

**Occidental College ARTH 250**

**American Indians in Film**

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:05 AM to 11:30 AM

Booth 204

**Fall 2014**

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Office hours: Mondays 9:30 to 11:30 AM, 115 Weingart

**Course Description:** This course critically examines the portrayal of American Indians in film, including art films, cinema, documentaries and works by Native filmmakers. Topics addressed include: auto ethnographic film, the short, reflexivity, the portrayal of Native women, the urban experience, indigenous aesthetics, contemporary storytelling, silence, parody, re-appropriation and conventional representations (also known as stereotypes). You will be introduced to Native filmmakers Arlene Bowman, Chris Eyre, Georgina Lightning, Patty Loew, Shelley Niro and the Inuit film company Isuma Productions. Case studies include: the Navajo Nation (Diné), American Indian veterans, the boarding school experience and the emerging Native film industry. The construction of conventional American Indian representations will be critically analyzed and alternative-imaging strategies explored.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students will learn to identify select visual referents, tools and materials specific to Native North American contexts, while also acquiring an appreciation of tribal diversity, sovereignty and contemporaneous identity. Critical thinking, visual literacy, and creative use of multidisciplinary sources will be enhanced through course writing exercises via the web (**Class Forum**), original research (**Research Paper**) and reflective **Film Review Response Papers**. The course will strengthen student skills in writing, speaking and reading critically and effectively in peer group and independent projects.

**Teaching Philosophy and Strategies:** I strive to create a participatory learning setting in which students model for their peers a spirit of intellectual inquiry and where current knowledge is constantly examined and expanded,

based on new knowledge. Active learning is sought, meaning honest self-reflection, questioning and real-world application grounded in careful reading and examination of the required texts, web references and films.

*Please note that the course addresses painful and sensitive issues of racism, sexism and genocide. In order for the course to be successful, students will be expected to exercise a high degree of intellectual and emotional maturity, respect for others and tolerance for diverse opinions. Civil discourse skills are required.*

Students wishing to explore more fully the issues of cultural competency and building inclusive environments may find resources with Occidental's Office of Intercultural Affairs. Contact: <http://www.oxy.edu/intercultural-affairs>, phone (323) 259-2522, location 1501 Campus Road.

Students seeking support for processing painful issues raised may call, email or visit the Emmons Student Wellness Center (323) 259-2657, [oxywell@oxy.edu](mailto:oxywell@oxy.edu). A **24/7** hotline is available for students to gain immediate counseling and resources - **(323) 341-4141**.

**Assessment:** Three Class Forums (5% each or 15%) Three Film Review Papers (15% each or 45%); Midterm (15%), Final Research Paper (20% final submission, 5% proposal or 25%). **Guidelines for all assignments are available online.** There is no final exam for this course.

*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.*

**Course resources:** All course readings and materials are available on the Moodle homepage. Access to viewing the films required for this course is made available for streaming via the Occidental Moodle page. The link for all films not available freely on the web is here: <http://mediasite.oxy.edu:80/Video/Catalog/catalogs/arth250>.

If students wish to watch the films as a group outside of class, they may self-organize this screening by checking the film out at the library and acquiring a viewing room. *Please note that some films in your syllabus (especially the shorts) are available on the web.*

All streaming problems should be reported to [helpdesk@oxy.edu](mailto:helpdesk@oxy.edu).

*Access to RESERVES is restricted to students in this course. Students may not copy, share, distribute or otherwise allow or facilitate any unauthorized access to the content or the passwords issued. Individuals who violate this provision will be subject to disciplinary action under the Occidental Academic Misconduct guidelines.*

**Research Paper Style:** I am not wedded to any specific style guideline (Chicago, MLA or APA) as long as students are consistent in their usage. Style guidelines may be accessed here:

[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.htm](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.htm)  
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>  
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/>

Film Review Response papers do not require a formal bibliography, although you should indicate the author's name and title of work referenced. Final research papers do require citations of sources and a bibliography.

