

21A.240
Race and Science
Spring 2004 MIT

PART 2: REFORMULATING RACE: MAKING AND REMAKING THE IDIOMS OF SCIENCE

Lecture 10. April 15

PAPER # 2 DUE

Land, Science, and Knowledge in Native America

Quick reminder about histories of RACE in UNITED STATES, why these categories in the syllabus

Blacks/African Americans become a RACE through middle passage, slavery, racial terror, segregation

Whites become a RACE through immigration laws, citizenship rules, invention of Caucasian

Asian Americans become a RACE through exclusion acts, war relocation camps

Indians/Native Americans become a RACE through genocide, forced removal from land

In all these cases, different kinds of people are homogenized

The primary themes that emerge in these texts for today:

NATURE ENVIRONMENT ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM/JUSTICE

How can we understand these? Go back to list of four critiques of race and science:

1. CRITIQUE OF UNDERREPRESENTATION: people who have been racially subordinated have been largely excluded from science, which happens to be a highly authoritative way of knowing with a great deal of social power. This critique questions the REPRESENTATION of different kinds of people in science.

e.g. The American Indian Science & Engineering Society web site

2. CRITIQUE OF RACIAL "BIAS": fallout of the under-representation of people from racially subordinated locations: BIAS in the choice and definition of problems.
3. CRITIQUE OF VIEWS OF NATURE IN WESTERN SCIENCE: modern Western scientific traditions, which have taken shape amidst racist racial formations, have taken on board visions of "nature" that are racially charged and that have effects on how humans and nonhumans are understood.

e.g. views of nature as something separate from culture with the Arctic

scientists versus the Inuit case.

Outer space as **Frontier**

4. ALTERNATIVE SCIENCES/EPISTEMOLOGIES

Closely linked to previous critique is the notion that there are “alternative sciences,” And WHOSE knowledge practices should count as “science” to begin with? Racism has carefully excised some practices from being *considered* science at all.

So, is Inuit knowledge, for example, science?

Another way to understand the themes of the readings today is through HISTORY. There’s a danger of romanticizing Native Americans as “close to nature.” Question IS: HOW did this stereotype come into being? This is where HISTORY can help us, particularly the history of the EXPROPRIATION OF LAND FROM NATIVE PEOPLES by THE US and CANADA. This IS something that many Native groups have in common.

The very production of “Indians” as a RACIAL group is bound up in the history of LAND, and the collision of different epistemologies of PROPERTY in the context of COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS and ADMINISTRATION.

For this reason I want to begin JAIMES and build from political economy toward epistemological arguments. I think political economy complicates articles about Cree, Inuit.

Jaimes, M. Annette. 1992. Federal Indian Identification Policy: A Usurpation of Indigenous Sovereignty in North America. In *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*. M. Annette Jaimes, ed. Boston: South End Press, pp. 123-138.

What’s the story here?

Treaties: production of Native “nations”

General Allotment Act 1877: unilateral dissolving of Native land holdings; redeeded back to individual “Indians.”

“Indians” now defined on basis of blood-quantum.

How do you read what’s happening here?

Well, there are different ideas about property at stake, for one thing.

Anglo-American government/settlers see land as something to be “improved” through the kind of rational labor that produces property.

This also hooks into the notion of “manifest destiny” for the white American nation...

Native peoples hold the land communally, as a “nation” (owing to treaties).

US gov’t in an attempt to bring these two together, but also as a way of getting more land, designates peoples’ membership in “nation” based on lineage/genealogy. Rise of biologicistic/evolutionary/hereditarian thinking. Skulls are measured; blood.

The result, interestingly, is a particular racialization of Native Americans.

Tied to the POLITICAL ECONOMY of LAND.

Indians get citizenship: 1924. This makes them bound by laws of US, so negotiations now happen not between members of different nations, but between citizens.

Indian Reorganization Act 1934: Part of the New Deal. All recognized Native groups are to have tribal councils, recognized by the US government. This again brings them closer to being under the thumb of US nation state.

what else is happening with LAND?

Native Americans moved to marginal agricultural land then, various minerals are discovered. And, importantly, at mid20th century, uranium;

as Winona LaDuke points out (pp. 128-129), Indians don't get wealthy from this.

In fact, as the Churchill and LaDuke article points out, they get very sick! Let's talk about the

Churchill, Ward and Winona LaDuke. 1992. Native North America: The Political Economy of Radioactive Colonialism. In *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*. M. Annette Jaimes, ed. Boston: South End Press, pp. 241-266.

Environmental racism.

what was the story of Shiprock? (p. 247)

National Sacrifice Areas?

