Indigenous Futures | Decolonizing NYC — Documenting the Lenape Trail
Professor Jack Tchen, Noah Fuller & The Wayfinding Lab
Fall 2016, 6 credits (2 credit storytelling lab included)
Tuesdays, 3:30-6:10, A/P/A Institute, 8 Washington Mews Gallery
Lab – Thursday, 3:30-4:45, 25 West 4th, #C6

The seminar is a collaborative research project working with experts and knowledge bearers, especially Lenape scholars and including Algonquian language scholars, digital mappers, and artists, to explore the many facets of indigenous life along what we today can offer recognition as “the Lenapeway” in 1609. Playing with time, we are actually a research project for a time to come—a lab decolonizing methodology to support and ally with Native peoples and worldviews necessarily at the core of a socially just, sustainable, global futurity.

Note: Always check your email and the NYU Classes site. We’ll be often walking, if for not other reason to get outside! Always wear good walking shoes and layers of clothing, and raingear. Also, Thursdays “lab” sessions are fully part of the seminar and more focused on techniques and methods of gleaning, mapping, storytelling, etc.

Full disclosure
Neither myself, nor Noah Fuller are practitioners of Native and/or Indigenous cultures. Nor are we experts in Native American and/or Indigenous studies. I have built collections, started long term research projects, founded organizations, sought to engage publics in stories of social justice, and to retell the story of this part of the world that not only includes the viewpoint of those who have gained power, wealth, and dominance over the centuries but also of those who have been dispossessed, to varying degrees, in the face of what has become “the normal” and the norms. As allies Noah and I seek to explore both the possibilities of what we can do with Native and Indigenous peoples, but also our limits.

What is your “subject position” in relation to Native American and Indigenous studies? To the culture and experience? We, both non-Native and Native, have complex relations but often they are buried and ignored.

I’ll state here that my life’s work has been build the foundation for invisibilized and disappeared knowledge claims, primarily with the Chinese and Asian diasporic communities in the Americas. I am always trying to decolonize, de-imperialise, and de-cold war-ify (in the formulations of Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1999, 2014 & Chen Kuan-Hsing’s *Asia as Method*, 2010).

Most importantly, it is now increasingly possible for non-Native/Indigenous researchers to do this work because there has been an amazing flourishing of excellent scholarship generated primarily by Native American and Indigenous scholars, archivist, and organizers. This scholarship is both academic and university based, but also notably building on the sheer commitment and tenacity of Native American and Indigenous communities collecting, documenting, preserving, conserving, and protesting over decades and hundred of years to the point that academics have been gaining academic, museum, and library positions.

The Wayfinding Lab
The goal of this research seminar at NYU in the land of Lenapehoking is to set up an ongoing research project gathering the scattered fragments of Lenape and NYC regional stories, documents, objects into a “living archive” of, by, and for the Lenape and Native Peoples first and foremost.

This research effort necessarily has to challenge a series of barriers that reinforcing the pervasive invisibilizing notions -- the First People are no longer here, were “noble” but “primitive,” and are not
part of the “modern” world (Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 2010). Such mythic ways of believing have to be constantly challenged before we can begin to understand the plentiful evidence surrounding us to the contrary—the living evidence of Lenape and Native Peoples are in what Gerald Vizenor called “survivance” mode all around us, if we would only honestly open our “hearts and minds.”

Shrouded in the mythos of an island real estate deal for “baubles,” the “purchase” of colonial Nieuw Amsterdam has always been suspect. The Wayfinding Lab will use research methods, time-tested and cutting edge, to reconstruct fragments of the Lenape Trail now known as Broadway.

The Wayfinding Lab is a collaborative research and tech storytelling project of our seminar, the A/P/A Institute with the work of Beatrice Glow the 2016-17 Artist in Residence and Alecz Inca, technologist. Beatrice will be joining many of our sessions and we’ll be exploring questions of storytelling, old school approaches, AR/VR, and much more soon!

**Manhates? Mannahatta? Manaháhtaan?**
The debate over the original way to name this island, and its original meaning, is one of challenges of Munsee/Lenape language reconstruction. And as we know from the work of Paolo Freire, “naming” is a profound process of literacy and illiteracy. To misname or to obscure the naming process is foundational to the work of our gleaning methodology. Therefore, our work is also a question of decolonizing the foundational history of this site unprecedented global finance and culture at this even greater globalizing moment and place.

To reclaim speaking and visibility, also requires the pre-requisite of gathering the fragments of what has been dispossessed and dismembered. The engaged, layered, multi-organized knowledge of the Lenape peoples linked to the coastal estuaries of Manaháhtaan has been scattered to all corners of North America and the royal colonial museums, collections, and archives of Europe. We seek to facilitate a process to pull these “fragments” together and, when appropriate, making it accessible for all to understand the deep and profound culture of Lenape and Native American eastern coastal peoples. Revitalizing that indigenous philosophy, respecting the people, and reckoning with the unresolved past is foundational towards an enhanced understanding of how to change the here and now, especially in the era of environmental and climate degradation.

