There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between all the citizens of the United States of America, and all the individuals, towns and tribes of the Upper, Middle and Lower Creeks and Semanolies composing the Creek Nation of Indians.

Treaty of 1790

The vitality of our race still persists. We have not lived for naught. We are the original discoverers of this continent, and the conquerors of it from the animal kingdom, and on it first taught the arts of peace and war, and first planted the institutions of virtue, truth and liberty. The European Nations found us here and were made aware that it was possible for men to exist and subsist here. . . . We have shown that what they believed were arid and desert places were habitable and capable of sustaining millions of people. We have led the vanguard of civilization in our conflicts with them for tribal existence from ocean to ocean. The race that has rendered this service to the other nations of mankind cannot utterly perish.

Pleasant Porter, 1906

oklahoma will be the last song
i'll ever sing

Joy Harjo, 1979

Like people in all human communities, members of every Native American society have conceived of themselves as being independent and unique in some way, as having their own particular identity in a world of human diversity. Today many Native American tribal nations continue to assert their political sovereignty and cultural autonomy within the context of contemporary American society. This course is based on the premise that studying the history of a single Native American tribal nation is as worthwhile and interesting
as studying the history of any modern African, American, Asian/Pacific, or European nation-state.

The course is organized around an in-depth case study of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma, which has the third-largest population of any federally recognized tribe in the Unites States. We will read a wide range of literature drawn from the fields of ethnography, history, ethnohistory, and political science, as well as journalistic accounts, legal documents, reference works, tribal publications, Creek language texts, speeches, autobiographies, poetry, short stories, oral traditions, art, photographs, and maps. In the classroom we will also learn from guest speakers and make use of multimedia resources including videotapes, audiotapes, and slides. Our primary goal in this case study will be to answer the question, "Who are the Creeks?" This is not so much a course on tribal history, at least not in the sense that it is limited to the study of a unilinear chronology of documented and remembered events, as it is a course on the nature of tribal identity and on the different ways in which tribal members, outside observers, and academic scholars attempt to understand and to interpret this identity in the context of American society.

The case study will provide us with the opportunity to consider a wide range of theoretical and methodological questions about Native American tribal histories. Some of the themes we will discuss include: nationalism and ethnicity; social constructions of "tribe" and "history"; cultural perceptions of historiography; authorship, authority and authenticity; oral traditions and documentary history; worldview and interpretation; and representations of cultural identity. Students will employ insights gained from the case study as they engage in their own tribal history research projects.

This is not an introductory-level course; enrollment preference will be given to students who have completed American Studies 80B (The Native American Experience) or comparable course work in Native American studies, or who have had significant first-hand experiences living in or working with Native American communities.

Please note: the structure of this course has been revised since the original catalog description was submitted; we will, however, still be considering all of the themes suggested in that description.
Course Objectives

Students in this course will:
(1) consider theoretical and cross-cultural perspectives on the idea of "history" and learn research methodologies useful for writing tribal/ethnic/national histories;
(2) learn about Native American history and culture by focusing on an in-depth case study of one particular tribal nation, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma;
(3) develop skills in textual criticism while reading a wide range of historical source materials on Muscogee tribal history;
(4) participate in collaborative learning experiences in the classroom and outside of class;
(5) conduct academic research by working with documentary resources, scholarly interpretations, multimedia materials, and oral testimonies; and
(6) interact with tribal representatives in preparing materials for use in education and public relations.

Course Requirements

Each student in this course will be required to:
(1) complete the assigned readings, attend class regularly, and participate in class and small group discussions and exercises;
(2) initiate and complete an original, substantive research project on a Native American tribal history, and submit all research project assignments in a timely fashion; and
(3) collaborate with several other students in developing a group presentation on an important topic or theme in the study of Native American tribal histories.

Each student will be evaluated on the basis of her/his class participation (preparation, attendance, discussion), research project (critical response essay, progress reports, chronology and bibliography, final essay), and group presentation.

