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# Tribal sovereign status: Conceptualizing its integration into the social work curriculum

Amy Fischer Williams

*University of St. Thomas, Minnesota*

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Tribal sovereign status:  
Conceptualizing its integration into the social work curriculum  
by  
Amy Fischer Williams

A Banded Dissertation in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Social Work

St. Catherine University | University of St. Thomas  
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### Abstract

This banded dissertation contains three related products: a conceptual article, a research article, and the development of an original social work course. Together the products conceptualize, research, and envision how accredited social work programs can integrate *tribal sovereign status* relevant theories and concepts into curriculum to prepare social workers to collaborate and work with Indigenous peoples and communities. The primary conceptual framework that informs the dissertation is decolonization theory. Decolonization entails a broad theoretical spectrum that includes both philosophical-oriented and action-effort approaches to combat the generational effects that colonization has inflicted on Indigenous peoples (Gray, M., Coates, J., Yellow Bird, M., & Hetherington, T., 2013; Aquash, 2013; Mbembe, 2013; Gibson, 2007). An elder epistemological framework is also utilized whereas Indigenous elders are consulted as informers to the research findings and the dissertation work at-large (Christensen & Poupart, 2013).

The first section of this banded dissertation is a conceptual article that focuses on the intersection of decolonization and the social work curriculum. Theoretical and action-efforts of the decolonization theoretical spectrum are examined. Early social work activities in the United States inflicted the dominant cultural values of an imperial or colonial nature on Indigenous Peoples (Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington, 2013). These values were adapted into social welfare policies and social work standards of practice, and are often dissimilar to Indigenous cultural values. How ideologies of decolonization can be integrated into the social work curriculum, its learning spaces, and its assessment are conceptualized within the context of the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) - Education and Policy Accreditation Standards (EPAS) Competency 2 – Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice.

The second section of this banded dissertation describes a qualitative study. In the exploratory study, 12 social workers with practice experience working with tribal communities were interviewed in order to identify indigenous-relevant content for social work curricula. Content analysis was used to analyze the data. Social work practice-oriented (i.e. historical trauma, cultural appropriation, and identity) and policy-oriented themes (i.e. tribal governance structure, historical policy and action, self-governance, and environmental justice) emerged from the investigation. Aligning with principles of elder epistemology, tribal elders were consulted and provided feedback about the study's findings and the elders provided recommendations for the direction of further research.

The third section of this banded dissertation is the design of a master of social work level course entitled: *Indigenous Communities and Peoples: Effective Social Work Practice*. The 5 curriculum content themes (Table 1) that emerged from the findings of the qualitative study outlined in section two of this banded dissertation are foundational and inform the course learning objectives. Social workers with practice experience working with tribal communities identified and inform indigenous-relevant, tribal sovereign status defining content, for social work curricula. The course is organized into 5 modules and includes both practice and policy-oriented topics. Consistent to the conceptual framework of the research study and the resulting course, decolonization ideologies and action-efforts and elder epistemology are primary course precepts.

*Keywords: decolonization, indigenous peoples, sovereignty, social work curriculum, elder epistemology*

Dedication

This banded dissertation is dedicated to my children:

Chauncey Kawelaketehatkwa *he dances on the wind* Williams

Levi Loyehsutsluh *he smiles quick* Williams

Belle Mae Yukhilihwiyosta *she who keeps our ways* Williams

You each inspire and make the world a better place.

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## Tribal sovereign status:

## Conceptualizing its integration into the social work curriculum

This banded dissertation explores how accredited social work programs can incorporate curriculum content to prepare social workers to knowledgeably and sensitively work and collaborate with Indigenous People and communities. There are over 570 federally recognized tribes in the United States (National Congress of American Indians, 2018). Tribes, domestic dependent nations, are sovereign entities with the right and power to self-govern. Tribal nations and citizens have distinct and diverse cultures, life ways, and languages. Concurrently, Indigenous Peoples have in common the historical perpetrations and lived experiences that settler occupation and doctrines such as Manifest Density inflicted. The complexities of these historical incidences and subsequent present-day effects require that social workers attain understanding and knowledge-sets to work with Indigenous Peoples and sovereign tribal nations.

Settler occupation and removal of Indigenous Peoples from their homelands resulted in loss of language, life-ways, land, and culture. These consequences of colonization necessitate that social workers, social work educators, and the profession work with Indigenous Peoples in ways that are not only relevant but that foremost recognize tribal sovereignty (Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington, 2013). Cognizant of the aforementioned complexities this banded dissertation is deliberated within the 5 contexts outline below:

- The profession's articulated values: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competency (NASW, 2017);
- A strengths-based perspective and human behavior in the social environment as hallmarks of the social work profession;
- Social work educational standards are set forth by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2015);

- The diversity of Indigenous Peoples and the complexities of tribal nations as sovereign entities within what is now-established as the United States;
- The scant amount of research regarding the social work curriculum specific to Indigenous Peoples and communities.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in its 2015 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) revisions included in its Competency 2 - Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice “tribal sovereign status” (p. 7) as a dimension to describe human diversity (CSWE, 2015). The inclusion of tribal sovereign status in the CSWE Standards provides an opportunity for social work scholars, students, and practitioners to conceptualize, research, and reflect on to what extent the profession knowledgeably, sensitively, and skillfully the profession collaborates and works with Indigenous Peoples.