As a Wayfinding Lab we will be designing a sharable “living archives” and experimenting with fresh storytelling techniques to both challenge myths, archive origin stories, and convey the simultaneous presence of pasts and futures on one parcel of Broadway.

**A dialogue-driven & chronotopic approach**
I believe a liberating, dialogic pedagogy needs to engage active learners in identifying from where we each come from in the world, imagine ourselves going, and how we consciously and unconsciously position ourselves in society and globally. These basic issues of identification are at once personal and political, social and cross-cultural, domestic and transnational. Communicating across our differences, honest analysis, rethinking, and the process of re-searching buried archives and fragments are some of the tools we’ll be using to deconstruct and reconstruct, decode and recode a more critical knowledge. This will require both an ethics of care and of critical generosity.

Our re-search and re-membering will be collaborative, dialogue-driven, personal and political, reflexive and ongoing. I won’t provide “answers” for you to regurgitate. We’ll all be formulating provisional questions and provisional answers with the goal of improving our approximations of understanding what this phenomenon has and is about. The honest feedback we provide each other is key to make this active learning process work.

Chrono-tope: Chronos or time and topos or place. Time, contrary to Greenwich Mean Time mechanics, is a cultural historical construct that can be infinitely meaningful and manipulated. GMT is a global standard because it stems from British colonialism and global economic-cultural imperialism. Today
more than ever, the sun rises and sets according to the mechanical and now atomic time of the British Empire’s past glory. In a land which First Nations/native peoples first named, what names do we use? In what language? All stories and explorations are grounded in the moment of the here and now with an emphasis of some other time and other place “back,” “now,” or to come. What is the “Present”? “Past”? “Future”? We'll be exploring power relationships in these three temporal frames but always being mindful of their relations to the originating time of reference—the momentous “now” of the formulator. What is our “now”?

What about topos? Home, a place of social practices and beliefs, is part of the cultural cartography of here/there, insider/outsider, us/them, citizen/alien, etc. A chronotope, therefore, is the cultural-bound meaning we tie to a specific case study between the here/now we take for granted and some other time/place. Chronotopes can be with a past moment read from the present back, or a projection into “the future” as in much science fiction.

Notetaking & communication
Notetaking, in your primary language, is the most important work for you to learn, master, and obsessively partake in this semester. Please keep all your notes and fieldnotes in one volume. Ideally a bound, hardcover 100 page notebook. If you have notes from somewhere else or a scribble on a piece of paper, just tape it into the notebook. When you read, write your notes into this. This will be the primary, low tech research notebook.

We need to learn how to communicate more precisely and clearly. And as the world become more multi-mediated and digitized and globalized, we need to do so in a decolonized, multi-lingual, cross-cultural way.

Syntax is key. The proper ways we learn self-presentation is through the way we learn to speak, move, and express ourselves socially within historic-cultural contexts. Creativity necessarily is expressive in relation to such “proper” patterning. Given these differences, how do we figure out how to communicate across these differences?

Course Requirements
Conceptually, students need to be conversant with an array of theoretical perspectives that can elaborate their own particular and disciplinary interests and to locate their own creative subject position and expressive vantage. Practically, we're asking you to:

- **show up!** and give your honest effort, this is a collaborative, interdependent team effort;
- **formulate** your own informed, engaged story in relation to Lenape and Native New Yorkers;
- **learn** to gather, document, interpret with a decolonizing, questioning approach
- **develop** a piece of storytelling that works to displace one of myths and part of the barrier to colonialist American today in honestly dealing with the reality of our daily possession, and dispossession of the past, present, and future. This is your final project.

Students are expected to do all readings for the week in which they are assigned and to consider them in relation to the larger questions we are raising.

Expectations
I don’t believe in grades but am required to give them. I believe in effort, engagement, cultivating insights, collaboration, and sustained work. I also believe in regular self-evaluation and giving feedback. And getting feedback from “others” is also essential. So, attendance is important. So is working in groups. And honest engagement with each other, with Noah and yours truly are imperative. We are all en-culturated within various powerful culturally normative systems and our senses are habituated to find comfort and meaning within them. Yet, meaning cannot just be found in the “head” but must integrate “heart” and “soul,” smell, taste, touching with the Western “higher” senses of sight and sound, right and left, upper and lower, and in how we live our lives and practice our theories. This, to me, is what critical cross-cultural researchers are made of.
There will be weekly assignments to be posted online. This will include rounds on you requirements bulleted above.

Your grade will be based on your critical, honest self-assessment and if we agree. A realistic self-awareness of your strengths and areas for improvement is key in this process. I’ll be asking you to write self-evaluations for the mid-term grade and at the end of the term. Attendance and participation, in class and online, are key. The effort you put in and how gained insights shift and deepen your understanding will be what you’ll be asked to measure yourself against.

On questions of Native American & Indigenous identities
We’ll be abiding by the Native American Indigenous Studies Association guidelines, attached below, on Native American and Indigenous identity questions. We are not accepting the European and Euro-American perseveration on “the races of mankind” categories and racialization practices, especially as measured by profiling, phenotype, genotype, and blood quantum.

