

Indigenous Policy Summer Institute



Master of Public Policy Program, Intercultural Student Services, Center for Civic Engagement

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1. Overview of the Program

The Indigenous Policy Summer Institutes are a series of short-term academic and service-learning exchanges that provide a student-based and partially student-run space for the discussion of questions of indigenous governance, culture, politics, and history, which takes place in an interdisciplinary, experiential and indigenous setting. Prepared by a classroom seminars, graduate and undergraduate students and faculty from Oregon State University and interested partners meet for a week of field trips and an academic conference each spring. The location may be a different indigenous community every year.

The student-based institutes are organized in cooperation between Oregon State University, tribal nations, and further institutional partners. Faculty-led workshops and courses at all participating institutions prepare a joint field trip, the institute week, which contains institutional visits, talks and workshops. In the future, we will also incorporate a final student-based and student-organized conference.

The institutes are targeted towards students of the humanities and social sciences, including Public Policy, Political Science, Cultural and Literary Studies, History, Education, Ethnic Studies, and others, who are working together in order to approach political and historical topics with a strong relation to present-day cultural and public policy issues. The students are furthermore provided with an outlook into professional and practical applications of their academic training.

1.1. Structure of the Summer Institutes

The institutes are structured as follows:

(1) Preparatory Phase

Faculty organizers decide upon the parameters for the following year during the preceding institute. This decision pertains to the field trip location and overall topic of the program. During the term directly preceding the institute, students are prepared in classroom seminars at each of the participating universities. We discuss the general theme and aid students in their research for the service learning component, which will be presented at the institute conference. To coordinate students and faculty at all three universities, we utilize an on-line course system and video-conferencing to facilitate the discussion, share courseware, and perform and coordinate joint tasks. Student selection is based on academic merits, and lies within the discretion of the respective unit.

The institute web site (<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/indian/policy>) features information on the institute itself, as well as on individual participants and their projects. The papers to be presented at the institute will be finished by the beginning of the institute week, and test presentations will be held in class to make sure that students feel comfortable with their presentation and are prepared to engage with their peers in the concluding conference. Students will receive feedback throughout their research and writing process both by academic faculty and student/assistant organizers.

(2) Institute Week

The institute week consists of several days of joint activities at a specific location. These are:

- cultural activities (museum visits, archaeological sites, art galleries, theater, etc.)
- social activities

- academic workshops by expert speakers on several issues related to the topic of the institute
- visits to political (both official authorities and NGOs), economic and cultural institutions related to the topic of the institute
- service learning activities

(3) Assessment and Alumni Phase

During the institute, learning outcomes are undergoing assessment. The findings of this process will be fed back into the next iteration of the program.

In conducting the assessment of the program, we combine the evaluation of the academic merits of the student participation with an assessment of several of the individual components of both the preparatory seminar and the field trip portion. We are gathering qualitative and quantitative data in the form of student surveys, undertaken during the field trip and the conference, assessing the value of the individual excursions, the expected and actual learning outcomes by the students, and their self-assessment of their own individual learning objectives. We offer continuous mentoring and consultations to make sure the experience contributes to the successful graduation of the students.

We will also maintain connections with institute participants in order to create a community of former institute participants. Previous participants will be invited to all upcoming events, and we will also offer an on-line discussion forum to facilitate an on-going exchange. Currently, this is done via Facebook.

This structure allows us to achieve the key learning and leadership objectives that will be outlined in the following.

1.2. Experiential Learning as Central Methodology

The Indigenous Policy Summer Institutes allow us to provide graduate students with a **multi-dimensional**, both **theoretical and applied**, outlook for their field of study and their future occupation, moving **beyond traditional classroom instruction**. The institutes are conceived to address a variety of key learning objectives that are elaborated in the following.

The institute started out as a student activity with faculty guidance. The organizers have striven to maintain this character. Therein, the institute follows a methodology that is strongly focused on **experiential learning**. The classroom seminars are aimed at preparing participating students for the experiences of the institute week. Students are also encouraged to conduct their own research, partially in a collaborative way, which will then cumulate into the final conference presentations.

The field trip portion specifically provides students with a **hands-on perspective** to otherwise rather theoretical classroom discussions. Traveling (whether at home or abroad) to key locations relevant to the institute topic and meeting with practitioners in their respective fields highlight the potential practical applications of knowledge gained through classroom discussions and readings, and may provide critical reevaluations of theoretical insights. By integrating practical components into the institute week, we are also offering an **outlook on future career opportunities and internships** (in diplomacy, politics, consulting, cultural work, etc.).

A further component of the summer institute will be a service learning component. We will work together with the respective indigenous community in identifying a policy issue which our students would collaboratively work to solve within the seminar period and during the field school. Preliminary results will be presented at the field school, and we will follow up with a final written report till the end of the year.

Travel within the institutes allows students to visit and engage with different cultures by meeting with international students and faculty. Ideally, such meetings with also provide them with a different and more critical perspective towards their own culture and background.

By taking responsibility for organizing the Summer Institutes, those students who have been chosen as student organizers can translate their previous experiences as program participants into guiding a new cohort of student participants throughout the process. This model of **student leadership** ties in with the experiential learning methodology of the institute. Faculty — whose role is the long-term maintenance, financing, and academic preparation of the program — guide the student organizers, but also allow them to find their own solutions to particular problems. Student organizers may also play a role during the classroom phase of the program by leading student discussions and guiding peer review of student research.

Both in the preparatory phase and throughout the institute week, academic faculty engage in team-teaching and in **expanding their own disciplinary boundaries** by allowing for an inter- and trans-disciplinary exchange of ideas and methods.

