

Representation & Indigenous Cultural Politics

#FNIS220

FNIS 220

Fall 2018, Tuesday & Thursday 11:00-12:30

Instructor

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Teaching Assistant

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COURSE DESCRIPTION



FNISP 220 explores the ways that Indigenous peoples seek to overcome the legacies of settler colonialism and claim sovereignty and self-determination through cultural production and critique. In this course, we will examine contemporary articulations of Indigenous identity, politics, and cultural traditions in the fields of literature, film, video games, and other modes of resurgent cultural expression. We will examine both critiques of mainstream representations of Indigenous peoples as well as Indigenous perspectives on popular culture, urban indigeneity, history, politics, and contemporary decolonization struggles.

Each class session will focus on a theme relevant to the course topic and reading materials. The course will be comprised of a combination of class lectures, guest speakers, group discussions, and in-class film screenings. Emphasis will be placed on generating group discussions and class participation whenever possible. Students and Instructor tweet relevant course material under the hashtag #FNIS220

OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to:

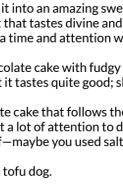
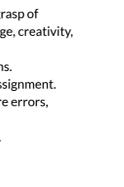
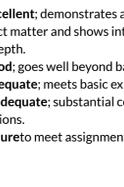
- Provide students with the empirical background and theoretical tools required to further their education in the First Nations and Indigenous Studies Program at UBC.
- Introduce students to the key interventions and critical/theoretical debates relating to Indigenous representation and self-determination in Canada. Although this course will focus on these issues at the national level, attention will also be paid to the context of British Columbia and internationally.
- Develop student capacity to critically analyze, read, write and research major issues in the field of First Nations and Indigenous Studies.
- Introduce students to the interdisciplinary network of scholars and institutional resources available at UBC that address Indigenous issues and concerns.
- Provide students with the skills to critically engage with arts, literature, and technology using close reading methodologies.
- Develop students' ability to write comprehensive arts analysis and critique on a variety of mediums and to connect that critique to key issues in Indigenous studies, including decolonization, Indigenous feminisms, sovereignty, and self-determination.
- Make students active participants in the conversations currently taking place in Indigenous studies about representation and cultural politics using blogs and social media.

Appointments

Dr. Gaertner
Buchanan E175
Tuesday & Thursday, 1-2
Or by appointment

Adi Burton
Buchanan E264
Office Hours TBD

Course Texts

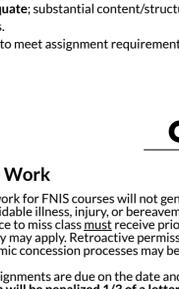


All other readings, links, games, ideas available online or via Canvas.

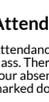


All films screened in class

Assignment Weights



- Participation (15%)
- Wikipedia Gap Analysis (25%)
- Research Essay (30%)
- Final Exam (30%)



GRADING SCALE, OR BAKING A GREAT CAKE

A: Excellent; demonstrates an exceptional grasp of subject matter and shows intellectual courage, creativity, and depth.

B: Good; goes well beyond basic expectations.

C: Adequate; meets basic expectations of assignment.

D: Inadequate; substantial content/structure errors, omissions.

F: Failure to meet assignment requirements.

A: Wow—you took the basic chocolate cake recipe and turned it into an amazing sweet-treat fudge cake delight that tastes divine and looks amazing! The extra time and attention were well spent!

B: A delicious chocolate cake with fudgy layers. Nothing fancy, but it tastes quite good; shows real care.

C: A basic chocolate cake that follows the recipe. Tastes fine, but not a lot of attention to detail.

D: Something's off—maybe you used salt instead of sugar?

F: I didn't ask for a tofu dog.

Course Policies

Late Work

Late work for FNIS courses will not generally be accepted except in extraordinary circumstances (such as unavoidable illness, injury, or bereavement), and only at the instructor's discretion. Students planning in advance to miss class **must** receive prior instructor permission to submit late coursework for credit, and a penalty may apply. Retroactive permission is not permitted. Supporting documentation through formal academic concession processes may be required.

All assignments are due on the date and times indicated below. **Late assignments without a documented reason will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for every day they are late.** (For example, an A+ paper that is two days late without a documented excuse will drop to an A).

Attendance

Attendance is required and will be recorded. **More than three absences** will result in a failing grade for the class. There is no differentiation between excused and unexcused absences for this course; you should "save" your absences for emergencies. Missing appointments with me without at least 4 hours' notice will also be marked down as an absence.

