

Indigenous Studies 4C03
Contemporary Indigenous Societies and Issues:
Queer, Two-Spirit, and Trans World-Making

Dr. Ki'en Debicki (they/them)
debickks@mcmaster.ca
Wednesdays 11:30-2:20pm

Course Description:

This course focuses on queer, two-spirit, and trans Indigenous communities and rights in its study of “contemporary Indigenous societies and issues.” Such a focus area crosses national/tribal affiliation and spans of time by following the narrative threads of Indigenous scholars, storytellers, and artists who represent experiences of being two-spirit/queer/trans (and the precolonial, traditional versions of gender/sexual fluidity). This course will pay particular attention to the ways in which genderqueer, genderfluid, and nonbinary Indigenous individuals and political movements have always been at the center of anticolonial and decolonizing work. Logics to explore will include how “gender as a category of analysis stabilizes and universalizes binary oppositions at other levels, including sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and nationalism” (Barker, *Critically Sovereign* 13); how a reclamation of “sovereign erotics” is a political and spiritual act that “relates our bodies to our nations, traditions, and histories” and whose suppression derives from settler colonisation (Qwo-Li Driskill et. al. *Sovereign Erotics* 3); and how the heteronormativity of patriarchal gender systems “undermines struggles for decolonization and sovereignty, and buoys the powers of colonial governance” (Driskill, *Queer Indigenous Studies* 19). To follow these lines of inquiry, we will consider intersections and divergence between Indigenous Studies, Queer, and Transgender Studies. Trans Studies, specifically, will provide the context for asking **whether “bodies simply are certain genders/sexes unquestionably” in ways that “map neatly onto the operations of power”** (Pyle 7). Course materials will include theory, memoir, fiction, film, creative non-fiction, and practical writings (i.e., handbooks, reports, etc.).

Class Format:

In person seminar every Wednesday.

Textbooks, Materials, & Fees:

All readings/materials will be posted on Avenue to Learn.

Method of Assessment:

Discussion Lead	40%
In Class Critical Response	20%
Podcast Analysis	20%
PBL Zine	20%

Assignments:

Discussion Lead 20% x 2

You will help guide 2 discussions over the course of the term (a sign-up sheet will go around in the first class). I will model what I expect from discussion leaders in the first class. Please prepare a 1-2 page review of the text assigned. Your writeup should include a list of 3-4 key concepts with accompanying definitions, a brief summary of the text's thesis, in your own words, and a question or critique intended to spur discussion.

In-Class Critical Response (20%)

4 times over the term I will pose critical reflection questions during class and give you time to compose an answer whether written, recorded, or oral. One page written or its equivalent (5 minutes speaking/recording) is sufficient. Each response is worth 5% and will be marked principally for its completion and then subsequently for depth of engagement with content and evidence of course content comprehension. You will not be marked for grammar/spelling/punctuation etc.

Podcast Analysis (20%)

Listen to one podcast episode from the list of podcast series provided by the teaching team and record a 5-10 minute response. In your response I would ask that you prioritize three things: 1) a positionality statement; 2) an up-down-both-why response; and 3) an argument. Further details will be provided via A2L. Analyses are due by 11:59pm on September 29th and should be submitted via A2L.

PBL Zine (20%)

For this problem-based learning assignment you will choose a specific issue of social injustice facing Indigenous queer, trans, or two-spirit peoples. You will then write a 10-page (minimum) zine that identifies and contextualizes the problem (provides info) and makes an argument for how to resolve the issue for those who are being marginalized (action items that anyone can take). Successful zines will combine theory from class (or additional readings) with accessible language/images and interesting graphics/images.

Topics & Readings (schedule)

PART 1: Basic Concepts & Historical Context

Indigiqueer, two-spirit, non-binary, transgender, intersex, etc. & context on how colonialism destroys our fluid genders and healthy sexualities, imposed immediate family over extended & chosen.

Wednesday January 11th: Introductions

Introduction to each other and the course. Terminology.

Required Reading:

- Guidelines for gender affirming healthcare for gender diverse and transgender children, young people and adults in Aotearoa New Zealand. J Oliphant, J Veale, J Macdonald, R Carroll. 2018. (terminology only)

- “What Does Two-Spirit Mean?” video.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4IBibGzUnE&t=5s>

Wednesday January 18th: Coming to Terms

Resisting singular definitions of Two-Spirit. Hearing from Community.

Required Reading:

- Marie Laing. Two-Spirit: Conversations with Young Two-Spirit, Trans, and Queer Indigenous People in Toronto. A zine.

: Colonizing Indigenous Kinship

How nuclear families and marriage have been used to colonize & how queer Indigenous peoples stood/stand in direct contestation to that mission.

Required Reading:

- Extermination of the Joyas : Gendercide in Spanish California Deborah A. Miranda (Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen Nation, Chumash) *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Volume 16, Number 1-2, 2010, pp. 253-284.

Wednesday January 25th: Colonizing Indigenous Kinship Continued

Required Reading:

- Tallbear, Kim. “Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sex and Family.” Adele E. Clarke and Donna Haraway (Eds). *Making Kin Not Population*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press. 2018.
- Qwo-Li Driskill. “Stolen From Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic.” *SAIL*. 16.2. 2004. 50-64.