The exploratory facets of this dissertation – how accredited social work programs can incorporate curriculum content to prepare social workers to knowledgeably and sensitively work and collaborate with Indigenous People and communities – is organized into 3 sections. The first section is a conceptual article that reviews the use of decolonization theory and its intersection with social work curriculum. The second section is a research article that stems from a qualitative study where Indigenous social workers inform and speak to what needs to be included in the social work curriculum to prepare professionals to work with Indigenous peoples and communities. The third section is the development of a social work course. The course-design syllabus outlines how the tribal sovereignty related concepts, theories, occurrences, policies, and lived experiences that stem from the inflictions of colonization can be integrated into the social work curriculum. The course content emerged from the findings of the qualitative study in section 2 of this banded dissertation. Preparing social workers for practice and collaboration with Indigenous People and tribal communities is central to the course.



### Conceptual Frameworks

Two conceptual frameworks inform this banded dissertation: decolonization theory and elder epistemology. Decolonization is the primary theoretical framework and its tenets are used to analyze and anchor the intersection of the concepts of tribal sovereign status and the social work curriculum. The decolonization conceptual frame is expansive and includes not only theoretic designations and distinctions, but also advocacy and action-efforts (Gray, M., Coates, J., Yellow Bird, M., & Hetherington, T., 2013; Aquash, 2013; Mbembe, 2013; Gibson, 2007). Four ideologies across the decolonization theoretical continuum inform this work: 1) decolonization specific to social work (Gray et al, 2013); 2) indigenous rights and action-efforts related to self-governance (Steinman, 2013); 3) decolonization defined as the rightful return of taken land (Aquash, 2013); and 4) relationships between the colonized and the colonizer to include acts of violence and war (Fanon, 1963).

Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington (2013) describe decolonization of social work as “acknowledging and harnessing the strengths of Indigenous communities” (p. 33) rather than to further compound the damaging centuries-long effects of colonization on Indigenous Peoples. This perspective aligns with social work’s strength-based and human behavior in the social environment perspectives. The Gray et al (2013) description of decolonization compels the social work profession to both realize and acknowledge the strengths of Indigenous communities, and to understand the injurious effects that colonization inflicts.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in September 2007 (United Nations, 2007). The declaration is a global policy statement that acknowledges the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-govern. Self-governance entails the rights of Indigenous peoples to govern ones’ own affairs, separate

from the governance structures of: occupiers, land settlers, or colonizing forces. It is an ideology that social work practitioners, educators, and scholars can utilize when interfacing with Indigenous Peoples and tribal nations, especially to determine if or to what extent non-indigenous professional involvement is appropriate.

Decolonization is also—more purely—defined as the rightful return of land taken from Indigenous Peoples by colonizing forces. Aquash (2013) describes the United States Manifest Destiny doctrine that led to military and religious invasions of indigenous territories resulting in the loss of land and removal of Indigenous peoples from homelands:

[I]nitial contact with Indigenous people was an incursion, with one of the most notable justifications for obtaining land at the heart of the concept of Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny doctrine provided a means for the colonizer to take land from Indigenous people based on the colonizer's religious belief that the land was their God-given right, a rationale stemming from the perception that First Nation peoples' spiritual practices were not Christian, and were, thus, unworthy of being recognized by the colonizing forces that impacted the social and cultural structures of First Nation people. (p. 9)

Decolonization as the return of land to Indigenous peoples aligns with the social work's commitments to social justice as well as policy practice and advocacy work on the macro levels.

The final aspect within decolonization theoretical spectrum of encompasses analysis and action, including war and violence between the colonizer and the colonized. Frantz Fanon was a preeminent theorist of the concepts of decolonization and colonial systems of governments. Fanon describes the colonizer-colonized relationship as sustained and continued, and outlined three dimensions of violence: “colonial violence, emancipatory violence of the colonized, and

violence in international relations” (Mbembe, 2012, p. 22). Fanon explained the colonizer–colonized relationship as based on the need for state expansion and appropriation of resources. Fanon describes anticolonial violence as fruitful and necessary to the self-determination of indigenous peoples, yet not as an end in itself (Gibson, 2007).

Violence is included as a point on the decolonization theoretical spectrum in this banded dissertation not as a social work advocacy-point. Rather, it is a cognizance-cue of the historical actions of war and violence waged against Indigenous Peoples. In the US, this includes policies and declarations of war and treaties resulting in loss of land and resources, and also efforts of emancipatory violence such as the American Indian Movement (AIM). The concepts and knowledge of colonization and decolonization, including historical facts such as war and violence, and the theories that reflect these, are important as social workers embark to work with those who navigate the effects of colonization.

A second conceptual framework used in this banded dissertation is elder epistemology. Christensen and Poupart (2013) describe elder epistemology as ways of knowing, approaches to knowledge, sharing knowledge, and a “keystone in Native American cultures” (p. 42). Elder epistemology, as described by Christensen and Poupart (2013), advocates including indigenous elders and their wisdom in classrooms when teaching First Nation and Indigenous Peoples content. The inclusion of elder epistemology is integrated the research product of this banded dissertation, whereas Indigenous elders serve as advisors and provide input about the direction of future research. Ways of knowing through Indigenous elders is also included in the syllabus product. Indigenous elders have a role in preparing social work professionals to work with Indigenous Peoples and communities. This pedagogy aligns not only with the social work

professional values of inclusion, diversity, and competence, but also with the Indigenous values of respect for elders and acknowledgment of their esteemed status.

