

LAW, NATIVE SOVEREIGNTY & TREATY RIGHTS
(LDST 305-01; Cross-listed with PLSC 379)

Fall 2026
Time: Tuesdays 3-5:40
Place: Jepson Hall
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PURPOSE: This course introduces you to, and more importantly, requires you to analyze U.S. domestic policy and federal law as it pertains to Native nations as the original sovereign peoples in the U.S. and to their individual citizens/members. In Part 1 we engage in a critical analysis of the principal actors--Native nations (including the status of individual Natives), federal, and state governments--involved in this distinctive government-to-government and intergovernmental relationship. We also discuss the role that activism, the media, and organizations--both governmental and non-governmental (i.e., interest groups, the public, etc.)--play in the development or hindering of Native peoples and federal Indian policy, law, and governance. In Part 2 of the course, we broadly examine the historical development of the major federal Indian policy eras and the initiatives generated during those periods from before the beginning of the Republic to the present. Finally, in Part 3 we engage in a focused analysis of several specific Indigenous policy issues and other topics: religious freedom, economic development, federal recognition, treaty rights, and international developments--topics that are particularly important at the moment. We conclude the course by suggesting some possible policy avenues the different sovereigns might consider to improve intergovernmental relations.

REQUIRED READING:

Stephen L. Pevar, The Rights of Indians and Tribes, 5th ed. (NY: Oxford University Press, 2024)

David E. Wilkins, Indigenous Governance: Clans, Constitutions and Consent (NY: Oxford University Press, 2024)

ADDITIONAL READING: An additional group of readings has been put together and is available on Canvas. The U.S. Supreme Court cases can be found at the Law School, the main library, or on-line. If you go online you can visit these sites: <http://www.supreme.gov>; <http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions>; <https://caselaw.findlaw.com>; <https://www.tribal-institute.org/lists/supreme.htm>. You might also visit the Native American Rights Fund website out of Boulder, CO. They have an extensive collection of Tribal law related materials that could prove useful.

VERBAL PARTICIPATION: As our class is small and meets only once a week, we will operate as a seminar. Thus, you will all be expected to orally contribute to the critical analysis of each week's readings. To quote a former colleague: "I see you as intellectual producers of knowledge; not as mere consumers of knowledge." (25%)

LEAD DISCUSSANT: At various points during the semester, each student will be required to be the **lead discussant** of an assigned article, chapter, court case, law, etc. I will make these assignments at the appropriate times. If you are leading the discussion of a given work you must submit your one to one and one-half page **critical analysis** in writing to me the day before (**5pm Monday**) you are scheduled to lead the discussion of your text. (25%) For your one-page analysis of the reading be sure to **analyze** and not merely **summarize** what you've read. In other words, think critically and be able to identify and describe what the author's question or goal (thesis) was for writing the piece you read. What kind of data did they use to make their argument (historical information, survey, interviews, primary sources, etc.?). Does this reading Relate to other readings or topics we've encountered? Did you find this a substantial or significant read? Why? What did you learn from this reading that was beneficial? Is there something the authors missed or should have covered that would have helped them with their argument?

As the leader of a given assignment you may guide the discussion in class using any approach you deem worthwhile. (25%) In previous classes students have prepared power points, others have organized their classmates into small groups to answer a question or set of questions you will have prepared in advance, or you may simply provide me and your classmates with a critical analysis of whatever the assigned reading was. You are welcome to work with a partner from time to time if that appeals to you. If you're not presenting, write a *comparative and critical question* and bring it to class. I will randomly call on students to read their question in class to generate discussion.

FINAL EXAM: There will be a final exam on the last day of class. This test consists of two broad essay questions. You will choose one and write a comprehensive answer in class. (25%)

OTHER EXPECTATIONS: In addition to the reading assignments, active participation, final exam, and written assignments, the only other requirement is that you regularly attend class. Three (3) unexcused absences and you will be administratively dropped from the course.

