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## A Book I Did Not Know I Needed Until It Existed

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I teach at a Catholic, predominantly white university. In the past few years, I have regularly taught a course titled ‘Native America and the Question of Genocide’ in the Peace and Justice program, which means that religion is not the central object of inquiry in this class. Nevertheless, I am a scholar of religion, and I find *Indigenous Religious Traditions in Five Minutes* useful in the classroom, even when what we talk about is not explicitly religion. (But isn’t religion implicitly there whenever we talk about questions related to the relationship between the United States and Native peoples?)

I teach in the United States but I did not grow up or go to school here, so I do not have a good sense of how much background knowledge my students might have about Native American history and politics, and so every semester I ask them, at the beginning of our time together, about their K–12 education (I can assume that my class is the first college class they take about this subject). I do not know when I will stop being surprised when they tell me they had only one day in their AP US History or AP US Government class about Native American history or politics. And I do not know when I will stop assuming that there are certain things that they all have at least heard about. For example, last semester, halfway through our discussion of the massacre at Wounded Knee, I asked how many students had heard about Wounded Knee before reading the materials I assigned for the week. I was shocked when only three hands went up.

This is where *Indigenous Religious Traditions in Five Minutes* comes in handy. I can bring copies of any chapter into the classroom with me and have the students spend, well, five minutes, reading it before diving into discussion of the topic, whether I want us to focus on religion or not. Tiffany Hale’s chapter on the Ghost Dance was really helpful in the

instance described above. I divided the class into groups, asked them to read Hale's chapter, and then—with the basic knowledge they gained about the massacre—I asked each group to dive into more serious research and work on different kinds of products: one group created a middle school lesson plan about Wounded Knee; another group had to be journalists reporting on the massacre; a third group played the role of lawyers arguing for compensation for the survivors of the massacre; the final group had to design a memorial. Even if Hale's short piece could not have been the sole source for the students to rely on when working on their projects, the background and sophisticated (if brief) analysis this chapter masterfully offers sent them into their research knowing what to search for, with a model of how to do research well and how to report on it, all in five short minutes. In a course that does not focus explicitly on religion, Jennifer Graber's chapter on the criminalization of religion pairs nicely with Hale's chapter on the Ghost Dance, giving students more context about the role religion played (and perhaps still plays) in the oppression and marginalization of Native nations.

Similarly, Zara Surrat's chapter on boarding schools allows students to start processing this difficult topic—and especially the guilt Catholic students often feel when they realize what huge role the Catholic church played in operating those schools and pursuing genocidal assimilation policies.

This course is designed to take students on an intellectual journey, but the journey depends on knowledge that my students do not have. I often ask myself how to balance the need to provide students with historical facts, when I know that my class is probably the only one they are ever going to take on Native American related issues, and my desire to make an argument, to explore theory, to get them curious and sufficiently enraged about the injustices of settler colonialism and inspired by struggles for Indigenous sovereignty. *Indigenous Religious Traditions in Five Minutes* is a useful tool for achieving such balance. It is also helpful when I occasionally have one Indigenous student in the class, whom I do not want to feel hurt by their classmates' lack of knowledge or burdened by some imagined responsibility to educate non-Indigenous students.

This course aims to complicate the category of genocide by applying it in the Native American context, where its relevance has been doubted, both because it is anachronistic and because it is very legalistic. But my aim is also to complicate our understanding of Native history and politics by insisting on applying the category of genocide in this context. Case studies such as the California missions system, Native American boarding schools, and the massacre at Wounded Knee help me provoke a nuanced discussion of genocide. While opening the course with the

theoretical framework of genocide is important to me, I do not want us to end there. With Patrick Wolfe's work, I move on to the theoretical framework of settler colonialism, looking at case studies that demonstrate that even if we are talking about genocide, it is a special kind of genocide, the goal of which is to eliminate the Native so that the settler can take their lands. Case studies include blood quantum, cultural appropriation (Gregory Alles's chapter is useful here), the American Indian Movement, and the second Wounded Knee. Finally, following Eve Tuck, I want to leave students with a notion of Indigenous survival and futurity rather than a tragic image of the Native as victim. We therefore end the semester with a unit on Indigenous sovereignty, where case studies include the #NoDAPL (Richard Callahan's chapter on Standing Rock is useful here), the thirty-meter telescope on Mauna Kea (Marie Alohalani Brown's chapters on Kanaka Maoli religions provide necessary background for this week), and the Klamath River, which the Yurok tribal council recently recognized as a rights-bearing person (Meaghan Weatherdon's chapter on personhood is great to read on this topic).

Finally, my students pursue individual research projects throughout the semester, and this book—even just the table of contents—is so useful in showing them the range of topics they could explore. Students are always surprised to learn that Native American mascots are a legitimate research topic, and Matt Sheedy's chapter on the Washington football team helps them see why it is. Every semester I have at least one student interested in Indigenous healing, and Suzanne Crawford O'Brien's chapter on healing helps them navigate and narrow down this huge topic. Students who are interested in the intersection of indigeneity and race or sexuality can use Sarah Dees's chapters or Lisa Poirier's chapter as starting points for their exploration, and I, as instructor, can always use the 'further reading' lists at the end of each chapter to direct students to relevant sources.

*Indigenous Religious Traditions in Five Minutes* is a book I did not know I needed until it existed. That it is so useful in a course that is not about religion is a nice additional surprise.