### **Summary of Banded Dissertation Products**

This banded dissertation is comprised of three products: a conceptual article, a research article, and the development of a master's-level social work course syllabus. The central focus of the banded dissertation is social work curriculum content, specifically what content needs to be in social work curricula to prepare social workers to best work with Indigenous people and communities. The primary conceptual framework is decolonization theory; attention is paid to the decolonization theoretical spectrum that includes both ideological and advocacy paradigms. Learning and preparing social workers for diversity and difference in practice is central to the social work discipline and because cultural knowledge and sensitivity essential for social work practice, elder epistemology, knowing by means of elders – specifically tribal elders, is additional dissertation conceptual framework.

The concept of *tribal sovereign status* and the integration of knowledge, concepts, and theories around its integration into the social work curriculum are recent adaptations to social work accreditation standards and competency language (CSWE, 2015). The inclusion of tribal sovereign status included as a dimension of diversity outlined in the 2015 Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice – CSWE – EPAS Competency 2 marked an opportunity for social work educators to conceptualize how emerging practitioners are prepared to work with Indigenous people and communities. This three-part banded dissertation: 1) conceptualizes the intersection of the decolonization theoretical spectrum and the social work curriculum; 2) reports the findings of a qualitative research study where Indigenous social workers, and non-Indigenous who are social worker employees of tribal nations, are asked their perceptions of what needs to

be in the social work curriculum to prepare social workers to work with Indigenous people and communities; and 3) the findings, 5 social work practice and policy-oriented curriculum content themes, that emerged from the study are utilized to develop a master level social work course titled: *Indigenous Communities and Peoples: Effective Social Work Practice*.

Together the products of this banded dissertation conceptualize, examine, and envision how social work educators and practitioners can improve social work standards of practice when working with Indigenous peoples and communities. Fundamental to the three products of this banded dissertation, the acknowledgment that tribes are sovereign nations with unique legal statuses, and governments that exercise rights to self-govern is central to effective social work practice on micro, mezzo, or macro levels.

## **Discussion**

### **Implications for Social Work Education**

A primary implication for social work education is that the components of this banded dissertation can promote critical discussion and help to move forward the development and implementation of social work curriculum content to prepare social work practitioners to more effectively work and collaborate with Indigenous people and communities.

Indigenous individuals have a unique legal status as citizens of respective tribal nations. Tribal governments are sovereign entities with legal statuses outlined in the US Constitution, nation-to-nation treaties, and US federal law (Ray, 2011; Echohawk, 2013). However, the cultures, life ways, and languages of respective tribes and their language-bases are distinctive. Although there exists a shared historical-experienced inflection of colonization, and its resulting generational effects, among Indigenous Peoples, understanding and learning about Indigenous People is layered with complexities. There are over 370 federally recognized tribes in the U.S.

(National Congress of American Indians, 2016). Social work programs, educators, and researchers will need to determine how and what curricula content is most pertinent to prepare emerging practitioners in their respective accredited programs.

Another implication for social work education, in addition to the responsibility of the social work profession social workers to recognize and work to understand the complexities and diversity among tribes and citizens of tribal nations, is to for the profession to consider and grapple with its professional humility and if there is a lack thereof in regard to sovereign status. For example, when tribes exercise their tribal legal jurisdiction over child welfare cases, and tribal judges and employees serve on behalf of respective nations, the social work profession and non-tribally employed social workers, need to discern: Is there, and what is the appropriate role for the social work profession in this given situation? That question may underpin many social work practice sectors; however, it is especially seminal when individuals are enrolled tribal members or tribal governments have legal jurisdiction.

A final implication for social work education is this question accredited social programs will need to discern: Now that *tribal sovereign status* is a descriptor of the profession's diversity competency as set forth in the EPAS, where does curricula content relevant to Indigenous People embed in the social work curriculum? Policy courses, practice courses, or is the rightful place throughout the curricula. And as accredited programs grapple with that question, CSWE is positioned with decisions regarding how and if the accrediting body further defines tribal sovereign status in forthcoming curriculum standards.

### **Implications for Future Research**

A primary implication for future research is the direction of inquiry social work scholars will embark upon related tribal sovereignty. Prior to the its 2015 Educational Policy and

Accreditation Standards (EPAS), the Council on Social Work Education described its diversity learning objectives and competencies in all-encompassing language; there was no specific, descriptive language specific to Indigenous peoples. The inclusion of the phrase *tribal sovereign status* in the Council's EPAS Competency 2 - Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice diversity standard changed the trajectory for Indigenous-related content in social work curricula.

Although this banded dissertation focuses on how social work educators can conceptualize principles from the decolonization theoretical spectrum to integrate concepts of tribal sovereignty to improve how social workers work with Indigenous people and communities, this banded dissertation is but one, exploratory qualitative study. There is a great deal of other Indigenous-relevant content (i.e. Indigenous historical trauma, effects and measurement of efforts to decolonize social work, Indigenous environmental justice, sovereignty protections, tribal jurisdiction, Indigenous identity, cultural appropriation, Indian Child Welfare) that is needs to be further researched, evidenced and available in the literature. That presents a serious challenge for scholars and research to respond to the dearth in the literature.

