation." (Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, 2008)

This course critically examines images of Native American Indians - from the diverse contexts of fine arts, popular culture, photography and film - in historic and contemporary cultural contexts. The process of translating culture by visual representation often implies notions of authority, objectivity and fixed reality. Contextual and revisionist strategies in visual studies challenge these earlier interpretative models by incorporating multiple perspectives and making theoretical aims explicit. This course focuses on visual representation as a form of cultural documentation and as an exploration of unique visual worlds. Both the colonial project and indigenous agency are presented as vantage points to understanding strategies of appropriation, commercialization and political representation. The course draws upon several key iconographic images (Pocahontas, Big Foot at Wounded Knee, the End of the Trail, boarding schools, warriors, mascots, the Indian environmentalist, the contrast picture, the photography of Horace Poolaw) for discussion of Native history, political mobilization, remembrance and re-appropriation.

Required text:

Johnson, Tim, ed. *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998). ISBN: 1560987650

Required articles:

The course reader is available through Bob's Copy Shop, 1401 University Avenue (608) 251-2936.

Assessment: Group Student Presentation (15%); Four Response Papers (3-4 pages @ 15% each); Final Research Paper (20% final submission, 5% draft). Guidelines for written assignments will be distributed. Style guidelines may be found in *A Short Guide to Writing about Art* by Sylvan Barnet (New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2008).

The course may be taken for graduate credit with approval of the instructor. In general, graduate students will be responsible for required and recommended readings as well as extended course assignments.

*Each student will be expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions. **Two or more absences will be grounds for subtracting points from your overall average.** As a rule, I do not accept late work. In the rare and extenuating instance in which I may accept late work, the paper will be marked down accordingly. Extra credit is not offered.*

Teaching philosophy and strategies: I strive to create a participatory classroom discussion setting, utilizing group work, short in-class written responses and student-led presentations. Individualized student research opportunities are encouraged and made available via papers and oral presentations. Active learning is sought, meaning honest self-reflection, questioning and real-world application grounded in careful reading and examination of the required texts.

Week 1: January 22 and 24: White Conceptions of Indians, Indian Conceptions of Whites

• **Required readings:**

Berkhofer, Robert F. "White Conceptions of Indians." In *Handbook of North American Indians Vol. 4: History of Indian-White Relations*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, 522-547 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1988).

Mithlo, Nancy Marie. "Reappropriating Redskins Pellerossasogna (Red Skin Dream): Shelley Niro at the 50th la Biennale di Venezia. *Visual Anthropology Review* 20, no 2 (2005):22-35.

Film: *The Shirt* Shelley Niro (2003).

- **Web resource:**

Po'pay, A True American Hero: Leader of the First American Revolution
<http://www.nativeart.net/affilpopay.php>

Week 2: January 29 and 31: Independent Identities/Developed Identities

Response paper #1 due in class January 31st

- **Required readings:**

Lippard, Lucy. "Independent Identities." In *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. W. Jackson Rushing III, 134-148 (New York: Routledge, 1999).

Hill, Richard W. Sr. "Developed Identities." In *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson, 139-160.(Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

Scherer, Joanna C. "The Photographic Document: Photography as Primary Data in Anthropological Enquiry." In *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards, 32-41 (New Haven ; London : Yale University Press in association with the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1994, c1992).

Dippie, Brian. "Representing the Other: The North American Indian." In *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards, 132-136 (New Haven; London : Yale University Press in association with the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1994, c1992).

Week 3: February 5 and 7: Introduction of the Contrast Picture - Boarding School Documentation

- **Required readings:**

Marglois, Eric. "Looking at Discipline, Looking at Labor: Photographic Representations of Indian Boarding Schools." *Visual Studies* 19, no. 1 (2004): 72-96.

Tsinhnahjinnie, Hulleah J. "When is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words?" In *Photography's Other Histories*, eds. Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, 40-52 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

Nash, Laura. "Transitions and Tribulations: Visible Changes Indicate New Realities," In *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson, 61-69. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

§ **Web resource:**

"Only a Teacher" - Interview With Tsianina Lomawaima, Professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona -
<http://www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/today7.html>

• **Recommended reading:**

Lomawaima, Tsianina. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

Week 4: February 12 and 14:

• **Required readings: Mead - The Mother of Visual Anthropology**

Mead, Margaret. "Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words." In *Principles of Visual Anthropology, Second Edition*, ed. Paul Hockings, 5-10 (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995).

"'For God's Sake, Margaret' Conversation with Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead." *CoEvolutionary Quarterly* 10 (June 1976):32-44. Also found at:
<http://www.oikos.org/forgod.htm>.

Collier Jr., John. "The Challenge of Observation and the Nature of Photography." *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press. 1986. pp. 5-13.

- **Film:** *Four Families*. National Film Board (1959).
- **Recommended reading:**
Jay Ruby's website: "Visual Anthropology." In *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, David Levinson and Melvin Ember, editors (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996) vol. 4:1345-1351.
<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/ruby/cultanthro.html>

Week 5: February 19: Historic Identities- DeCora
No class February 21st, Instructor attending College Art Association meetings

Response paper #2 due in class February 19th

- **Required reading:**
McAnulty, Sarah. "Angel DeCora: American Artist and Educator." *Nebraska History* 57, no. 2 (Summer 1976):143-199. Also found at:
<http://www.nebraskahistory.org>.