**Academic Ethics:** Please review Occidental College's Statement on Academic Ethics found in the Student Handbook and here: <https://www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/academic-ethics/academic-ethics>. RE: "Academic misconduct occurs when a student misrepresents others' work as her/his own or otherwise behaves so as to unfairly advantage her/himself or another student academically."

**Digital Etiquette:** My classroom laptop and electronic device usage policy is that technology is OK as long as you are actively engaged with the course materials and do not distract your fellow classmates. I reserve the right to ban electronics if classroom respect is jeopardized by over-usage or abuse of laptop privileges.

While I do not prohibit laptop or I pad use in the classroom, I expect that when I am lecturing, presenting a powerpoint or using a film clip, that students are engaged with me and each other in this exercise, not surfing the web, texting or communicating on Facebook. I may often ask that students turn off or put away their electronics when we are engaging together in group discussions.

Classroom time is an occasion to think together about a particular problem or text. Because we need to be able to engage with each other, it matters how you treat other people and how you focus.

I am aware that students with differently-abled learning styles may have accommodations that require the use of a laptop, tape-recorder, or other technological tool for note taking. These students must also, however follow the guidelines set above for respectful use of their computer.

**Electronic communication policy:** Although I typically respond to student emails within a 24 hour period, students shouldn't expect to get a response from an email query for 48 hours. This standard response time is only operable during the weekdays and before 9 PM. If you have an emergency that needs immediate attention, label the subject line - emergency issue.

Emails should open with a salutation (Nancy, Professor Mithlo) and the body of the message should convey the student's full name and class title. To make email communication more productive, I encourage you to be specific about your inquiry or request and to keep the communication thread brief. I encourage students to take advantage of office hours for longer communication needs. Because my classes may be scheduled back to back, I am not always available for one on one in person communication directly before or after class.

**Student Services:** Students who are differently abled have certain rights and responsibilities, as do their professors. Please review the college's guidelines here: <https://www.oxy.edu/disability-services/rights-responsibilities/students>.

If you are eligible for services or have questions, please contact the Accessibility office on campus, phone: (323)

259-2969, [accessibility@oxy.edu](mailto:accessibility@oxy.edu), location: Arthur G. Coons Building, Room 111. Students who are requesting accommodations should present me with their documentation of need within the first two weeks of class.

The Center for Academic Excellence offers faculty writing specialists and student writing advisors. Please visit their website here: <https://www.oxy.edu/center-academic-excellence/three-guidelines-10-tips>. Phone: (323) 259-2545, Location: Academic Commons, Ground Floor.

### **Technical Questions?**

Contact the Information Technology Help desk: [helpdesk@oxy.edu](mailto:helpdesk@oxy.edu), or call 323-259-2880.

### **Web resources:**

Agua Caliente Native Film Festival:  
<http://www.accmuseum.org/2014-Native-FilmFest>

American Indian Film Institute: <http://www.aifisf.com/>

ImagineNative Film + Media Arts Festival:  
<http://www.imaginenative.org>

National Museum of the American Indian Film and Media:  
<http://nmai.si.edu/explore/film-media/>

Sundance Film Festival Native Forum:  
<http://www.sundance.org/programs/native-film>

Vtape: <http://www.vtape.org/research-centre>

Nish Media: [http://www.nishmedia.tv/index\\_en.php](http://www.nishmedia.tv/index_en.php)

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation:  
<http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/society/native-issues/general-21/alanis-obomsawin-the-activist.html>

Native America Calling:  
<http://www.nativeamericacalling.com/>

Indian Country Today:  
[indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com](http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com)

**Course schedule:** This course is organized into seven two-week learning modules. Each learning module contains an introduction to the learning focus of the module, reading assignments, links to online learning activities, assignment directions and due dates.

The first week of each learning module is time for you to watch the films, read, prepare for online activities, and work on assignments. The second week of each learning module will usually be the time when we interact through in class discussion, interactive activities, short writing assignments and critical cumulative assessment.