A final implication for social work research is in the area of research methodologies and standards. How do scholars assuredly structure research studies that are culturally sensitive and free from cultural appropriation when Indigenous people and tribal citizens are identified as research subjects? And importantly, who gets to decide what is (or is not) culturally appropriate, especially if researchers are removed from the respective tribal self-governance structures and the cultural nuances and complexities. These are questions are necessary as continued research with Indigenous peoples and tribes are planned.

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Indigenous Communities and Peoples: Effective Social Work Practice

Amy Fischer Williams

Saint Catherine University | University of Saint Thomas

Author Note:

Correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to Amy Fischer Williams,  
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Department of Social Work, Swart Hall, 800 Algoma  
Boulevard, Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901.

### Abstract

The accrediting body of social work programs, the Council on Social Work Education, outlines Engaging Diversity and Difference in Practice as one of its competency-based standards in the social work curriculum. One facet of diversity and difference in practice, as described in the educational standards, is tribal sovereign status. The Council first specifically included tribal sovereignty in its 2015 educational standards (CSWE, 2015). This document platforms the development of an original master's level social work course titled *Indigenous Communities and Peoples: Effective Social Work Practice*. Decolonization is the theoretical conceptual framework that informs the course design, and tribal sovereign status content is central to the learning objectives. The course incorporates theories and concepts specific to tribal sovereignty into social work curricula with the intent to prepare social workers to work and collaborate with Indigenous people and communities. The *Indigenous Communities and Peoples: Effective Social Work Practice* course integrates the findings of a qualitative study where Indigenous social workers were asked to inform the curriculum content. The organizational strata of the course include 5 learning modules: colonialism and historical trauma, tribal sovereign status and policy enactment, tribal governance structure and self-governance, indigenous cultural identity, and environmental justice. The course syllabus is outlined and includes: the course description, learning objectives, assigned readings and materials, measurements to align with CSWE dimensions, course assignments, annotated notes to the instructor, and rubrics. Social work programs and faculty can also consider the incorporation tribal sovereign status content into existing courses.



## Introduction

The decolonization theoretical spectrum was drawn on as the primary conceptual framework for the purpose to develop a social work course that incorporates concepts of *tribal sovereign status* into the social work curriculum. Decolonization theory includes both ideological-orientations and action-oriented approaches as options to redress the inflictions of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples (Gray, M., Coates, J., Yellow Bird, M., & Hetherington, T., 2013; Aquash, 2013; Mbembe, 2013; Gibson, 2007). This social work course development project draws on existing social work literature, specifically studies in which Indigenous Peoples inform the social work curriculum and programs (Weaver, 1999; 2000). Literature that conceptualizes settler colonialism structures (Steinman, 2013; Wolfe, 2006) as well as scholarship that examine the effects of historical trauma further inform this newly developed course (Whitbeck, L. B., Adams, G. W., Hoyt, D. R., & Chen, X., 2004; Walls & Whitbeck, 2012).

This document outlines an MSW-level course design entitled *Indigenous Communities and Peoples: Effective Social Work Practice*. The development of this course is an aspect of the banded dissertation requirement for the doctorate of social work program at the University of St. Thomas and St. Catherine's University, and emerges from an exploratory study where the perspectives of indigenous social workers were collected to inform the social work curriculum about *tribal sovereign status*. Tribal sovereign status refers to the rights of indigenous peoples and tribes to self-govern.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the accrediting body of baccalaureate master's degree programs in the United States and its territories. CSWE's Commission on Accreditation (COS) develops the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), the

measure by which social work programs secure accreditation and reaffirm their accreditation status. Prior to the 2015 Standards, although diversity was addressed broadly, there was not specific reference to tribal sovereignty or indigenous peoples. The descriptor *tribal sovereign status* is now included as a dimension of CSWE 2015 EPAS Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice.

The revisions in the 2015 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) – Education and Policy Accreditation Standards (EPAS) provide an opportunity for social work educators and researchers to consider how programs will incorporate concepts related to tribal sovereignty into curricula. The integration Indigenous-relevant content intersects with social work practice perspectives on micro, mezzo, and macro levels, and is germane to both social work policy and practice courses.

The primary purpose of this course is to prepare advanced-level social work practitioners to more effectively work with indigenous peoples and communities. In order to facilitate a greater understanding of the distinctiveness of indigenous people and tribes, historical and legal frameworks of colonization, sovereignty, and action-efforts to decolonize are used to contextualize the course. The theoretical framework of decolonization and elder epistemology as a pedagogical approach further scaffold the course.

The course is designed as an in-person, 3-credit course to occur over a 15-week semester. With modification, it is possible to adapt the course to a hybrid format. Five central themes are used to organize the course and form its learning modules. These themes emerged from the study whereas Indigenous social workers were asked their perspectives about what should be in social work curriculum to best prepare social workers to work with Indigenous people and tribes.