Hinook-Mahiwi-Kilinaka (Angel de Cora). "Gray Wolf's Daughter." Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library
<http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=HinGray.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1>.

Week 6: February 26 and 28: Big Foot at Wounded Knee

- **Required readings:**
Niezen, Ron. "The Politics of Repression." In *Spirit Wars*, 128-137. (Los Angeles: CA: University of California Press, 2000).

Takaki, Ron. "The 'Indian Question': From Reservation to Reorganization." In *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, 228-245 (Boston : Little, Brown & Co., c1993).
 - **Web resource:**
<http://www.warriorsofwoundedknee.com/view.htm>
- § **Film:** *Way of the Warrior*. Patty Lowe (2007).

<http://www.pbs.org/wayofthewarrior/>

Week 7: March 4 and 6: Pocahontas - Princess/Squaw

• **Required readings:**

Young, Philip. "The Mother of Us All: Pocahontas." In *American Fiction, American Myth*, 25-46 (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

Green, Rayna. "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture." In *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, ed. Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz, 15-21 (New York: Routledge, 1990).

Gleach, Frederic W. "Controlled Speculation: Interpreting the Saga of Pocahontas and Captain John Smith." In *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, eds. Jennifer S.H. Brown & Elizabeth Vibert, 21-42 (Orchard Park: NY: Broadview Press, 1996).

§ **Film:** *The New World*. Terrence Malick(2006).

Week 8: March 11 and 13: Pocahontas - Princess/Squaw - continued

Response paper #3 due in class March 13th

• **Required readings:**

LaRocque, Emma. "The Colonization of a Native Woman Scholar." In *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength. Manitoba Studies in Native History IX*, ed. Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk, 11-18 (Winnepeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 1996).

King, C. Richard. "De/Scribing Squ*w: Indigenous Women and Imperial Idioms in the United States." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. 27, no.2 (2003):1-16.

Mihesuah, Devon. "Commonality of Difference: American Indian Women and History. *American Indian Quarterly* 20, no.1 (Winter, 1990):15-17.

- **Web resource:**
Indian Women as Sex Objects
<http://www.bluecorncomics.com/princess.htm>
- **Recommended reading:**
Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide
by Andrea Smith

Week 9: March 18 and 20 Spring Break

Week 10: March 25 and 27: The Photographic Record - History

- **Readings:**
Martinez, Natasha Bonilla and Rose Wyaco. "Camera Shots: Photographers, Expeditions, and Collections." In *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson, 77-106. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

Roessel, Monty. "Navajo Photography." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 20, no.3 (1996): 83-91.

Sandweiss, Martha. Laura Gilpin. Online source. n.d.
<http://www.cla.purdue.edu/WAAW/Sandweiss/>.

Week 11: April 1 and 3: American Indian Mascots

- **Required readings:**
King, C. Richard. "Borrowing Power: Racial Metaphors and Pseudo-Indian Mascots." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 4, no.1 (Spring 2004):189-209.

Woodward, Denni. "When the 'Indian' Was Mascot." *Coming Voice*. XXXI, no.1 (Fall, 2001): 9.

Stanford Removes Indian Symbol: Student Petition Gains Support. In *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children*, ed. Arlene Hirschfelder, Paulette Fairbanks Molin, Yvonne Wakim. Lanham, 185-192 (Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1999).

Week 12: April 8 and 10 Commodification - End of the Trail, The Environmental Indian

- **Required reading:**

Coombe, Rosemary. "Embodied Trademarks: Mimesis and Alterity on American Commercial Frontiers." *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 2(1996): 202-224.

Web resources: Keep America Beautiful:

http://www.kab.org/site/PageServer?pagename=media_multimedia

Dave Chappelle: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kJzF-jemVg>

Film: *Tree*. Shelley Niro (2006).

Week 13: April 15 and 17: Native Moderns: Poolaw

Response paper #4 due in class April 15th

- **Required reading:**

Poolaw, Linda. "Spirit Capture: Observations of an Encounter." In *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson, 167-186.(Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

Anthes, Bill. "Introduction." In *Native Moderns: American Indian Painting 1940-1960*, xi - xxiii (Durham: Duke University Press. 2006).

Week 14: April 22 and 24: The Contrast Picture Revisited

§ **Required reading:**

Ryan, Allan J. "Double Play on the World Stage." In *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, 253-254 and p. 140 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

Todd, Loretta. "Polemics, Philosophies and a Story: Aboriginal Aesthetics in the Media of this Land." In *Transference, Tradition, Technology: Narrative New Media Exploring Visual and Digital Culture*, eds. Melanie Townsend, Dana Claxton, Steve Loft, 105-124 (Hamilton, Ontario: Art Gallery of Hamilton and the Indigenous Media Arts Group, 2005).

Week 15: April 29, May 1: Student Presentations

Attendance will be taken.

Week 16: May 6 and May 8: Student Presentations

Attendance will be taken.

Final Papers are due on the day of your scheduled presentation. No extensions are granted.