Environmental justice.

OK, NOW, I think we have a few more TOOLS for examining the stuff about NATURE that comes up in "Science for the West, Myth for the Rest? The Case of James Bay Cree Knowledge Construction," and in "Inuit Indigenous Knowledge and Science in the Arctic." It seems to me that the history of LAND is a better way of getting at this stuff than speculations about essential cultural differences in EPISTEMOLOGIES of NATURE.

There may be different epistemologies of nature at work, but I'd argue that they often precipitate most immediately out of different epistemologies of property — which, in a way, only become visible as such in the context of colonialism.

Scott, Colin. 1996. Science for the West, Myth for the Rest? The Case of James Bay Cree Knowledge Construction. In *Naked Science: Anthropological Inquiry into Boundaries, Power, Knowledge*. Laura Nader, ed. New York: Routledge, pp. 69-86.

What's Scott's argument here?

"I focus on the particular task of exploring how practical, empirical knowledge flows from root metaphors (paradigms) that are not generally associated with scientific results in Western thought" (p. 70). So, he's saying that what counts as empirical is so with respect to an experiential context that has metaphysical, cultural commitments built into it.

Sets up differences between scientific knowledge and Cree knowledge as differences in metaphysics. But he also sees them as similar precisely because both are lodged in metaphysical commitments.

One contrast is: "In Cree, there is no word corresponding to our term 'nature' (p. 72).

While, in Western science, "Natural objects and nature at large are experienced as innate; as 'naturally' separate from the scientific culture that represents them" (p. 74).

BUT "the separation of culture from nature depends not on a preponderance of literal-mindedness per se, but on which metaphors are used to frame the literal" (p. 74).

vague claim, but we can use it to think about relations with land (this is a more concrete way to talk about this than "nature" [Scott talks about "nature" in last two sentences]). For white settlers, land was thought of as something that could be property, something that could be bought and sold as one buys and sells objects. This idea of property is highly metaphorical — depends on a comparison of land with other things, and on the idea that it can be packaged (something that reflected in the idea of MAPS of LOTS). People started to think of this as LITERAL.

There were metaphors FRAMING the LITERAL; these in turn dictated what would count as "practical, empirical, knowledge" about LAND. "How much of it is there" makes most sense when you imagine partitioning it from social relations, from sky...

"As certain root metaphors become conventionalized, as certain paradigms persist, their presence in observation language becomes less noticeable — they become literally implicit in the empirical description of experience" (p. 72).

But Scott's argument, while it implicates land, is more about human/animal relations, especially geese.

So, in Cree, "practical, empirical knowledge" about say "the semiotic conventions of geese" flows from view of humans and animals as engaged in processes of communication, as embedded in a reciprocative network.

You might contrast this idea with the way in which "practical, empirical knowledge" about nonhuman primate communication (like we saw in *Primate Visions*) was predicated on the idea that humans and apes are not constitutively in communication, but that we must BRIDGE this GAP.

Bielawski, Ellen. 1996. Inuit Indigenous Knowledge and Science in the Arctic. In *Naked Science: Anthropological Inquiry into Boundaries, Power, Knowledge*. Laura Nader, ed. New York: Routledge, 216-227.

comparison of different knowledge systems. again, though, there's a history of displacement which is crucial! The Inuit in this article have ecological knowledge, not because they're close to nature, or necessarily even have a different view of it (though

why wouldn't they?), but because they had to survive in marginal environment to which they were relocated — in a very different environment.

Mars in Nunavut

Sedna, after the goddess of the ocean.

Speaking of the ocean: Alien algae:
Alien Invasion

Evolutionary biologists classification of native and alien species:

NATURE	CULTURE
native	alien / introduced
endemic	accidental
indigenous	intentional
	invasive

The parallels in the rhetoric surrounding foreign plants and those of foreign peoples are striking. ... The first parallel is that aliens are 'other.' ... Second is the idea that aliens/exotic plants are everywhere, taking over everything. ... The third parallel is the suggestion that they are growing in strength and number. ... The fourth parallel is that aliens are difficult to destroy and will persist because they can withstand extreme situations. ... The fifth parallel is that aliens are "aggressive predators and pests and are prolific in nature, reproducing rapidly." ... Finally, like human immigrants, the greatest focus is on their economic costs because it is believed that they consume resources and return nothing (pp. 29-30).

Native Hawaiian parsing:

NATURE	CULTURE
native	alien
endemic	accidental
indigenous	intentional
introduced by ancient Polynesians	invasive
developed over history of Hawaiian people	