**COURSE TITLE**

Indigenous Communities and Peoples: Effective Social Work Practice

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This MSW-level course examines historical and contextual factors that have contributed to the lived experience of Indigenous peoples in North America. The intersection of federal policy and *tribal sovereign status* is studied, with specific attention to how each influence effective social work practice. The course is organized into five primary topics: colonialism and historical trauma; tribal sovereign status and policy action; tribal governance structure and self-governance; cultural identity; and indigenous environmental justice. The course is taught from a decolonizing social work theoretical perspective and elder epistemology “ways of knowing by means of elders” is utilized.

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the connection between the acts of colonialism waged on the Indigenous Peoples of North America and historical and generational trauma. (Module 1)
2. Analyze and critically evaluate the major theoretical frameworks of decolonization. (Module 1)
3. Explain tribal sovereign status and its intersection with tribal self-governance, indigenous identity, and citizenry. (Module 2 & 4)
4. Analyze and critically evaluate the effects of U.S. federal policy enactment specific to indigenous peoples and respective indigenous action responses, and their intersection with the social work. (Modules 2 & 3)
5. Understand and explain the significance of tribal self-governance and sovereignty.
6. Identify and explain acts of colonization and indigenous efforts of decolonization that shape indigenous cultural identity. (Module 4)
7. Identify an indigenous-salient environmental justice effort, and in the context of tribal self-governance analyze the applicability of social work planned change efforts (Module 5)
8. Deliberate and reflect on the course material using the pedagogical approach of elder epistemology. (Modules 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

**Competencies and Dimensions**

The assessment and measurement of CSWE Accreditation Standards into the social work curriculum of accredited programs is competency-based. The CSWE EPAS (2015) competency addressed in this course is Competency 2 - Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice defined in Table 2. The matrix of course assignments, behavioral indicators, and aligning dimensions (values, knowledge, affective reaction, and critical thinking) are in outlined in Table 3.

**Table 2:**  
***2015 EPAS Competency 2 – full text***

<p>Below is Competency 2 – Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice – it is referenced from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) – Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). The phrase <i>tribal sovereign status</i> is one aspect of the social work profession’s diversity competency. It is provided here for reference and to contextualize integration of sovereignty concepts within the at-large curriculum.</p>
<p>Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. Social workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;</li> <li>• present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and</li> <li>• apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">(CSWE, 2015, p. 7)</p>

The table below outlines how the generalist behaviors and dimensions are measured in the *Indigenous Peoples and Communities: Effective Social Work Practice* course. The performance

descriptors also can be adapted into other social work courses where Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice is measured. Performance descriptions, corresponding course assignments, and dimensions are summarized. Students demonstrate proficiency by means of the course assignments. Competency ratings are also measured as part of the field practicum assessment, the signature pedagogy of social work education.

**Table 3**  
*Measurement of generalist behaviors and dimensions*

<b>Generalist Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice</b>		
<b>Performance Description</b>	<b>Assessment procedures and assignments</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>
2.1 Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.	Discussion Posts  Environmental Policy Paper	Values  Critical Thinking  Affective Reaction
2.2 Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences.	Tribal Elder Panel Discussion  Discussion Posts  Tribal Sovereign Status Paper	Values  Knowledge  Affective Reaction  Critical Thinking
2.3 Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.	Discussion Posts  In-class discussion  Environmental Policy Practice Presentation	Values  Knowledge  Affective Reaction

**MODULE 1: COLONIALISM and HISTORICAL TRAUMA**

This module introduces colonialism and decolonization within social work disciplinary and theoretical frameworks. Attention is given to the colonialism and its connection to historical and generational trauma. Discernment of sensitive and knowledgeable social work practice coordinated with indigenous people and communities is studied and deliberated.

*Annotated note to instructors: In this module students map the theoretical terrain of decolonization. We are seeking to become comfortable with concepts and delineations such as: western, non-western, indigenous, indigenization, colonialism, and decolonization, and then thinking about how these concepts relate to historical and generational trauma. Students are then introduced to elder epistemology and the cultural significance of knowing and learning through elders.*

### **Module 1: Learning Objectives**

1. Understand the connection between the acts of colonialism waged on the Indigenous Peoples of North America and historical and generational trauma.
2. Analyze and critically evaluate the major theoretical frameworks of decolonization.
3. Deliberate and reflect on the course material using the pedagogical approach of elder epistemology.

### **Readings**

Gray, M., Coates, J., Yellow Bird, M., & Hetherington, T. (2013). *Decolonizing social work*. Surrey, UK: Ashgate.

Chapter 1 “Indigenization, Indigenous Social Work and Decolonization: Mapping the Theoretical Terrain” by Mel Gray and Tiana Hetherington

Chapter 4 “Why Decolonized Social Work is More than Cross-Culturalism” by Ann Joselynn Baltra-Ulloa

Ehlers, C., Gizer, I., Gilder, D., Ellingson, J., & Yehuda, R. (2013). Measuring historical trauma in an American Indian community sample: Contributions of substance dependence, affective disorder, conduct disorder and PTSD. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 133*(1), 180–187.

