

Session One

April 13, 2020

The approximate times shown below are guidelines for the benefit of the host (instructor) and co-host (Kate). In the unlikely event that there is unfilled time, the instructor has more than enough material to fill in the empty space!

12:30 PM start time; Welcome and Introduction (some to be done by Megan, then comments by Michael and Kate; including:

- A Land Acknowledgment (Part I)
- Review of the lesson structure (as below)
- Discussion of Zoom features that will be used (webinar format versus meeting)
- **polls:** [instead of "Ho!" "Hey!"] yes/no or multiple choice
 - sample question: Did you read the book **1491**?
 - ➔ cover to cover
 - ➔ parts on it
 - ➔ nothing so far
 - All polls will be anonymous unless I tell you otherwise
 - Polling results will be shared with the class
- hand raising (?) or **Q&A** – use of Q&A to make suggestions/requests
- no breakout sessions
- Chat

12:40 Slide show giving an outline of what the course will cover

1:10 Five-minute break

1:15 Halfway point:

- Questions & Comments received so far from students (via "Q&A") will be addressed, then
- A Deeper Dive into one or more of the themes presented earlier

1:45 Check-in for more comments and questions submitted via Q&A or Chat

1:55 Wrap-up comments from the instructor

2:00 End of session

[Query: can session go overtime if the Q&A is extensive?]

Session One Polls



Did you read the book **1491**?

- cover to cover
- parts on it
- nothing so far

How would you describe your current level of **knowledge** of indigenous people?




- minimal
- moderate
- extensive

What was Holmberg's Mistake?

- He misread a map and never found Machu Picchu
- He did not believe the indigenous lore that the headwaters of the Amazon River were in the Andes
- He believed the Sirionó ("People of the Longbow") were the remnants of a Stone Age society
- Something else

Of the **topics** outlined so far, which one(s) contain the most interest for you?

Possible items to record via Q&A or Chat:

-  What other books or **resources** would you recommend to the class?
-  Have you been to relevant museums, performances, or other events?
-  What **other topics** would you like to see covered?

Session One Slide Show

M103 Indigenous Cultures in the Berkshires and Beyond

1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus

- People arrived in the Americas earlier than had been thought
- There were many more people in the Americas than in previous estimates
- American cultures were far more sophisticated than had been believed
- Environmental management was widespread and hugely impactful

In his book **1491**, Charles Mann addresses **three interwoven themes**⁶, which we will explore:

1. *Indian societies were bigger than had been previously realized,*
2. *these societies were older and more sophisticated than previously believed, and*
3. *they had greater impact on the environment than previously understood (making the notion of "wilderness" obsolete).*

Related Observations:

Laurentine Glaciation

- ★ Our part of the "New World" was inhabited before parts of northern Europe
- ★ More of the Continental Shelf was exposed
- ★

"History is written by the victors"

- ★ What was Holmberg's Mistake?
- ★ Who controlled the narrative that we (of European descent) have come to know? [rhetorical question!]

Changes in the Land⁷, our secondary text, focuses on the ecological impact in New England. Books by Jared Diamond, Bill McKibbin, and others give examples from elsewhere (see my bibliography).

Through case studies, in class presentations and breakout group discussions, we will explore these themes in greater detail. The literature on indigenous cultures is rich and growing, reflecting renewed interest in the topic. We will be able to touch on only a fraction of the possible topics; student questions and comments can help guide our course.

6 Preface page XI "...this book explores what I believe to be the three main foci of the new findings: Indian demography (Part I), Indian origins (Part II), and Indian ecology (Part III)."

7 *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*

Case Studies:

- Inka Empire
- Local: New France, New England, New York, New Jersey
 - ▶ Muhheconneok and their kin
 - ▶ Haudenosaunee

Language: we will discuss both the (English) language we use to describe indigenous people, and the indigenous languages themselves. The way we use language reveals and shapes our values and attitudes.

- ◆ "Please do not speak of us in the past tense; we are still very much here!"
- ◆ English is object-oriented; Algonkian⁸ languages are action-oriented (and have no gender)
- ◆ What (inanimate) and Who (spirited/animate) [e.g. "Kagwi ni?" versus "Awani na?"]
- ◆ Animals are who, not what, and are viewed as relatives

Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881): established anthropology as a science by lifting it from anecdotes to systemization. He studied and wrote on American indigenous cultures (including a book about beavers), and was cited by Darwin and Engels, among others.

Indigenous Values: as expressed in religious beliefs, myths, and story-telling. Also, how these values influenced

- ★ Political organization
- ★ Economic systems

The History of Balance: Spinoza and other philosophical ramblings

- ★ Balance as a concept in the European history of thought
- ★ The centrality of balance to American indigenous culture
- ★ Spinoza integrates the conflict between science and religion and ends up where the Americans had long been

Exchange of Values: how American values influenced the Enlightenment Philosophers and the rebellious colonists; and how European culture infiltrated indigenous peoples' beliefs and practices.

Little Ice Age: what caused it, and what influence it had on the development of cultural institutions on both sides of the Atlantic.

8 When I refer to the characteristics of the Algonkian languages and beliefs, I think my observations hold true for most North American cultures, even those of different language groups, but I do not know all about every culture, so there could be exceptions.

Lost Opportunity: there was a failure of understanding in both directions. Indigenous Americans tried to understand European ways, and for the most part rejected them. The same could be said in the other direction. Europeans were slow to adopt American wisdom and practices; tomatoes were considered poisonous, and potatoes were grown for their flowers, e.g.