I weight the above requirements as follows:

Verbal Participation:	25%
Critical Analysis:	25%
Class Presentation:	25%
Final Exam:	25%

I use the typical, if imperfect, 10-point scale—94-100 =A; 90-93 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 84-86 = B;

80-83 = B-; 77-79= C+, etc.

Let me reiterate, I expect a high level of intellectual discussion each time we meet. Remember, you are producers, not consumers in this class. It also behooves you to take copious notes of the readings, outline what you read, and write specific questions about anything you do not fully understand.

P.S. I reserve the right to add or delete readings from those listed below. I do not assign extra-credit projects, I do not loan my notes if you miss class, and I do not use a curved grading system. Finally, **cell phones may never be used in class. Laptops are not allowed either, with one exception: if you have a *documented* need recognized by the university's Disability Service office. You must have paperwork verifying the same.**

As you can see, I expect a high level of intellectual discussion each time we meet. I also maintain a professional learning environment that expects participation and the constructive exchange of ideas. All viewpoints are welcome, as is scrutiny of those viewpoints. Like many others, I continue to learn about and will always show respect for diverse perspectives and identities.

Finally, I have a somewhat formal approach to teaching based in respect for learning and the privacy of students. Therefore, I will address you by your last name and ask that you let me know your preferred honorific, such as Ms., Mr., or Mx. Like most people of my generation, I am still learning and getting accustomed to more inclusive identifications and will do my best to address everyone appropriately.

TOPICAL OUTLINE

(Read it and Reap!)

Introduction & Orientation

PART I: The Political Actors

A. Who are the Native Nations? Indigenous Government Powers and Political Status

READ:

David E. Wilkins, Indigenous Governance: Clans, Constitutions and Consent (NY: OUP, 2024): Read the Introduction, Chapters, 1, 2 and 6.

Vine Deloria, Jr. "Self-Determination and the Concept of Sovereignty." In Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, ed. Economic Development in American Indian Reservations (Albuquerque, NM: Native American Studies, 1979): 22-28.

Stephen Pevar, The Rights of Indians and Tribes (NY: OUP, 2024): Read Chapters 2 and 6.

B. Rights & Status of Urban & Suburban Natives

READ:

Susan Lobo, “Is Urban a Person or a Place? Characteristics of Urban Indian Country” in Susan Lobo and Kurt Peters, eds. American Indians and the Urban Experience (AltaMira Press, 2001): 73-84.

Kent Blansett, Cathleen D. Cahill, and Andrew Needham, eds. Histories of Indigenous Urbanization (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2022): “Introduction,” pgs. 1-22.

Azusa Ono, “American Indian Homelessness in Cities,” in Donna Martinez, Grace Sage, and Azusa Ono, eds’ Urban American Indians: Reclaiming Native Space (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2016): 43-62.

Kasey R. Keeler, American Indians & the American Dream. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2023): Conclusion: Racializing Public Space: American Indian Homelessness as Houselessness and Exclusion, pgs. 181-191.

C. What is the Nature of the Native Nations-Federal relationship: Trade, Treaties, Trust, Jurisdiction & Territory?

READ:

Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, 30 U.S. 1 (1831).

Talton v. Mayes, 163 U.S. 376 (1896).

Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock, 187 U.S. 553 (1903).

United States v. Winans, 198 U.S. 371 (1905).

Pevar, The Rights of Indians and Tribes (2024): Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Vine Deloria, Jr. “Treaties,” in Mary B. Davis, Native America in the Twentieth Century: An Encyclopedia (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996): 646-649.

Vine Deloria, Jr. and Raymond DeMallie, Documents of American Indian Diplomacy, Vol. 1 (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1999): Chapters 4 and 6.

Treaty with the Six Nations, 1794 (7 Stat. 44)

Treaty with the Cherokee, 1835 (7 Stat. 478)

Treaty with the Navajo, 1868 (15 Stat. 667)

Larry Nesper, "Twenty-Five Years of Ojibwe Treaty Rights in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota," American Indian Culture & Research Journal, vol. 36, no. 1 (2012): 47-77.