Smith, A. (2005). Conquest: Sexual violence and American Indian genocide. In *Boarding school abuses and the case for reparations*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

*Chapter 2 Boarding School Abuses and the Case for Reparations.*

**MODULE 2: TRIBAL SOVEREIGN STATUS and POLICY ENACTMENT**

This module reviews tribal sovereign status and U.S. government policies with attention to the intersection of tribal governments and citizenry. Domestic Dependency, the Allotment Act, Reorganization, Termination and Restoration era, and Self-determination are examined with attention to the relevancy and implications to social work practice on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

*Annotated note to instructors: Key to this module is for students to understand the foundational legal structures that underpin tribal sovereign status (i.e. treaties, nation-status, law of the land status, and the US Constitution). Once this foundational knowledge is achieved, tribal case examples are introduced. Policies around Menominee termination and restoration are included here as examples. However, additional or different assigned readings and case studies that pertain to tribes closer to your respective university or region may be used to illustrate tribal sovereignty and its related policy.*

**Module 2: Learning Objectives**

1. Explain tribal sovereign status and its intersection with tribal self-governance, indigenous identity, and citizenry.
2. Analyze and critically evaluate the effects of U.S. federal policy enactment specific to indigenous peoples and respective indigenous action responses, and their intersection with the social work.
3. Deliberate and reflect on the course material using the pedagogical approach of elder epistemology.

**Audio**

Deer, A. (n.d.). *Menominee Indians lecture the Menominee Nation*. Madison, Wisconsin:

American Indian Studies Program University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Readings**

Echohawk, J. E. (2013). Understanding tribal sovereignty: The Native American Rights Fund.

*Expedition*, 55(3), 18–23.

Smith, A. (2005). Conquest: Sexual violence and American Indian genocide. In *Boarding school*

*abuses and the case for reparations*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Chapter 7 *Anticolonial Responses to Gender Violence*.

Steinman, E. (2012). Settler colonial power and the American Indian Sovereignty Movement:

Forms of domination; Strategies of transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*,

117(4), 1073–1130. doi:10.1086//662708

Menominee Restoration Act: Public law 93–197, H.R. 10717, 93rd Cong. (1973).

### **Recommended**

Benton, T. H. (1846). Senator Thomas Hart Benton on Manifest Destiny. *Congressional Globe*,

29(1), 917–918.

### **MODULE 3: TRIBAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE and SELF-GOVERNANCE**

This module surveys the tenants of tribal governance structure in the U.S. It also examines self-governance as exercised by tribal governments. Self-governance case studies relevant to social work practice are deliberated.

*Annotated note to instructors: In this module students are introduced and examine specific policies that are specific to acts and exercise of sovereignty. There is opportunity in this module, once the policies are read or discussed, to consider the stereotypes and misinformation about tribes and tribal members. For examples: the treaty rights to hunt and fish, land in trust versus fee status, the gaming and casino operations, taxation etc. can be explained once there is foundational knowledge of tribal sovereign status coupled with an understanding of self-governance. This module also the understanding of elder epistemology and the role of elders is*



*strengthened. It is important for students to consider the status of elders prior to the elder panel learning experience.*

### **Module 3: Learning Objectives**

1. Analyze and critically evaluate the effects of U.S. federal policy enactment specific to indigenous peoples and respective indigenous action responses, and their intersection with the social work.
2. Deliberate and reflect on the course material using the pedagogical approach of elder epistemology.

### **Readings**

- Akee, R. Q., Spilde, K. A., & Taylor, J. B. (2015). The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and its effects on American Indian economic development. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 29(3), 185–208. doi:10.1257/jep.29.3.185
- Cross, T. (2011). A mission not impossible: Understanding and reducing disparities and disproportionality. Retrieved from National Indian Child Welfare Association website: [https://www.nicwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/MissionNotImpossible\\_DisparitiesDisproportionality.pdf](https://www.nicwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/MissionNotImpossible_DisparitiesDisproportionality.pdf)
- Daehnke, J., & Lonetree, A. (2011). Repatriation in the United States: The current state of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 35(1), 87–97.
- Di Palma, J. (2014). Adoptive Couple v. Baby Girl: The Supreme Court's distorted interpretation of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review*, 47(2), 523–538.
- Larkin, J. J., & Luppino-Esposito, J. (2012). The Violence Against Women Act, federal criminal jurisdiction and Indian tribal courts. *BYU Journal of Public Law*, 27(1), 1–40.

### **Guest Speaker**

Elder epistemology “ways of knowing” is utilized in this course. A small panel (2-3) of indigenous elders is convened in during Module 2. The course instructor will assemble a panel discussion whereas tribal elders discuss their lived experience: cultural identity, respective band/or tribal worldview, cultural distinction and values, and perspective about social work practice standards when working with indigenous communities and peoples. The discussion panel is an interactive experience whereas students plan for the guest speaker opportunity.

### **Recommended**

National Indian Child Welfare Association. (2018). *A guide to compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act*. Retrieved from <https://www.nicwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Guide-to-ICWA-Compliance-2018.pdf>

Ray, F. (2011). Preserving Indian preference for Native American self-governance. *American Indian Law Review*, 36(1), 223–252.

### **MODULE 4: INDINGEOUS CULTURAL IDENTITY**

This module examines historical and present-day complexities of indigenous cultural identity, belonging, and tribal citizenship statuses. Pre and post-colonization indigenous life-ways and identity are reviewed. Indigenous imagery, mascots, and cultural appropriation and their intersection with identity are examined. Indigenous resiliency, sovereignty preservation, and decolonization action-efforts are explored.