Research Project

This course is a research seminar; the primary course assignment is the research project. Each student will engage in a detailed study of one particular Native American tribal nation. Research topics will determined by the end of the second week of the quarter, when students will be organized into research groups focusing on historically, culturally, or geographically related tribal nations. Each research project will incorporate a range of bibliographic
resources (primary documents, popular and scholarly interpretations, and non-
literary "texts"); in addition, each student must conduct at least one
conversation/interview with an individual who is affiliated with the tribal nation.

Project assignment schedule:
April 7    Critical Response Essay (2-3 pp.) due
April 14   Topic due
April 21   Progress Report 1--Preliminary Bibliography (1-2 pp.) due
April 28   Progress Report 2--Interview Synopsis (1-2 pp.) due
May 10    Progress Report 3--Secondary Sources (1-2 pp.) due
May 17    Progress Report 4--Primary Sources (1-2 pp.) due
May 24    Progress Report 5--Historical Interpretation (1-2 pp.) due
June 9    Chronology (2-3 pp.) and Bibliography (2-3 pp.) due
Final     Final Essay (5-7 pp.) due

Course Texts

This course has one required course text (below), which is available at Bay Tree
Bookstore, and one required course reader, which is available at the UCSC Copy
Center. The text (but not the reader) is also on reserve at McHenry Library.

Calvin Martin (ed.). The American Indian and the Problem of History. New York:
Course Readings

April 5
Course Introduction

April 7
Native American Tribal Histories
Community, Time, and Interpretation


April 12
Native American Tribal Histories (cont.)

Martin, 98-220.

April 14
The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Today
Tribal Identity in American Society


April 19
Este Mvskoke, The Muscogee People
Origins, Traditions, Worldviews, Languages


April 21
The Muscogees and European Colonialism, 1539-1783
Britain, Spain, France, and the United States


April 26
The Emergence of the Muscogee Confederacy, 1783-93

Alexander McGillivray

Wright, 73-99.


April 28
The Muscogee Civil War, 1813-14
Red Sticks

Joel W. Martin, Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World (Boston: Beacon, 1991), ix-xi, 114-68.


May 3
The Muscogee Migration, 1828-37
Removal to Indian Territory

Elizabeth Sullivan, Indian Legends of the Trail of Tears and Other Creek Stories (Oklahoma?: Elizabeth Sullivan, 1974), Introduction-7.


George Stiggins, Creek Indian History: A Historical Narrative of the Genealogy, Traditions and Downfall of the Ispocoga or Creek Indian Tribe of Indians, edited by Virginia Pounds Brown (Birmingham, AB: Birmingham Public Library, 1989), 13-25, 51-68.

May 5
The Muscogees and the U. S. Civil War, 1861-65
Loyal Creeks and Southern Creeks


"Treaty with the Creeks, 1866," Treaties and Agreements, 239-44.

May 10
The Muscogee (Creek) Nation, 1867-1899
Constitutional Government


May 12
The Muscogees and Oklahoma Statehood, 1899-1907
Allotment and Dispossession

Angie Debo, And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes (Princeton: Princeton University, 1940), ix-xii, 92-158.

"Agreement with the Creek Nation, September 27, 1897," Treaties and Agreements, 248-52.


Waldman, 181.

Morris, 18, 23, 26, 33, 55, 59.

May 17
The Muscogees in the Twentieth Century, 1907-71
Cultural Resistance

Donald E. Green, The Creek People (Phoenix: Indian Tribal Series, 1973), 88-99.


William Harjo, 14-21.


May 19

The Reemergence of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, 1971-94
Tribal Sovereignty and Self-determination

Muscogee (Creek) Nation, an ancient partnership: the energy of the Soil . . . the energy of the Muscogee people . . ., 17 pp. brochure, ca. 1980.


May 24

Tribal History and Tribal Survival
Contemporary Creek Literature and Art


Jamake Highwater, Song from the Earth: American Indian Painting (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976), 71, 97 (Acee Blue Eagle); 107, 164-68 (Fred Beaver); 108 (Jerome Tiger); 133 (Johnny Tiger); 128 (Joan Hill).


Stephanie Berryhill, "Creek artist revives material Mvskoke culture," Muscogee Nation News, 21/2 (February 1992), 1, 11.

May 26, June 2, 7

Class Presentations

June 9

Course Evaluations