Furthermore, opening up an experiential space for the student organizers and the students requires faculty to shift their roles from active teaching to facilitating experiential learning. As a result, this may allow for **innovative approaches to both teaching and learning**.

1.3. Central Objectives of the Program

The program builds on the following central components: (1) cross-cultural and international approach, (2) inter-disciplinarity, (3) collegiality and collaborative learning, (4) diversity, (5) student scholarship and research, and (6) student leadership.

(1) Cross-Cultural and International Approach

A central aim of the institutes lies in providing the students with an experience that offers them a more international and/or cross-cultural outlook. This encompasses both the bringing together of students countries, if possible, and by situating the field school within an Indian Reservation during the institute week. As a result, domestic perspectives are confronted with international and cross-cultural counter-narratives that provide students with an alternative way of positioning themselves within an increasingly global world – and with understanding the specific legal and cultural framework of national sovereignty of most indigenous communities within North America.

(2) Interdisciplinarity

The institutes aim to unite different theoretical and practical approaches from different academic cultures in order to discuss a topic of contemporary relevance. This is achieved by the collaboration of different academic departments in setting up both the preparatory coursework and the field trips. Confronting the students with differing methodologies allows them to put their own respective fields in a specific research context, and to see interconnections, similarities and differences to other, equally valid, academic approaches to issues of cultural and public policy.

(3) Collegiality and Collaborative Learning

Throughout both the preparatory and the field trip portion of the Summer Institutes, students are both encouraged and required to work closely together. The aim is to create a productive group dynamics as a prerequisite for a working cultural exchange, with an added emphasis on the collaborative nature of academic learning.

(4) Diversity

In recruiting students for the Summer Institutes, we have been putting increasing emphasis on diversifying the composition of both the student and faculty group. Our aim therein is both the inclusion of students from traditionally disadvantaged parts of the population, and the decentering of the normative national discourse by the inclusion of minority voices.

(5) Student Scholarship and Research

The final institute conference is a student-run forum which allows the students to share their scholarship with their fellow students, faculty and interested guests. The presentations are based on their own research conducted throughout the preparatory seminars.

(6) Student Leadership

Since the beginning, one central component of the institutes has been to encourage student leadership. While the long-term and recurrent parts of the organization — such as finances, teaching, and establishing and maintaining contact with academic partner institutions — have been conducted by faculty, students have been playing an active part in the organization of central components of the program.

(7) Service Learning

The service learning component of the field school relates theories of policy, society and culture directly to practice by serving the needs of a specific community. Furthermore, by directly aiming to serve community needs and looking for applicability, we also intend to answer to actual needs of the indigenous communities we visit, rather than to follow the model of disinterested research. Ideally, this also means that, following Linda Tuhiwai Smith, we will contribute to the decolonization of academic methodologies themselves.

We will collaborate with the Dr. Sally Duncan at the Oregon Policy Analysis Laboratory (OPAL) at the School of Public Policy. OPAL has been successful in training students to service various communities within Oregon already (<http://oregonstate.edu/opal/>).

1.4. Program Organizers

The organization of the institutes is conducted by both academic faculty — who ensure the long-term success and academic preparation of the program — and student/assistant organizers — who take up tasks such as the organization of the student conference, guiding students throughout the preparatory phase and the institute week, and providing input and assistance both to students and faculty throughout the entire process.

Current Organizing Team (since 2014)

Dr. Allison Davis-White Eyes (Oregon State University, Intercultural Student Services)

Dr. Philipp Kneis (Oregon State University, Public Policy)

Dr. Brent Steel (Oregon State University, Public Policy)

Dr. Sally Duncan (Oregon State University, OPAL)

Further university partners have been invited to join in the future.

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In the following, a brief history of the program will be sketched, in order to highlight the development of key aspects of the institute.

2. Institutes

1st Indigenous Policy Summer Institute (OSU/Warm Springs)

Warm Springs, Oregon, June 16–June 20, 2014

Preparatory Seminars

A preparatory seminar has been taught by Dr. Allison Davis-White Eyes (Intercultural Student Services), Dr. Philipp Kneis (Public Policy / Political Science), Dr. Sally Duncan (OSU Policy Analysis Laboratory) and PhD student Hillary Fishler (Environmental Science) in Spring 2014 at Oregon State University. Another contingent of students has been prepared by Emily Bowling from the Center for Civic Engagement.

The field school worked as a pilot project.

Institute Week Field Trips

Site Visits:

OSU Extension, Warm Springs Power & Water, Warm Springs Agency Campus, Salmon Hatchery, Natural Resources Department, Warm Springs Museum, Indian Health Service

Workshops and Talks on the following topics:

Tribal Government/Sovereignty, Culture & Heritage, Youth programming, Language preservation, Cultural Foods, Public Safety & Jurisdiction, Government Policy

Number of Participants:

Organizers: 5

Dr. Allison Davis-White Eyes, Dr. Philipp Kneis, Dr. Sally Duncan, Hillary Fishler, Emily Bowling (OSU)

Visiting Researchers:

Dr. Margherita Arcieri

OSU Students:

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3. Proposed Future Institutes

Canadian Reserves: TBA by Canadian Partners

New Zealand: Maori homelands in partnership with University of Waikato Centre for Maori and Indigenous Governance

Hawaii: Homesteads in partnership with University of Hawaii, Hilo

Australia, Aboriginal communities in partnership with University of Melbourne Indigenous Studies

Norway, Guovdageaidnu in partnership with Saami University College

Argentina TBA in partnership with US Department of Interior—Climate Change

Ecuador TBA in partnership with Oregon State University Anthropology on Food Security and Social Justice

4. Contact Information

Program Web Site:

<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/indian/policy/>

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