**Module #1: August 28, September 2, 4: What is Indigenous Cinema?**

First day of class August 28<sup>th</sup>: *The Embargo Collective* (2009)  
<http://www.imagenative.org/program.php?id=59>

***Class Forum #1 online discussion due September 7th by midnight*** Review and respond to two shorts. *Discussion guidelines provided in Moodle online under Forum.*

1) Everyone watches this film: *Tungijuq*. Isuma Productions (2009):  
<http://www.isuma.tv/hi/en/tungijuq/tungijuq720p>

2) Each student selects one film from this selection of 28 emerging filmmakers: *Reel Native*  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/reel native](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/reel%20native)

Read more at:  
Tanya Tagaq <http://www.isuma.tv/tagaq>

Reel Native  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/native now/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/native%20now/)

• **Required reading:**

**Singer, Beverly.** "Thinking Indian Thoughts," in *Wiping the War Paint off the Lens* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), vii-13.

**Public Agenda.** *Walking a Mile: A First Step Toward Mutual Understanding: A Qualitative Study Exploring How Indians and Non-Indians Think About Each Other*  
<http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education2/walkingamile.pdf>

Native American Stereotypes  
<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1500377?terms=native+american+stereotypes>

Myth of the Noble Savage  
<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1385456?terms=myth+of+the+noble+savage>

**Smithsonian Institution.** *Erasing Native American Stereotypes*  
<http://anthropology.si.edu/outreach/Indbibl/sterotyp.html>

- **Recommended reading:**

**Ginsburg, Faye.** "Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village?" *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Feb., 1991), pp. 92-112.

**National Indian Education Association.** "Indians 101" *Basic Facts about American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Education*  
<http://www.niea.org/data/files/policy/nativeeducation101.pdf>

**The Authentic History Center.** *Native Americans & American Popular Culture*  
<http://www.authentichistory.com/diversity/native/>

## **Module #2: September 9, 11, 16, 18: The Art of the Short**

- **Class Forum #2 due September 21<sup>st</sup> by midnight**  
*Review and respond - Discussion guidelines provided in Moodle online under Forum.*

- **Films:** Suite: INDIAN. Shelley Niro (2005)

Tree. Shelley Niro (2006)

A Thousand Roads. Chris Eyre and the  
National Museum of the American Indian (2005)

▪ **Web resources:**

Keep America Beautiful:

[https://secure2.convio.net/kab/site/SPageServer;jsessionid=0713BAC209FEB1B264F5BAC7373DFCD0.app272a?pagename=kabmedia\\_psa](https://secure2.convio.net/kab/site/SPageServer;jsessionid=0713BAC209FEB1B264F5BAC7373DFCD0.app272a?pagename=kabmedia_psa)

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

Iron Eyes Cody:

<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/05/arts/iron-eyes-cody-94-an-actor-and-tearful-anti-littering-icon.html>

Shelley Niro

<http://archive.is/53mh>

[http://www.britesites.com/native\\_artist\\_interviews/sniro.htm](http://www.britesites.com/native_artist_interviews/sniro.htm)

Suite: Indian

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRcrTAZSzos>

Kissed by Lightning

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhOWdqNmLtw>

The Shirt:

<http://www.isuma.tv/hi/en/imaginative/shirt>

National Museum of the American Indian Film and Video  
Center

[http://nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/reservation\\_x/eXtras/media/feverB.htm](http://nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/reservation_x/eXtras/media/feverB.htm)

• **Required readings:**

**Wood**, Houston. "Chapter 6 - Dimensions of Difference in Indigenous Film," in *Native Features: Indigenous Films from Around the World* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 86-104.



**Beadling**, Laura L. "In an "Indian Key: Shelley Niro's Revisioning of the Baroque Suite Form in *Suite: Indian*." *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 20.2: 2011.

**Hoolboom**, Mike. "Shelley Niro: The Red Army is the Strongest." In *Practical Dreamers: Conversations with Movie Artists*, 91-102 (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2008).

**Editorial**. "September 21, 2004: A Native Universe Opens," in *American is Indian Country*, eds. José Barriero and Tim Johnson (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2005), 278-281.

**King**, Frank J. III and Lise Balk King. "Director Chris Eyre Inspired by Filmmaking: Journey on A Thousand Roads." Press packet info. (Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. n.d.).

