**Course Proposal: Indigenous Critical Theory: Key Concepts and Debates**

**Submitted by:** Pauline Wakeham, Associate Professor, English

**Rationale for Submission:** In recent years, the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism has been increasingly admitting students who are pursuing projects either directly situated within or related to Indigenous studies. Additionally, other students admitted into the MA and PhD programs are seeking engagement with non-Western knowledges and critical thought. Having had the pleasure of meeting and teaching many of these students in courses I have taught outside of the Theory Centre, I thought that perhaps the time was ripe to propose a course on Indigenous thought to the Theory Centre.

**Time/Duration:** I am proposing a one-semester course to be offered during the 2017-2018 academic year. Either semester would be fine with me.

**Course Description:**

In her groundbreaking work, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith considers the historical forces and power asymmetries that have created a hegemonic intellectual “text world in which the centre of […] knowledge is either in Britain, the United States, or Western Europe” (Smith 35) and, moreover, where theory is naturalized as the invention and provenance of the West. Ironically, at the core of much Western thought, Indigeneity constitutes the sometimes repressed and sometimes overt catalyst for theorization—the figure of radical alterity, the bearer of “the gift,” the carrier of knowledge to be colonized for the West’s own self-reinvention. This graduate seminar is premised upon the urgent need to do more than re-trace the spectres of Indigeneity in Western thought or even examine the West’s unacknowledged debt to Indigenous intellectual culture. Instead, the course will challenge the limits of academic theory’s traditional “text world” by engaging with the transdisciplinary field of contemporary Indigenous thought, a field in which Indigenous peoples are the agents, instead of the objects, of theory. In so doing, the course will lay a critical foundation for understanding key concepts and debates in the field of Indigenous studies.

In this context, the course will grapple with the following questions: How might we engage with Indigenous theory beyond paradigms of “writing back” or “theorizing back” against Empire? What is the relation between theory and practice? How might theory be mobilized to better address Indigenous rights and social justice? How do a range of Indigenous cultural practices constitute forms of theorizing and how might we read them for their theoretical innovations? In exploring these and other questions, the course will consider how both thinking Indigeneity and Indigenous thinking enable important critical reappraisals of questions of identity, subjectivity, temporality, sovereignty, citizenship, and power. While the emphasis will be on Indigenous thought and cultural production in Canada and the United States, the course will also consider broader global concerns and contexts.

**Week 1: What Is Indigeneity? What is Theory?**

Sean Kicummah Teuton, “Introduction: Imagining an American Indian Center” from *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel* (Duke UP, 2008)

Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith, “Introduction” to *Theorizing Native Studies* (Duke UP, 2014)

**Week 2: Settler Colonialism**

Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native”

Lorenzo Veracini, “Introduction: The Settler Colonial Situation”

Eden Robinson, “Terminal Avenue”

**Week 3: Settler Colonialism’s Social Contexts in Canada Since 1990, Part I**

Alanis Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (available for viewing in AHB’s film library as well as through the Weldon library catalogue’s link to NFB access)

Ellen Gabriel, “Epilogue: Fraudulent Theft of Mohawk Land by the Municipality of Oka”

Peter H. Russell, “Oka to Ipperwash: The Necessity of Flashpoint Events”

**Week 4: Sovereignty**

Taiaiake Alfred, “Sovereignty”

Joanne Barker, “For Whom Sovereignty Matters”

Jessica R. Catellino, “Sovereign Interdependencies”

**Week 5: The Colonial Politics of Recognition**

Glen Coulthard,“Introduction: Subjects of Empire” and “The Politics of Recognition in Colonial Contexts” from *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (U of Minnesota P, 2014)

Audra Simpson, “Introduction”and “Ethnographic Refusal: Anthropological Need”from *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke UP, 2014)

**Week 6: Economies of Abandonment in Late Liberalism**

Ursula LeGuin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”

Elizabeth Povinelli, “Introduction: The Child in the Broom Closet” and “Events of Abandonment” from *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (Duke UP, 2011)

**Week 7: Settler Colonialism’s Social Contexts in Canada Since 1990, Part II**

Alanis Obomsawin, *The People of the Kattawapiskak River* (available for viewing in UC’s film library as well as through the Weldon library catalogue’s link to NFB access)

Jennifer Henderson, “Transparency, Spectatorship, Accountability: Indigenous Families in Settler-State ‘Postdemocracies’”

Leanne Simpson, “A Love Song for Attawapiskat” (Please listen to the audio version of this poem online at <http://www.arpbooks.org/islands>)

**Week 8: Contexts of Colonial Heteropatriarchy in Canada**

Glen Coulthard, “Essentialism and the Gendered Politics of Aboriginal Self-Government”

Audra Simpson,“Histories of Being Refused: The Indian Act in Canada”

From *The Indian Act*

Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, “(a found poem)”

**Week 9: Indigenous Feminisms**

Joyce Green, “Taking Account of Aboriginal Feminism”

Cheryl Suzack, “Emotion Before the Law”

Shari Huhndorf, “Indigenous Feminism: Theorizing the Issues” from *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture* (UBC P, 2010)

**Week 10: Queer Indigeneities**

Mark Rifkin, Introduction to *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (Oxford UP, 2011)

Scott Morgenson, “Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities”

Kent Monkman’s art: view the images on the powerpoint slide and visit kentmonkman.com

**Week 11: Reconciliation: Recognition Politics Reboot?**

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Final Report, “Introduction” in *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* and “Calls to Action”

David Garneau, “Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation”

Glen Coulthard, “Seeing Red: Reconciliation and Resentment”

**Week 12: Indigeneity, Decolonization, and #BlackLivesMatter: Theorizing Alliance**

Tiffany King, “Labor’s Aphasia: Antiblackness as Constitutive to Settler Colonialism”

Shona Jackson, “Humanity beyond the Regime of Labor: Antiblackness, Indigeneity, and the Legacies of Colonialism in the Caribbean”

**Week 13: The Ethics of Research**

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “Imperialism, History, Writing, Theory”

Leanne Simpson, “Please Be Careful When You’re Getting Smart”

Gregory Scofield “The Dissertation”

*Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, “Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis People of Canada”