*Annotated note instructors: In this module students are introduced to aspects affecting indigenous identity to include imagery and mascots. Concepts of self-governance are purposefully introduced before cultural identity so it is clear that tribes have the right to determine their membership. The Ratteree & Hill (2017) readings provide clear examples of colonialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This module also provides space to discuss or integrate readings Two Spirit identity and people and/or urban Indian communities.*

**Module 4: Learning Objectives**

1. Identify and explain acts of colonization and indigenous efforts of decolonization that shape indigenous cultural identity.
2. Deliberate and reflect on the course material using the pedagogical approach of elder epistemology.

**Readings**

Chaney, J., Burke, A., & Burkley, E. (2011). Do American Indian Mascots = American Indian People? Examining implicit bias towards American Indian People and American Indian Mascots. *American Indian & Alaska Native Mental Health Research: The Journal of the National Center*, 18(1), 42–62.

Christensen, R., & Poupart, L. M. (2012) Elder teachers gather at Manitou Api, Manitoba: Igniting the fire, gathering wisdom from all nations. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 25(7), 933–949. doi:10.1080/09518398.2012.720733

Lucero, N. (2010). Making meaning of urban American Indian identity: A multistage integrative process. *Social Work*, 55(4), 327–336.

Ratteree, K., Hill, N. S. (Eds.), & Oneida Nation (Sponsoring Body). (2017). *The great vanishing act: Blood quantum and the future of native nations*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum.

“Vampire Policy is Bleeding Us Dry – Blood Quantums, Be Gone!” p. 77-79 by Suzan Shown Harjo

“Reconsidering Blood Quantum Criteria for the Expansion of Tribal Jurisdiction” p. 260-270 by Rebecca M. Webster

**Recommended**

Kingstone, L. (2015). The destruction of identity: Cultural genocide and Indigenous Peoples. *Journal of Human Rights*, 14(1), 63–83. doi:10.1080/14754835.2014.886951

## MODULE 5: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

This module examines indigenous environmental justice concepts, policies, and political action-efforts. Through the use of case studies, the intersection of tribal, federal, and local environmental law and policy is studied. Environmental action-efforts are compared and analyzed. The social work planned change process is critically analyzed to discern to what extent the social work professional macro-level involvement has a place in indigenous environmental justice issues.

*Annotated note to instructors: The use of environmental case studies, activism, and legal precedent are useful for students to understand Indigenous environment justice and how it intersects with colonial land grabs. The environmental assessment tool kit can be applied to regional or global environmental onslaughts. The content in this module provide an opportunity to analyze and discuss the parallels between human injustices and environmental injustices.*

### Module 5: Course Objectives

1. Identify an indigenous-salient environmental justice effort, and in the context of tribal self-governance analyze the applicability of social work planned change efforts.
2. Deliberate and reflect on the course material using the pedagogical approach of elder epistemology.

### Required

Hoover, C., Cook, K., Plain, R., Sanchez, K., Waghivi, V., Miller, P., & Carpenter, D. O. (2012).

Indigenous Peoples of North America: Environmental exposures and reproductive justice. *Environment Health Perspectives*, 120(12), 1645–1649. doi:10.1289/ehp1205422

Schlosberg, D., & Carruthers, D. (2010). Indigenous struggles, environmental justice, and community capabilities. *Global Environmental Politics*, 10(4), 12–35.

Women's Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health Network Alliance Partnership. (2018).

Environmental Assessment Toolkit. *Violence on the land, violence on our bodies:*

*Building an Indigenous response to environmental violence.* Retrieved from

<http://landbodydefense.org/resources/environmental-assessment>

### **Documentary**

Fox, J. (Producer), Dewey, M. & Spione, J. (Codirectors). (2017). *Awake, a dream from*

*Standing Rock* [DVD]. United States: Bullfrog Films.

### **Recommended**

Olive, A. & Rabe, A. (2016). Indigenous environmental justice: Comparing the United States and Canada's legal frameworks for endangered species conservation. *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 46(4), 496–512. doi:10.1080/02722011.2016.1255654

LaDuke, W. (1999). *All our relations: Native struggles for land and life*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Chapter 1 Akwesasne: Mohawk mothers' milk and PCBs

Chapter 4 Nuclear waste: dumping on the Indians

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Module 1: Written Discussion Post**

Online discussion post: Drawing from the assigned module readings, write a 400 word essay that: discusses the theoretical tenets of “decolonizing social work” and the relationship between colonization and historical trauma. Respond to the original discussion posts of two classmates.

Discussion post responses build on the theoretical tenets and deliberate the intersection of social work professional practice with historical trauma. Two response posts required. Limit response posts to 150 words.

**Module 2: Written Discussion Post**

Online discussion post: Drawing from the assigned module readings, write a 400 word essay that: discusses “settler colonial dynamics” in the context of the Allotment Act, Termination and Restoration, and/or Self-determination. Respond to the original discussion posts of two classmates. Discussion post responses build on the policy discussion and deliberate the intersection of indigenous activism at the macro level. Two response posts required. Limit response posts to 150 words.