- **Recommended Reading:**

**McDonald**, Christine. "An Interview with Native Filmmaker Chris Eyre and Producer Scott Garen." *Multicultural Review*, Spring 2006, p.37-40.

### **Module #3: September 23, 25, October 7, 9: Indian Princess - Gender Politics**

- **Class Forum #3 due October 12<sup>th</sup> by midnight** Review and respond - Discussion guidelines provided in Moodle online under Forum.

- **Films:** *The New World*. Terrence Malick (2006)  
*Pocahontas*. Disney (1995)

- **Required readings:**

**Rountree**, Helen C. "Pocahontas: The Hostage Who Became Famous," in *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives*, ed. Theda Perdue (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14-28.

**Sardar**, Ziauddin. "Walt Disney and the Double Victimization of Pocahontas," In *The Third Text Reader:*

*On Art, Culture and Theory*, eds. Rasheed Araeen, Sean Cubitt and Ziauddin Sardar (London: Continuum Press, 2002), 193-203.

The American Indian Experience: How has the marked increase in violence against Native American women on reservations affected clan/family/social structure and traditions? *Read the Enduring Question and also the three responses to the right.*

<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Ideas/Display/1611237>

Native American Representations

<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1521322?terms=Native+American+Representations>

Indian Women as Sex Objects

<http://www.bluecorncomics.com/princess.htm>

Disney Pocahontas

<http://princess.disney.com/pocahontas>

Disney's Pocahontas film 1995

<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1520051?terms=Disney%27s+Pocahontas%3a>

Russell Means <http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1384808?terms=Russell+means>

<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1384808?terms=Russell+means>

Pocahontas the person <http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1479963?terms=pocahontas>

<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1479963?terms=pocahontas>

Amnesty International Report. "Maze of Injustice: The Failure to Protect Indigenous Women from Violence."

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/50/inspirational-stories/indigenous-women%27s-rights>

- **Recommended reading:**

**Green**, Rayna. "The Pocahontas Perplex: Images of American Indian Women in American Culture," *Massachusetts Review* 16 (Autumn 1975): 698-714.

**King**, C. Richard. "De/Scribing Squ\*w: Indigenous Women and Imperial Idioms in the United States." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 27:2 (2003): 1-16.

**Mihesuah**, Devon A. "Colonialism and Disempowerment." In *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*, 41-61 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

**NO CLASS OCTOBER 13 - FALL BREAK**

**Module #4 October 16, 21, 23 Auto Ethnographic Film**

**\* Midterm in class October 16**

**\* Film Review Paper #1 by October 26<sup>th</sup> midnight**

- **Film:** *Navajo Talking Picture*. Arlene Bowman (1986)
- **Required readings:**

**Jackson**, Deborah Davis. "'This Hole in Our Heart': The Urban-Raised Generation and the Legacy of Silence." *American Indians and the Urban Experience*, eds. Susan Lobo and Kurt Peters, 189-206. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001).

**Pack**, Sam. "Constructing 'The Navajo': Visual and Literary Representation From Inside and Out." *Wicazo Sa Review*, 15, no. 1, *The Secular Past, the Mythic Past, and the Impending Future*. (Spring, 2000): 137-156.

The Navajo Nation Government  
<http://www.navajo-nsn.gov/history.htm>

The American Indian Experience, Indian Relocation:  
<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1385395?terms=relocation>

- **Recommended reading:**

**Medicine**, Bea. "The Anthropologist as the Indian's Image-Maker," *The Indian Historian* 4, no.3 (Fall 1971):27-29.

Indian Child Welfare:

<https://www.aclu.org/blog/racial-justice/why-are-these-indian-children-being-torn-away-their-homes>

## **Module #5: October 28, 30, November 4, 6 The Documentary**

**\* Research Paper Proposal due November 4**

**\* Film Review Paper #2 due November 9<sup>th</sup> midnight**

- **Film:** Way of the Warrior. Patty Loew (2007)

