Welcome!

Native American and Indigenous Studies at Indiana University is not really a new thing. For a long time, the Bloomington campus has featured faculty and students with an abundant interest in this field. Over this longer view, prominent institutions have emerged here - for instance, the American Indian Studies Research Institute - to serve as foundations for scholarship and community. They were built slowly, painstakingly, and lovingly, and they serve as a foundation for the present.

IU’s commitment to Native American Studies

Still there is something decidedly different about the state of things today. There is now a doctoral minor offered in Native American and Indigenous Studies. There is a committed faculty group, known as the Committee on Native American & Indigenous Studies. And there is a strong and meaningful partnership with American Studies. As a result of these things, which sit on top of that long history, there is, perhaps, great hope for the future of this field here at IU.

Developing Communitas

We can also say that we have a newsletter. It would be easy to dismiss such a thing, especially in the face of other accomplishments, but that would be a mistake. Big things grow out of newsletters, pamphlets, and broadsheets. Indeed, at the very least, this newsletter is a critical part of finding the “we” here on a bewilderingly busy campus. Still, I also hope, more than anything else, that this first issue is the beginning of something new and something bold. All professors of online courses have had students who have disappeared in cyberspace, and they’re not sure why. Was it equipment failure, learning style differences, dissociation from mechanization, or disinterest? Generally speaking, the student who does best in a virtual class is accustomed to working independently, being individually motivated to learn, and who has a vision of achievement goals. Obviously, many college students do not meet these criteria.

In the upcoming newsletters you will notice the newsletter growing and expanding based on the minor needs, especially in the Resources section. If you ever feel that something is missing or lacking, please do not hesitate to contact the editor, Joseph Stahlman (jstahlma@indiana.edu), and bring it to his attention. Thank you.

What is the PhD Minor in Native American and Indigenous Studies?

Students who pursue the PhD minor in Native American & Indigenous Studies will focus their interdisciplinary study on the histories, cultures, and literatures of Native American and Indigenous peoples, chiefly in the United States, Mexico, and Canada, but also, where appropriate, in the broader Americas. This is one of a very few programs in the United States that focus explicitly on Native American and Indigenous Studies at the graduate level, and that place the study of American Indians within the context of a broader, more sweeping and international inquiry into the nature of political power, colonial settlement, and global contact. These types of meetups are appropriate where the topic calls for rapid-fire exchange of ideas, quick collaboration, and spontaneity.

Requirements for the Native American and Indigenous Studies PhD minor encourage graduate students to develop a program of academic inquiry that complements their doctoral program and takes advantage of the wide range of College of Arts and Sciences faculty with a focus on Native American and Indigenous literature, politics, art, history, culture, and folklore. Each student’s “Program of Study” is developed upon their entry to the degree and in consultation with the American Studies Director. For more information go to http://www.indiana.edu/~amst/graduates/faq.shtml
Can you tell me about your research focus for your PhD?

I am in the archaeology program in the anthropology department. My research focuses on the late-prehistoric archaeology of the Midwestern and Southeastern U.S. For my dissertation, I am creating a project that will analyze the architecture of late-prehistoric fortifications used in these areas. The first fortifications with towers in them in North or South America first appeared in the Midwest at 1000 AD. This probably means that a new type of offensive or defensive warfare coincided with this technological development. I am currently working on a research design that will attempt to figure out how the architecture of fortifications in the Midwest changed after 1000 AD, and why.

Why did you choose a NAIS minor?

I personally think that some of the most useful and exciting realizations in Midwestern archaeology have come from archaeologists that used Native American studies in their analysis. These archaeologists constitute a minority of the discipline. They have used Native American ethnographies, oral histories, and interpretations to supplement their understandings of artifacts and sites. The best examples of this that I can think of are in the book “An Archaeology of the Soul” by Robert Hall. I chose the NAIS minor because it provided a unique opportunity for me to get training for that type of analysis.

How does the NAIS fit with anthropology? How does it fit into other social sciences?

The NAIS fits with anthropology and other social sciences in the same way that Ph.D. minors in Chinese, Japanese, or East Asian Studies fit in with anthropology and other social sciences. If a graduate student in anthropology is focusing on China for their research, it is a logical decision to receive the Chinese minor to supplement that research. The same rules apply for the NAIS minor.

That said, I think that anthropology has a bit of a different relationship with the NAIS minor than it does with the Chinese minor. This difference is that anthropology has made incredibly large contributions to Native American studies. Some aspects of my course work for the NAIS minor do not just “fit” with anthropology, but blatantly are anthropology. This is evident from the number of anthropology courses that are regularly cross-listed as NAIS courses.

For anthropologists, the NAIS minor will probably expose them to more anthropology, but also aspects of folklore, ethnomusicology, and history. Overall, the minor is cross-disciplinary, and could supplement the research of any anthropologist focusing on Native North America.

How has the minor helped your research?

The classes I have taken for the minor have given me the time to research some evidence of its existence in prehistory. It is also important, because how Native Americans used fortifications in warfare is still somewhat of a mystery. This research will constitute a part of my dissertation.

Next semester I hope to do research on prehistoric evidence of the ball game. In many Southeastern groups, the ball game trained boys and men to become warriors, and I think that there may be some concrete evidence of its existence in prehistory.

Has the minor changed the way you approach your work with native communities (contemporary or peoples of the past)?