**Module 3: Written Discussion Post**

Online discussion post: Drawing from the assigned module readings, write a 400 word essay that: discusses *tribal governance structure*. Use one of the required readings to illustrate how tribal governance and sovereignty are enacted. Respond to the original discussion posts of two classmates. Discussion post responses build on the policy case examples (i.e. Indian Child Welfare Act, Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, or Violence Against Women Act) and deliberate policy intersection with social work professional practice. Two response posts required. Limit response posts to 150 words.

**Module 4: Written Discussion Post**

Online discussion post: Drawing from the elder panel discussion and the module readings, write a 400 word essay that: discusses *indigenous identity* and its intersection with social work professional practice. Respond to the original discussion posts of two classmates. Discussion post responses build on elder panel and readings, and reflect on ethical professional practice rooted in practice humility and acknowledgment of self-governance and sovereignty. Two response posts required. Limit response posts to 150 words.

**Tribal Sovereign Status Paper**

Select 1 tribal nation or band whose reservation is located in the United States. Develop a 12-page research paper that outlines the intersection of nation-to-nation treaties, federal policy or law, and tribal laws and self-governance policies that both attempt to erode and sustain the sovereign status of the tribe you have selected. Begin the paper with an introduction of the nation or band you have selected for the assignment. Organize the paper historically. Identify and contextualize the occurrences and policies that have and do contribute to the Nation’s sovereignty.

**Environmental Policy Practice Paper**

Identify an indigenous-salient environmental policy and activism issue. Conduct a literature review and write a 12-page research paper. Include the following sections in the paper: 1) introduction and policy description, 2) historical and political context, 3) cultural significance to indigenous peoples and territories, 4) description of activism and resistance, 5) address jurisdictional and sovereignty issues related to the selected policy, and 6) discuss social work ethical response in the context of tribal self-governance to the policy issue.

**Table 4**  
**Rubric for tribal sovereign status and environmental justice assignments**

The rubric below outlines the assignment dimensions and related descriptors for use in grading the Tribal Sovereign Status and Environmental Justice assignments.			
Dimension	Description	Comments	Points
<b>Topic and Introduction:</b> 2 pts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Topic is clear and succinctly introduced</li> <li>○ Direction of paper is evident and well-established</li> </ul>		
<b>Content:</b> 6 pts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Minimum of 8 scholarly sources</li> <li>○ Extent to which the selection of sources build the argument or rationale of the paper</li> <li>○ Sources contribute to the execution and flow of the paper</li> <li>○ Connection to social work practice on micro, mezzo, and macro levels is evident</li> </ul>		

<b>Organization: 4 pts.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Employs logical progression throughout</li> <li>○ Sentence and paragraph structure contributes to the organizational flow of the paper</li> </ul>		
<b>Writing Quality: 6pts.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Clearly written</li> <li>○ APA format throughout</li> <li>○ Grammar and spelling</li> </ul>		
<b>Discussion: 2pts.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reflective discussion addresses implications for social work practice</li> </ul>		
<b>Total Points:</b>			

**Environmental Policy Presentation**

Students present to the class the respective Environmental Policy Paper findings. Incorporate the 6 sections addressed in the paper and integrate teaching visual aids (i.e. PowerPoint, video clips, handouts). Presentations are 12-15 minutes in length, and presenters facilitate a brief post-presentation class discussion not to exceed 5 additional minutes.

**Table 5**  
***Rubric for environmental justice presentation assignment***

<b>Individual Presentation Skills</b>		
<b>Exemplary</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The presenter spoke clearly, slowly, and loudly enough.</li> <li>○ The presenter used expressive, appropriate body language.</li> <li>○ The presenter used all the time allotted but did not speak too long.</li> <li>○ The presenter used anecdotes appropriately to liven up and illustrate the presentation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The presenter was understood but sometimes unclear; however, intelligibility was not compromised.</li> <li>○ The presenter’s body language did not distract significantly.</li> <li>○ The presenter’s timing was too long or too brief.</li> <li>○ Anecdotes were used, but they were over or underused to liven up or illustrate the presentation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The presenter mumbled, spoke too fast or too slow; intelligibility was compromised.</li> <li>○ The presenter’s body language distracted seriously from the content.</li> <li>○ The presenter barely used the time allotted or used excessively too much time.</li> <li>○ The lack of anecdotes made the presentation dull.</li> </ul>
<b>Individual Content</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Facts and examples were detailed, accurate, and appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Facts and examples were mostly detailed, accurate, and appropriate, but</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Facts and examples were seriously lacking in detail, inaccurate, or</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Theories and content were accurately described and appropriately used.</li> <li>○ Analyses, discussions, and conclusions were explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories</li> </ul>	<p>there were lapses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Theories were referenced but they were either not accurately described or not appropriately used.</li> <li>○ The connection between analyses, discussions, and conclusions is evident, but it is not explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories.</li> </ul>	<p>inappropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Theories and content referenced were inaccurately described and inappropriately used or not referenced or used at all.</li> <li>○ There is no clear connection between analyses, discussions, and examples, facts, and theories.</li> </ul>
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The rubric is adapted from: (Stevens & Levi, 2005)

**SUMMARY OF STUDENT EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS**

Online Discussion Post Assignments (4 @ 7 points each)	28%
Class Participation and Leadership	12%
Tribal Sovereign Status Paper	20%
Environmental Policy Practice Paper	20%
Environmental Policy Practice Presentation	10%

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