DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTH 310: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ RIGHTS IN SOUTH AMERICA

FALL 2006

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Room: 360 Condon
Office: Condon 315/ Hendrix 338
Class Time: 16:00-17:50 TR
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Course Description

This special topics course is about the rights of indigenous peoples of the tropical lowlands of South America, an ethnographic region that includes coastal, savannah, and rainforest ecosystems. The two main ecosystems in the region are Amazonia and the Gran Chaco. For the past five hundred years, indigenous peoples in the lowlands have sustained themselves with a mixture of horticulture, fishing, hunting, and gathering. These peoples have been colonized by the Portuguese and the Spanish (although the French, the Dutch, and the British also settled in the Caribbean coast of northern Amazonia). European colonists employed the Indians in the extraction of natural resources and in agriculture. The indigenes contributed with their labor to the economic development of the region, while many indigenous communities remained semi-autonomous. In the early 1800s, the lowland region was segmented into nation-states.

This course will familiarize the students with the deconstruction of the myths and errors that have plagued European interpretations of indigenous peoples in the Americas, and the policies toward them—for example, the English conquered property, denying the natives’ true ownership of their land, while the Iberians (Spaniards and Portuguese) initially conquered people, allowing sedentary natives to retain their lands in exchange for labor and social humiliation. In confiscating natives’ goods and land, and using their labor, all Europeans reasoned that the aborigines had failed to conform to Europeans’ expectations of society. Even now, old European cultural assumptions seriously limit the natives’ options to own the riches they possess. To bring the topic closer to the students’ experience, we will compare how the United States and South American nation-states deal with the native populations—linking it, to a large extent, to the legacy of the colonial era; then we will review the most pressing issues affecting indigenous communities in the South American lowlands.

This course is part of a three-course series that addresses indigenous peoples’ rights in the Americas. The second course is on Oregon Indian History and Termination of Federal Recognition, taught by David Lewis in the 2007 winter term. The third course of this series is on Indigenous Mexican and Central American Immigrants in Oregon, taught by Dr. Lynn Stephen in the spring of 2007. The series has been supported by the
Wayne Morse Center of Law and Politics and the UO Department of Anthropology. It is part of the Center’s 2005-07 programs on the theme Indigenous Peoples, National Policy, and International Human Rights.

The program includes a speakers’ series. These lectures by invited speakers will supplement the content of the courses and will be open to the public. The speakers for this first course are Hector Huertas, a Kuna lawyer working with the Centro de Asistencia Legal Popular in Panama; Lottie Cunningham, a lawyer with the International Human Rights Law Group in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua; Dr. Larry Sujiyama, assistant professor of Anthropology at UO; and Dr. Jean Jackson, professor of Anthropology at MIT. Also, graduate students Jaime Peña and Elena Montenegro will discuss their individual research projects on indigenous languages of the Peruvian Amazon, and on the current political situation in Bolivia.

Course Content

On the first half of the course we will discuss the concept of “indigenous peoples” or “indigenes” and their collective rights. We will study differences and similarities in the Europeans’ approaches to colonization: the English in North America and the Iberians (Spanish and Portuguese) in South America. We will analyze cultural categories and unquestioned ideas about the rights of Europeans to pursue wealth in the Americas, while dispossessing the natives of their own lands and resources. We will compare the role of anthropology and identity-making nationalisms in the construction of Indianness/indigeneity in two post-colonial nation-states, the United States and Brazil.

The students will be introduced to the ethnographical and ecological meanings of “lowlands”—in contrast to “highlands”—, and “tropicality” to understand the constructed and discursive character of the tropics in European imagination. Then, we will consider the first European vision of Brazilian Indians, and will study the current civil status of these indigenous populations regarding issues of identity and political representation.

In the second half of the course, we will reflect on indigenous body images and European notions of cultural authenticity, and then will generate deeper understanding of pressing issues concerning indigenous communities in the lowlands, such as the right to self-determination, land rights, demographic growth and health inequality, the right to education and preservation of the native languages, alliances with conservationists to preserve indigenous access to natural resources, peoples’ requests of intellectual property rights in pharmaceutical bioprospecting and biomedical research projects, economic development, and the politics of citizenship. We will conclude the course with a reflection on the commodification of the indigenous images, native knowledge, and indigenous products in the South American lowlands.

Course Goals

The main goals of this special topics course on the rights of indigenous peoples of South America are:
• To familiarize the students with cultural assumptions behind unself-conscious declarations about the rights of Europeans (and later Americans) to native land and resources—since neither the characteristics of native peoples nor first contacts can explain the dissimilar ways Europeans pursued wealth in the Americas, rather old cultural traditions about obtaining and possessing riches.

• To facilitate the students’ understanding of indigenous peoples’ rights in the South American lowlands by comparing how the United States and Brazil deal with the native populations.

• To develop the students’ understanding of pressing issues affecting the collective rights of indigenous peoples in the lowlands, such as the right to self-determination, rights to land and natural resources, rights to healthcare, education, preservation of native languages, and intellectual property rights, particularly concerning indigenous responses to biopiracy.

• To familiarize the students with the different experiences of the indigenes in Brazil, Paraguay, eastern Bolivia, and northern Argentina regarding development, access to natural resources, identity politics, and citizenship.