What I have done as part of NAIS is similar to what I was already doing before I was a part of NAIS. I am not sure if I really can answer this question yet, because I have only been a part of the minor for 1.5 semesters.

How does your education help you connect with living communities?

I have read a lot about community archaeology. I even wrote the Wikipedia page on it (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_archaeology). I learned a lot about community archaeology and the importance of involving local communities in the research process. This has been a valuable perspective to bring to my research as an archaeologist.
Professor Profile: Jason Baird Jackson, Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology

Interviewed by Joseph Stahlman, NAIS Newsletter Editor

Can you tell me the positions you hold on the IU campus? (like folklore chair, journals, etc)

Especially over the past year or so, I have begun to think that I have lost track! I am an Associate Professor of Folklore in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, for which I also serve as Department Chair and Director of the Folklore Institute. Secondarily, I am also affiliated with the Department of Anthropology and American Studies, Cultural Studies and Native American and Indigenous Studies Programs. The IUB Library is a center of activity for me right now, as I chair the Bloomington Faculty Council’s Library Committee and am working with library colleagues on a number of projects associated with the IU Scholar Works Initiative. One of these is the "gold open access" journal Museum Anthropology Review, which I founded and edit.

Two campus roles of special relevance to native studies are my participation in the work of the American Indian Studies Research Institute and my service as a representative of the Native American and Indigenous Studies faculty to the advisory committee of the American Studies Program. These roles help me stay connected to the larger community of NAIS faculty and students, even as much of my day-to-day work of late is not focusing specifically on native studies.

Why did you take part in the NAIS minor?

Trained in three disciplines--sociology, anthropology, and folklore studies and engaged with the work of a few more (geography, ethnomusicology, art history, history, linguistics), I have a deep appreciation for what disciplines represent and how they function but also a passion for seeing what happens when we move across them. IU’s system of Ph.D. minors is an amazing asset to doctoral students here. It is not universal. At the University of Oklahoma, where I taught before coming back to IU, doctoral students focus only in their home department. There is little opportunity to study beyond one’s discipline and this is, in my experience, a real drawback. The NAIS minor at IU provides a framework within which students can track the field of native studies across a reasonable sample of disciplines while also gaining some perspective on the growing body of scholarship that frames NAIS in its own disciplinary terms, including an emphasis the relationship between NAIS and the needs of Indian Country.

Jason, you are very knowledgeable about many subjects and research. Are there resources at IU that students and faculty may not be aware of in terms of American Indian studies?

Right now, I am returning after many years to doing collections research at the Mathers Museum. Its holdings--both photographic and artifactual--for American Indian studies are very good and can be useful to doctoral students in many fields. The Archives of Traditional Music holds many of the most important recordings that exist for American Indian studies. It is uniquely important and is proving every more useful to the source communities from which so many recordings derived. I have experienced the excitement of studying in its collections and of playing its recordings sitting in the homes of native elders in Oklahoma. Also of unique importance is the Ohio Valley-Great Lakes Ethnohistory Archives, which are stewarded by the Glenn Black Laboratory of Archaeology. There are priceless American Indian studies resources all over this campus.

Can you tell me about some of your current research endeavors?

I am finishing work on an edited book related to the history of the Yuchi (Euchee) people prior to the forced removals of the early 19th century. This will be the first bona fide book exploring Yuchi history and it draws together scholars working in a number of different disciplines. It is intended to articulate with a historical research project that the Yuchi (Euchee) Tribe of Indians has just begun with support from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA).

I have been working in recent years on questions related to intellectual and cultural heritage policy (on the other). This has led to a forthcoming paper on the intersection of cultural property practices characteristic of contemporary native communities in Oklahoma and new media technologies such as camera-phones and video recorders.

How can students get more involved in NAIS?

There are probably as many ways as there are interested faculty and students, but I would stress the vitality of the larger American Studies Program (AMST) with which the NAIS faculty collaborates in important ways. AMST has been a remarkably generous and smart collaborator in building up and supporting the NAIS community on campus. One way that NAIS students can support NAIS and benefit in important ways along the way is to engage with the larger AMST community. The amount of useful programing that AMST has been pursuing is really remarkable and has made a real difference in the life of the campus in general.

Why would you advise students to choose a NAIS minor? How does the NAIS fit with folklore? How does it fit into other social sciences?

It has long been a reality in fields like NAIS that it is crucial to have a familiarity with the approaches to native studies taken in a range of fields. As NAIS becomes more mature, the range of disciplines contributing to it has expanded in important ways. It is important for students to be aware of the developments happening on the basis of the work of those scholars who are endeavoring to build and sustain NAIS as its own autonomous field of inquiry, one that is both shaped by neighboring disciplines over time and the specific concerns, needs, and intellectual traditions of Indian Country.
that project, we often brought the local community on site to show them what we were doing. We also did several public outreach events to present our findings to the local community. I doubt I would have participated in community archaeology if I hadn’t made it a part of my education.

Why did you come to Indiana University, and why not other universities?

Indiana University has a very strong program in Southeastern archaeology, community archaeology, and Native American studies. The combined strength of those disciplines drew me to IUB.

Do you have any advice to current or future recruits?

If you are focusing on the anthropology of Native Americans but do not have an outside minor yet, I would advise you to consider the NAIS minor.

Thanks for your time, Tony.

The image on page 2 was created by Fileve Palmer using images from the Wannamaker Collection part of the Mathers Museum collection.