If you are **more than 15 minutes** late for class, you will be marked down for an absence. Students who are tardy (i.e. 5-15 minutes late) twice, will be marked down for an absence. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to find out about homework assignments or schedule changes and get class notes. Furthermore, if an assignment is due on a day that you will be absent, plan for a classmate to turn it in for you.

If circumstances arise that make it difficult for you to come to class or to complete your assigned work, please inform me immediately. Do not wait until the end of the semester, when it becomes much harder and sometimes impossible to make accommodations in a way that is fair to both you and the other students in the class.

Preparation

To assist classroom discussions, come to class prepared with questions, discussion points, notes, and the relevant text(s) for that class. Lack of preparation will negatively impact your grade.

Respect

Some of the issues we discuss will be provocative, controversial, or emotionally challenging. Our classroom should be as conducive as possible to an ethos of thoughtful and open inquiry that encourages everyone to share ideas in a productive way. Please be respectful of the rights of others to their own opinions and beliefs. Please keep in mind that many of the issues we discuss in class are the lived experience of real human beings, not just theoretical concerns, so be kind to one another even in disagreement.

Courtesy & Technology

Please be respectful of a productive learning environment by ensuring that your phones, laptops, and other electronics are not disruptive to the class or to the students around you. If needed for family or medical reasons, phones should be switched to vibrate. Misuse of laptops, (smart)phones, or other electronics for non-class purposes will be dealt with according to UBC policy and devices may be banned.

Academic Dishonesty

Don't cheat, **don't plagiarize**, don't buy papers or have someone else do your work for you. If you do, you fail the class. You will be reported to University authorities. See UBC's statement on Academic Misconduct here: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?yres=3,54,111,959>

Email and Telephone Policy

Phone calls should be limited to appointment queries or emergencies only. I generally respond to e-mail during working hours, M-F. Do not expect a response if you email a question about an assignment the night before it is due. Plan ahead and make use of office hours.

Audio/Video Recording

Unauthorized or misappropriated audio/visual recording of lectures, guest presentations, or teaching materials is prohibited under the Canadian Copyright Act without express written permission of the instructor and/or speaker.

Accommodation

If you are or think you are differently abled and therefore need support, please contact Access and Diversity and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations. For more information about Access and Diversity visit <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity>.

Essay Format

All of your essays must be typed in Times New Roman font in size 12, double-spaced (unless specified otherwise). There should be one-inch margins around the entire page and your last name and page number should be on the top of each page. You must follow the format outlined by the Modern Language Association (MLA) including proper citation of sources within your texts and a corresponding list of "works cited" when needed. Students who deliberately alter the essay format specifications in order to make your essay longer or shorter will be marked down a letter grade on their papers.

All papers should include an original title that accurately reflects the content of your essay. **Please do not turn in assignments that are titled "Essay #2"; be creative.**

Revision Policy

For all writing assignments, you will be given the opportunity to revise your paper. I will average the two papers' grades and replace your original grade (assuming, of course, that the revised paper has a higher grade). You must meet with me before you turn in your revision. Within five days of the assignment, you should turn in 1) the paper with my comments on it 2) your revised piece 3) a one-page reflection detailing what you changed, why, and what you have learned in the process.

Deliverables

Participation (15%)

15 percent of your grade will be based on your demonstrated attendance and punctuality and the *quality* of your participation in the classroom. It is absolutely essential that you arrive in class prepared to discuss the course material in detail. All readings must therefore be read **PRIOR** to each class and **MUST BE BROUGHT TO CLASS FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES.**

Mini Assignment: Questioning the text

For each class, one or two of your classmates will be responsible for posing a question on that day's reading for group discussion. Bring your question, in hardcopy and typed, to class that day and be prepared to read it aloud. Hand in your question to me before you leave that day. I will circulate a sign-up sheet for these questions in the first or second week of class. Questions are graded on a pass/fail basis. Failure to present your question on your assigned day will result in an automatic 7% deduction from your participation grade.

A good question is one that cannot be answered by a "yes" or "no" statement, but is not so expansive that it cannot be addressed in one or two minutes. Voght, Brown, and Isaacs write that "a powerful question also has the capacity to 'travel well'—to spread beyond the place where it began into larger networks of conversation throughout an organization or a community." Try to formulate questions that resonate with larger discussion topics in FNIS 220 or that address what you see as big topics in the field or Indigenous representation. For more on the art of the question, see Tobga, Brown, and Isaacs, https://humanitoba.ca/admin/human_resources/change/media/the-art-of-powerful-questions.pdf

If you have concerns about speaking in public please come and see me ASAP. I cannot help you to improve your participation grade at the end of the term. I will also periodically ask my own questions of our readings on Twitter via the hashtag #FNIS220. You are welcome to share your own questions (or answers) there as well as credit towards your participation grade.