- **Required readings:**

**Fischer**, Joan. "Interview, Way of the Warrior," *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, Fall 2007, pp.37 - 42. See producer interview, web access:  
[http://www.wpt2.org/wayofthewarrior/WoW%20Extras/WPI\\_fall07\\_Warrior.pdf](http://www.wpt2.org/wayofthewarrior/WoW%20Extras/WPI_fall07_Warrior.pdf)

<http://www.wpt2.org/wayofthewarrior/>

Way of the Warrior discussion questions  
<http://www.wpt2.org/wayofthewarrior/discussion.cfm>

- **Recommended reading:**

**Rosier**, Paul. "'They Are Ancestral Homelands': Race, Place, and Politics in Cold War Native America, 1945-1961," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (2006): 1300-1326.

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## **Module #6: November 11, 13, 18, 20 The Boarding School Experience**

**\* Film Review Paper #3 due November 23<sup>rd</sup> midnight**

**Individual meetings with professor on Research Paper**

- **Film:** Older Than America. Georgina Lightning (2008)

- **Required readings:**

**Szasz, M. C.** "'I Knew How to Be Moderate. And I knew How to Obey": The Commonality of American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1750s-1920s," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* v. 29 no. 4 (2005): 75-94

**Brave Heart MYH, DeBruyn LM.** "The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief" *American Indian Alaska Native Mental Health Research Journal*. 1998;8(2) p.71.

The Ziibiwing Center: "American Indian Boarding Schools, An Exploration of Global Ethnic and Cultural Cleansing":  
<http://www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing/planyourvisit/pdf/AIBSCurrGuide.pdf>

Older Than America web resource  
[www.olderthanamerica.com](http://www.olderthanamerica.com)

Older Than America Film 2008  
<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1699266?term=s=older+than+america>

Tantoo Cardinal  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5xLZX2JR1k&feature=related>

Georgina Lightning  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Roz0QcApSwo&feature=related>

Wes Studi  
<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1519863?term=s=wes+studi>

American Indian Boarding Schools

<http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1537502?terms=American+Indian+boarding+schools>

Interview With Native educator Tsianina Lomawaima  
<http://www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/today7.html>

- **Recommended reading/viewing:**

**Quinn**, Ashley. Reflections on Intergenerational Trauma: Healing as a Critical Intervention. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, Volume 3, Number 4, 2007.

*We Were Children* Tim Wolochatiuk (2012) National Film Board of Canada: <http://tinyurl.com/k4rd9gj>

Impact of the Boarding School Movement: <http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1661966?terms=boarding+school>

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## Module #7: November 25, December 2, Storytelling: Indigenous Cinema in the North

**\* Final Research Paper due December 3<sup>rd</sup> midnight**

- **Film:** *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*. Isuma Productions (2000)

- **Required readings:**

**Wood**, Houston. "Chapter 5 - Uses and Abuses of Indigenous Films," in *Native Features: Indigenous Films from Around the World* (New York: Continuum, 2008): 71-85 AND 144-146.

**Kunuk**, Zacharias and Puhipau. "Dialogue: Pumipau in Conversation with Zacharias Kunuk," in *Transference, Tradition, Technology: Narrative New Media Exploring Visual and Digital Culture*, eds. Melanie Townsend, Dana Claxton, Steve Loft (Hamilton, Ontario: Art Gallery of Hamilton and the Indigenous Media Arts Group, 2005), 43-59.

**Soukup**, Katarina. "Report: Travelling Through Layers: Inuit Artists Appropriate New Technologies; Igloolik Isuma Productions." *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol 31 (2006) 239-246.

Isuma Productions <http://www.isuma.tv/isuma-productions/>

<http://www.isuma.tv/atanarjuat>

Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)  
<http://americanindian2.abc-clio.com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/Search/Display/1520040?terms=film>

Zacharias Kunuk <http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1387443?terms=Zacharias+Kunuk++>

- **Recommended Reading:**

**Huhndorf**, Shari. "Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner": Culture, History, and Politics in Inuit Media." *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 105, No. 4, Special Issue: Language Politics and Practices (Dec., 2003), pp. 822-826.

*There is no final exam for this course.*