NAISA Council Statement on Indigenous Identity Fraud

Issues of Indigenous identity are complex. Hundreds of years of ongoing colonialism around the world have contributed to this complexity. However, such complexity does not mean that there are no ethical considerations in claiming Indigenous identity or relationships with particular Indigenous peoples. To falsely claim such belonging is Indigenous identity fraud.

As scholars of Native American and Indigenous Studies, we are expected to undertake our work with a commitment to the communities with whom we work, about whom we write, and among whom we conduct research -- we are expected to uphold the highest ethical standards of our profession. Further, as scholars it is incumbent upon us to be honest about both our ancestries and our involvement with, and ties to, Indigenous communities. This is true whether we are Indigenous or non-Indigenous. In no way are we implying that one must be Indigenous in order to undertake Native American and Indigenous Studies. We are simply stating that we must be honest about our identity claims, whatever our particular positionalities. Belonging does not arise simply from individual feelings – it is not simply who you claim to be, but also who claims you. When someone articulates connections to a particular people, the measure of truth cannot simply be a person’s belief but must come from relationships with Indigenous people, recognizing that there may be disagreements among Indigenous people over the legitimacy of a particular person’s or group’s claims. According to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues statement on Indigenous identity, the test is “Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.”

Being dishonest about one’s identity and one’s connections to Indigenous communities damages the integrity of the discipline and field of Native American and Indigenous Studies and is harmful to Indigenous peoples. If we believe in Indigenous self-determination as a value and goal, then questions of identity and integrity in its expression cannot be treated as merely a distraction from supposedly more important issues. Falsifying one’s identity or relationship to particular Indigenous peoples is an act of appropriation continuous with other forms of colonial violence. The harmful effects of cultural and identity appropriation have been clearly articulated by Native American and Indigenous Studies scholars over the past four decades, and it is our responsibility to be aware of these critiques.

The issue is not one of enrollment, or blood quantum, or recognition by the state, or meeting any particular set of criteria for defining “proper” or “authentic” Indigenous identity. The issue is honesty and integrity in engaging the complexities, difficulties, and messiness of our histories (individual and
collective), our relations to each other, and our connections to the people and peoples who serve as the subjects of our scholarship.

For these reasons, the Council of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association expresses its conviction that we are all responsible to act in an ethical fashion by standing against Indigenous identity fraud.

Approved by NAISA Council, 15 September 2015


http://www.naisa.org/
Fall 2016 Schedule
Indigenous Futures | Decolonizing NYC – Documenting the Lenapeway

Research Lab ARC:

Weeks 1-4: Decolonizing walking, reading, talking

Weeks 5-12: Gleaning & developing a “living archive”

Weeks 13-14: Storytelling presentations

Required events:

Sept. 21, Tuesday 6-9 pm: Beatrice Glow AIR Event

Oct. 10, Monday: Indigenous Peoples Day

Oct. 29, Saturday: Lenape Identity Symposium at NYU

Optional: (more to come)

Sept. 9, Friday, 5-8 pm: Support Rally, Sioux Pipeline Protests at Standing Rock (seek back of this page)

Sept. 10, Saturday, 9:30 am: Gallatin’s “Big Walk” (Washington Square to Red Hook), a (kinda) “one day’s walk” measure.

Sept. 23, Friday 6pm: “Human Futures,” Environmental Humanities Series.

Walking the Study: Weeks 1-4

#1 Myths buried within myths: Lenapeway - Battery Park & the Customs House; Th. Lab, meet in WSq, guest Rick Chavolla to speak with Jack about the longstanding relations Indigenous peoples have had to this place & NYU site in Lenapehoking.


#3 Shell “middens”: Kalch Hook – Collect Pond walk & Sanderson’s Mannahatta & Welikia work, walk around Chinatown, Five Points, Civic Center.

#4 A Lenapeway Guide for Smart New Yorkers? Kerry Hardy on his Maine Wabaniki trail guide. Immediately after: Beatrice’s AIR event which includes walking around NYU’s native plants w/NYU landscape botanist-arborist George Reiss, event at 19 University Place.
NYC Rally for Standing Rock--NO DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE

Friday, September 9, 2016

5:00 PM to 8:00 PM

5th Avenue & Waverly Place, Washington Square Park

Show your support for the Standing Rock Sioux and many other Great Plains tribes in their fight to protect the land and water. We will be collecting supplies to send to Standing Rock as they continue to hold their territory against the Dakota Access Pipeline. #noDAPL #waterislife #standwithStandingRock

Facebook Event Page: https://www.facebook.com/events/1142525169168184/

Background video: https://www.facebook.com/fusionmedianetwork/videos/1543459422346697/?hc_ref=NEWSFEED

Washington Post: UN Says Sioux should have say in pipeline: https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/un-body-says-sioux-should-have-say-in-pipeline-project/2016/08/31/4082d09c-6fc8-11e6-993f-73e693a89820_story.html