Wikipedia Gap Analysis and Page Edits (25%)

For this assignment, working individually and in groups of 4, you will be analyzing, writing, and reflecting on Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org).

Wikipedia is a multilingual, web-based, free encyclopedia based on a model of open community generated knowledge. The community driven nature of Wikipedia is meant to support Wikipedia's goal of providing "...every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge." However information gaps, biases, exclusions, and assumptions about "neutrality" means there remains lots of work to be done, particularly within the contexts of settler colonialism In the case of this assignment, you are being asked to analyze a topic from your course in Wikipedia in relation to information gaps and help build knowledge in that area.

There are three components to this assignment We will have time to work on this in class, but you will also have to organize yourselves to complete the assignment. The breakdown of this assignment is as follows:

PART I (Gap Analysis, 15%)

- Select a topic, relevant to FNIS 220, to analyse in Wikipedia
- Compose gap analysis paper (1000 words)

PART II (Editing Wikipedia, 10%)

- Edit an existing Wikipedia article (training provided in class)
- Reflection Paper

WIKIPEDIA: GAP ANALYSIS

01
PART #1

Selecting a Topic (individually)

Building off of class readings and discussions, select a topic, relevant to Indigenous studies, that you think needs better representation on Wikipedia. We will not be writing new articles for this assignment; we will be editing and hopefully improving existing pieces, so take some time to explore what's out there and generate a list of 3-5 potential topics. There will be some time to do this in class, but it is best if you come prepared with some ideas.

There are a number of ways to choose a topic. For instance, you might choose an author, artists, or filmmaker from FNIS 220 and work on that page. You might also choose to edit an article about a particular piece of work, such as an Indigenous film, novel, or videogame. In the past, I have also had students edit the pages on their home towns to better represent Indigenous histories of those places. I had one student who completed a very successful Wikipedia assignment changing lower case "i"'s in "Indigenous" to upper case (as per Daniel Justice's recommendation in *Why Indigenous Literature Matters*).

The choice is up to you. I am not so much interested in the *amount* of content you add or change as the *critical insight* you bring to those changes, which is where the gap analysis comes into play.

Gap Analysis

The gap analysis represents the largest portion of your grade for this assignment (15%). It is written individually and turned in, in class (hardcopy only; no email), on **October 11**.

A gap analysis is a detailed look at what is *missing* from the Wikipedia article on your chosen topic. It includes critical insight into why that content might be missing and how those gaps might be addressed.

For instance, the student who changed the lower case "i"'s in "Indigenous" wrote about the ways in which the use of the lower case "i" in Indigenous undermined Indigenous sovereignty by relegating a proper noun to the position of an adjective. She used Daniel Heath Justice's *Why Indigenous Literature Matters* as evidence for her claim and pointed to specific Wikipedia pages where this error was particularly glaring. She then built in citations from the *Globe & Mail* and the *National Post* as further evidence to changes being made in editorial procedure across Canada.

For your gap analysis, we are providing the theoretical starting point. Ground your engagement in the article by Siobhan Senior, "*Indigenous Wikipedia: Student Accountability to Native American Authors on the World's Largest Encyclopedia*." How can you apply the ideas in the article to the gap analysis and writing in Wikipedia?

Following an introductory paragraph, which presents your topic and reasons for choosing it, each article should begin with a summary of Senior and direct explanation of how you see that article applying to your chosen topic. From there, build an argument for your gap analysis using references to the existing Wikipedia page and resources that you have located to help you to address the gap. Finish the paper with a conclusion summarizing your argument and gesturing towards how your research might impact other articles on the Wikipedia.

Give your gap analysis a creative title! Assignments title "Gap Analysis" or Wikipedia Assignment" will automatically be docked 5 points.

Gap Analysis Checklist

- Identify a course-related person, concept, movement, or media. You can begin with material discussed in class or follow your own interests. To explore possible topics:
 - Look at the categories in Wikipedia.
 - Research Indigenous arts and media in books and articles from this class and the UBC Library
 - Review websites and information shared in class
- Search Wikipedia for coverage of your topic. Using Senior's article, identify any gaps you may find. For example (you do not have address all of these questions; they are prompts to get you started):
 - Is there an article on your topic? Is the information sparse or limited?
 - Does your article link to important related topics and themes?
 - Is your topic missing significant or relevant people, events, or concept?
 - What sources are cited on your topic? Are important voices missing?
 - How is the article categorized? Are there categories that should be added?
- Reflect on how you would fill this gap in information. Whose voices need to be included? What source of information should be added?
- Once you have identified a gap, write a reflection that documents it, describe how you found it, and, using Senior's article, analyze how this gap limits knowledge or structures it in a particular way.