D. What is the Native Nations-State relationship?

READ:

Worcester v. Georgia, 31 U.S. 515 (1832).

Pevar, The Rights of Indians & Tribes, (2024): Chapters 7 and 12.

David E. Wilkins, "Tribal-State Affairs: American States as 'Disclaiming' Sovereigns," Publius (1998): 55-81.

Andrea Wilkins, Fostering State-Tribal Collaboration: An Indian Law Primer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015): Chapter 2 "State-Tribal Consultation" and Chapter 6 "Taxation."

Proposed "Tribal-Commonwealth Accord: An Agreement between Tribal Nations & the Commonwealth of Virginia" (2020).

FALL BREAK: OCTOBER 9-13. NO CLASS

E. What role does mass and social media, cultural appropriation, political participation, and Indigenous activism play in the legal, political, and policy process?

READ:

Wilkins, Indigenous Governance, Chapter 9 "Electoral Politics" and 13 "Governments and the Media."

Casey Ryan Kelly, "Representations of Native Americans in the Mass Media." In John Nussbaum, ed. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication (NY: Oxford University Press, 2017): 1-37.

Taima Moeke-Pickering, Julia Rowat, Sheila Cote-Meek, and Ann Pegoraro, “Indigenous Social Activism Using Twitter,” In Bronwyn Carlson and Jeff Borglund, eds. Indigenous Peoples Rise Up: The Global Ascendancy of Social Media Activism (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2021): 112-124.

John Borrows, “Turning Away from the State: Cultural Appropriation in the Shadow of the Courts.” In John Borrows and Kent McNeil, eds. Voicing Identity: Cultural Appropriation and Indigenous Issues (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022): 155-170.

PART II: The Political Action

A. Native Religious Freedom

READ:

Vine Deloria, Jr. “Sacred Places and Moral Responsibility,” in Barbara Deloria, et al., Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr. Reader (Fulcrum Publishing, 1999): 323-328.

Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association, 485 U.S. 439 (1988).

Edward Valandra, “Mni Wiconi: Water is [More Than] Life,” in Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon, eds. Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2019): 71-89.

Documentary: “*In the Light of Reverence.*”

B. Economic Development in Indian Country

READ:

Wilkins, Indigenous Governance, Chapter 10 “Political Economics.”

Pevar, The Rights of Indians and Tribes (2024): Chapters 9 and 15.

Jessica R. Cattellino, “Tribal Gaming and Indigenous Sovereignty, with Notes from Seminole Country,” Indigenous Studies Today (Fall 2005/Spring 2006): 187-204.

Documentary: “*100 Years: One Woman’s Fight for Justice.*”

C. Federal Recognition (Acknowledgment) Process for Community’s Pursuing a Government-to-Government Relationship with the U.S.

READ:

William W. Quinn, Jr. "Federal Acknowledgment of American Indian Tribes: The Historical Development of a Legal Concept," American Journal of Legal History, vol. xxxix, no. 4 (October 1990): 321-364.

Amy E. Den Ouden and Jean M. O'Brien, "Introduction," in Amy E. Den Ouden and Jean M. O'Brien, eds. Recognition, Sovereignty Struggles, & Indigenous Rights in the United States (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013): 1-34.

Olivia M. Chilcote, Unrecognized in California: Federal Acknowledgement and the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2024): Read "Introduction: An Uninvited Guest," pgs. 1-19.

THANKSGIVING BREAK: NOVEMBER 20-27

D. Indigenous Peoples and the International Community: Final Thoughts

READ:

Russel Barsh, "Political Diversification of the International Indigenous Movement," European Review of Native American Studies, vol. 5, no. 1 (1991): 7-10.

United Nations. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

Claire Charters, "Indigenous Peoples and International Law and Policy," in Benjamin J. Richardson, Shin Imai, and Kent McNeil, eds. Indigenous Peoples and the Law: Comparative and Critical Perspectives (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2009): 161-191.

Wilkins, Indigenous Governance, Chapter 11 and "Conclusion."

FINAL EXAM (LAST CLASS: DECEMBER 3)