Required Texts


Selected Required Readings


Additional Readings


Documentaries

Columbus Didn’t Discover Us. 1992. Turning Tie Productions. VHS, 24 min. [01699]
Granada Video, 52 min. [3174]

Electronic Resources

Amazon Alliance  http://www.amazonalliance.org
American Anthropological Association, Programs, Human Rights (AAA Committee for Human Rights)  http://www.aaanet.org
Amerindian Peoples Association, Guyana  http://www.caribbeangos.net
Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (Spanish)  http://www.cidob-bo.org
Conselho Indigenista Missionario (Portuguese)  http://www.cimi.org
Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (Spanish)  http://www.coica.org
Etnias de Colombia (Spanish)  http://www.etniasdecolombia.org
Forest People  http://www.forestpeople.org
Instituto Socioambiental, Brazil (English)  http://www.socioambiental.org
Survival International  http://www.survival-international.org
Tierra Viva (Spanish)  http://www.tierraviva.org.py
University of Minnesota Human Rights Center  http://www.indigpeoples.org
 http://www.hrusa.org
World Rainforest Movement  http://www.wrm.org.uy

Course Requirements and Policies

This special topics course counts for 4 credits. There are no prerequisites to enroll although the complexity of the readings would require an upper-division standing. Lectures and class discussion will follow the order of the outline and reading schedule presented below. Students need to attend lectures, including the invited speakers’ lectures (mandatory attendance) and read in advance the assigned readings. The invited speakers’ lectures have been scheduled to match up the class schedule and topics. Course grades will be determined on the basis of two exams, one essay, five written assignments, class attendance and participation. Notice that participation is more than attendance; it means being prepared, reviewing class notes, keeping up-to-date with the readings, and contributing to the class discussions. The assignments will require additional work on a particular subject that is being discussed at the moment. Exams will include a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The exam questions will evaluate your understanding of the materials covered in the lectures and readings. The mid-term exam will be administered during regular class time and will cover the first half of the course (week 1-4). The final exam will be held during the exam period and will cover the second half of the course content (week 5-10), although students are expected to make connections and interrelations among all the topics
presented in the course. Make-up exams are not allowed except in case of exceptional emergency or severe illness/injury, documented by a physician.

The required 5 to 7 page-long essay is designed to give you the opportunity to critically assess a topic of your interest among those developed in the course. The format will be discussed in class. Submit your essay and other assignments in hardcopy (no e-mail submissions). You will need to submit the topic of your essay with a short explanation on November 7. The essay due date is November 21. **Essay and assignments are due in class.** Essay and assignments that are not submitted on the due date will count less (you may loose one letter grade per day). Retain all the graded submissions for your records.

All the work submitted to this course should be your own and produced exclusively for the course. If you use the ideas and words of others, you need to acknowledge and document these. Plagiarism is a very serious offense. Any assignment, essay or exam containing plagiarized material will receive a failing grade. Refer to the university policy on academic dishonesty for details.

Students with special needs should contact the instructor immediately and file documentation with Disability Services at 541-346-1155.

At any time during the term, please consult the instructor if you have any questions or concerns about the requirements, policies, and materials covered in the class. Successful students generally have very good attendance, complete the readings in advance, participate in discussions, and make use of the instructor’s office hours.

**Course Grading and Exam Dates**

Your final grade will be determined by the total number of points obtained in different forms of evaluation (exams, essay, assignments, class attendance and participation). The total possible points are 500, weighted in the following manner (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIREMENT</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>WEIGHT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam (based on Week 1-4 materials)</td>
<td>Oct 24</td>
<td>20 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td>20 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam (based on Week 5-10 materials)</td>
<td>Wed. Dec 5, 13:00</td>
<td>30 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
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<td>10 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Attendance and Participation</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Grades will be assigned using the following scale: A=93+, A-=90-92, B+=87-89, B=83-86, B-=80-82, C+=77-79, C=73-76, 70-72= C-, 67-69= D+, 60-66=D, Below 60=F.
### Course Outline and Reading Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Discussion Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept 28</td>
<td>Differences among the British, Spanish, and Portuguese colonization of the Americas. Cultural assumptions about the rights of Europeans to native resources</td>
<td>Seed, Ch 1-3, pp.12-56; Ch 4-5, pp.57-90.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Oct 3</td>
<td>The heritage of British, Spanish, and Portuguese policies toward the Indians in post-independence nation-states.</td>
<td>Seed, Ch 7-8, pp.113-150</td>
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<td>Oct 12</td>
<td>Presentation by Héctor Huertas, Kuna Lawyer, Panama, sponsored by Environmental Law</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Oct 17</td>
<td>The special status of Brazilian Indians</td>
<td>Ramos (2003), pp.401-420</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Oct 24</td>
<td>In-class mid-term exam</td>
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<td>Nov 2</td>
<td>Presentation Lottie Cunninham, Law Professor, International Human Rights Law, Nicaragua</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic Description</td>
<td>Source References</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Elena Montenegro presentation on the current situation in Bolivia</strong></td>
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<td>Nov 14</td>
<td>Class cancelled, Dr. Mendoza presenting a paper at the AAA annual meeting in San</td>
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<td>Jose, CA</td>
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<td>Nov 9</td>
<td>Oral presentations of essay topics and small-group discussion</td>
<td>Essay due date</td>
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<td>Nov 10</td>
<td>Presentation Dr. Jean Jackson, <strong>Anthropology MIT</strong></td>
<td>Jackson 1995, 1999; Jackson and Warren 2005</td>
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<td></td>
<td>evaluation</td>
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<td>Wed 5</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td><strong>13:00 - 15:00 pm</strong></td>
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**DISCLAIMER:** Every effort was made to present an accurate and complete syllabus. However, unexpected circumstances may arise requiring that segments of this outline be revised or changed. Students will be notified in advance of any modifications.