WIKIPEDIA: EDITING

02
PART #2

Editing (in groups of 4)

The second portion of this assignment (10%) is the practical application of the gap analysis. The class will be broken up into groups of four. You will begin by sharing your topic and selected materials from your gap analysis. As a group, you will then decide on ONE topic you want to engage with on Wikipedia. You will then work, to the best of your ability, to make the changes addressed in the gap analysis and publish them to Wikipedia. Training in Wikipedia editing will be provided in class.

Please publish your edits to Wikipedia before class on **October 30** and have one member of your group email me and your TA with a summary of the selected gap analysis, a summary of the changes made, and the URL of your edited Wikipedia page. Use the subject header **FNIS 220 Wikipedia Article** in the email and CC all members of the group.

Under Construction

Note: many of your changes will be taken down. This assignment is not graded on what makes it onto the Wikipedia site, but how you and your group attempt to change and challenge Indigenous representation. We will be checking in on these entries periodically throughout the semester, so please keep track of any feedback or comments you receive from the Wikipedia community.

Personal Reflection

Each group member must also write a 300-500 word reflection on the project itself, which should be composed privately and handed in (hardcopy, in class) on **November 6**, one week following the publication of your page. This will provide some time to collect feedback from editors and allow you some time to think about the changes made to your page. The reflection paper is a place to record these changes and reflections. It should be written in essay style, but can be informal in tone.

The reflection paper is also the place where you can tell us how the project worked on a practical level. Did everyone contribute equally? Did someone put in extra effort? Did someone contribute little, or nothing? This information will not be shared with the group, but we will be taking it into consideration when assigning the grades.

Research Essay (30%)

The research essay is intended to give you the opportunity to explore more deeply one of the texts we have discussed in class while providing experience in academic research. For this assignment, you must compose an 8-page (2000-word) essay analyzing the representation of Indigenous peoples, ideas, culture, or politics in one of the creative pieces we have studied this term (e.g. a novel, poem, videogame, short story, or film). Using direct citations from your primary text and argumentative support from secondary texts, your paper should carefully unpack the nuanced and complicated ways in which Indigenous authors and media makers represent themselves and their communities within, against, and outside of settler colonialism.

There are multiple different ways to approach this assignment. For instance, you might look at the ways in which Billy-Ray Belcourt uses language to represent his experiences as a queer Indigenous man. You might look at how Elizabeth LaPense incorporates ludology (game play) to remediate Thunderbird stories. Or you might address how Elle-Majja Tailfeathers challenges the victim narrative in *Red Girl Reasoning*. These are just three examples, which you are welcome to draw from or adapt. Ultimately, you should choose a piece and a topic that interests you and that you want to learn more about.

You will be graded on the originality of your ideas, the focus and clarity of your thesis statement, your ability to organize and support an argument using primary and secondary sources, and your overall writing ability. We will provide assistance along the way and extra office hours will be made available, during which we encourage you to workshop your thesis or get feedback on a draft.

A separate handout on tips for writing a research essay is available on Canvas.

Research Essay Requirements

You must include *three* secondary sources in this paper.

- One of those sources can be from class.
- One of those sources must be an article from an academic journal or a chapter from an academic collection.
- One of those sources can be from a newspaper, magazine, or a website.

If you need help getting started with your research, make an appointment with me or your TA or visit a UBC librarian. There are also great resources available via the library website: <https://help.library.ubc.ca>.

Style: This is essay must be written in MLA style. See the UBC Wiki on MLA: <https://wiki.ubc.ca/images/f/f9/Mlastyle.pdf>

Formatting: See the "essay format" section of this syllabus for instructions on formatting.

Additional References: In addition to MLA style, your works cited must include a brief description of where you found the source (e.g. the name of the database, the name of the library, etc.). Write this directly at the end of each entry.

Essays that do not follow formatting guidelines or do not adhere to MLA style will be docked a full letter grade. If you have questions regarding formatting, style, or references, please ask.

Student Resources



UBC Learning Commons

Writing Consultation

Academic Integrity

Student Toolkit

Health & Wellness

Academic Support

First Nations and Indigenous Studies