Wednesday February 1st: Too Queer to be Indigenous, Too Indigenous to be Queer

Assumptions made about Indigenous communities and queerness, internalized colonialism, intersectionality.

Required Reading:

- Leanne Simpson. “Indigenous Queer Normativity.” In *As We Have Always Done*. 119-144.
- What’s Normative Got to Do with It? Toward Indigenous Queer Relationality Jodi A. Byrd
- Thirza Cuthand. *Lessons in Baby Dyke Theory*. 1995. <https://vimeo.com/210502822>

PART 2: Ongoing Barriers

Gender affirming care, ableism, child welfare, incarceration.

Wednesday February 8th: Health Care

Required Reading:

- Sarah Hunt. *An introduction to the health of Two-Spirit people: Historical, contemporary and emergent issues*. 2016.

- Dykhuizen M, Marshall K, Loewen Walker R, Saddleback J. “Holistic Health of Two Spirit People in Canada: A Call for Nursing Action.” *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 40.4 (2022): 383-396.

Optional Reading:

- Guidelines for gender affirming healthcare for gender diverse and transgender children, young people and adults in Aotearoa New Zealand. J Oliphant, J Veale, J Macdonald, R Carroll. 2018.

February 15th: Ableism

Intersectionality of queer and disability studies.

Required Reading:

- “Crippling the Fuck Out:” A Queer Crip Mad Manifesta Against the Medical Industrial Complex Lzz Johnk and Sasha A. Khan

March 1st: Child Welfare

Intersectionality of Indigiqueer/trans/two-spirit youth and the Children’s Aid Society (the new residential school).

Required Reading:

- Sylvia Massinon. “Honouring the Voices of 2SLGBTQ+ Youth in Care Within Manitoba.” Master’s Thesis. 2020. Please read pages 48-100.
- jaye simpson. Selections from *It was never going to be okay*.

March 8th: Incarceration

Issues pertaining to trans and queer Indigenous peoples in the carceral system where their gender rights are often denied and their gender fluidity puts them at additional risk.

Required Reading:

- Boyer, Yvonne; Odeyemi, Ayoola S.; Fletcher, Erin; Fletcher, Jade. “Vulnerable Targets: Trans Prisoner Safety, the Law, and Sexual Violence in the Prison System Report.” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 31 (2019): 386.

PART 3: Reclamation

Personal stories of survivance; how ppl found their queer selves; contemporary two-spirit selfhood and joyful expressions of such. Narrative sovereignty.

March 15th: Our Coming In Stories

Indigenous peoples telling their own stories about their gender and sexuality and bodies; celebrating our sacredness.

Required Readings:

- Wilson, A. (2008). N'tacinowin inna nah': Our coming in stories. *Canadian Women Studies*, 26 (3-4), 193-199.
- “We’ve Always Been Here: Two-Spirit People in the Midewiwin Creation Story. Red Rising Magazine. 2020. <https://www.redrising.ca/post/we-ve-always-been-here-two-spirit-people-in-the-midewiwin-creation-story-chantel-fiola>

Required Watching:

- Ty Defoe. Circle. <https://vimeo.com/531572884/6eeb9b4bbf>
- Thirza Cuthand. Woman Dress. 2019. <https://www.nfb.ca/film/woman-dress/>

Optional Reading:

- Indigiqueer the Space: An Interview with Ty Defoe Ty Defoe Interviewed by Nic Gareiss.

March 22nd: Finding Our Voices

- Wildhood. Film. (we will watch in class)

PART 4: The Future is Indigiqueer

Where we're going and how two-spirit ppl will be the bringers of change (intimacy, sovereign erotics, ENM, ecoerotics, pleasure activism, unshaming our bodies through land, mutual aid, etc.)

March 29th: Our Future Bodies

Required Reading:

- "Joyful Embodiment: Felt Theory and Indigenous Trans Perspectives in the Work of Max Wolf Valerio." Lisa Tatonetti. *Transmotion* 7.1 (2021).
- Melissa K. Nelson. "Getting Dirty: The Eco-Eroticism of Women in Indigenous Oral Literatures." In *Critically Sovereign*.

Optional Reading:

- Belcourt. Selections from *A History of My Brief Body*.

April 5th: Imagining Otherwise

Required Readings:

- Joshua Whitehead. Selections from *FullMetalIndigiqueer*.
- Smokii Sumac. Selections from *You are enough: love poems for the end of the world*.

Optional Reading:

- "#morelove. always": Reading Smokii Sumac's Transmasculine First Nations Poetry on and beyond Social Media." James Mackay. *Transmotion* 7.1 (2021).

April 12th: Radical Care & Decolonial Futures

Required Reading:

- Jeffrey Ansloos, Deanna Zantingh, Katelyn Ward, Samantha McCormick and Chutchaya Bloom Siriwattakanon. "Radical Care and Decolonial Futures: Conversations on Identity, Health, and Spirituality with Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit Youth." *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies* 12.3-4 (2021): 74-103.