

The American Indian Studies Program at Haskell Indian Nations University

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Haskell Indian Nations University is a federally funded college for all federally recognized American Indian and Alaskan Native entities. Among the most diverse of any university in the United States, Haskell Indian Nations University serves an inter-tribal university student population representing an average of 130 sovereign nations and 850 students each semester. As an institution of higher education and member of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Haskell Indian Nations University is committed to providing a culturally sensitive education, as well as refining pedagogy which provides a relevant frame of reference for the diverse perspectives and experiences of American Indians.

The American Indian Studies baccalaureate degree that was implemented in the Fall of 1998 emerged out of the University Vision Statement of 1993 reflecting University dedication to the spiritual, emotional, intellectual and cultural development of students. Designed to prepare students to understand and protect the unique cultural, political and economic resources of tribes, this interdisciplinary degree in American Indian Studies is intended to both prepare First Nations professionals for the complexity of issues in Indigenous communities with a range of skills and knowledge that is both practical and culturally relevant and to prepare students for graduate study with integrated foundations of interdisciplinary knowledge. These premises are reflected in the mission statement for the program:

American Indian Studies Mission Statement

The mission of the American Indian Studies Program is to prepare First Nations students for positions of leadership in the development of tribal communities and the preservation of sovereignty and self-determination for First Nations People.

This will be accomplished through an interdisciplinary curriculum providing thematic foundations of knowledge in the arts; history; language; law and sovereignty, philosophy and religion; and community, social and wellness issues.

Students seeking a baccalaureate degree in American Indian Studies will develop the skills needed for immediate service to First Nation and other communities or for continued education at the graduate level.

Students will gain high level intellectual skills in reading, writing, thinking analytically, critically and cross-culturally and speaking and arguing persuasively.

By analyzing and understanding different cultural perspectives and conflict resolution models, students will be better able to state and defend positions and to provide service to First Nations People and communities.

The discipline of American Indian Studies was viewed as pivotal to establishing Haskell Indian Nations University as an innovative center for American Indian education, research and cultural programs and in overcoming the legacy of colonization represented in Haskell's boarding school past. The concept of the program was unique in that the developmental focus was on preparing First Nations students to protect the unique cultural and economic resources of tribes, the political-legal status of tribes, to ensure the continued growth and development of American Indian communities and to serve as advocates of tribal peoples in Indigenous and other social institutions.

The American Indian Studies baccalaureate degree at Haskell Indian Nations University is intended to educate students using approaches which validate First Nations ways of living and understanding as well as exploring the relationship and connection between the whole of academic knowledge and the practical needs of First Nations People. Weaving together courses from across academic disciplines, the American Indian Studies degree is designed to respond to First Nations learning styles using teaching approaches emphasizing the interconnectedness and relationship of academic knowledge to the needs of Indigenous nations.

A major goal of the curriculum is intended to provide students with practical skills and abilities needed by tribes to protect the unique cultural and economic resources and the political-legal status of tribes. Such skills include, but are not limited to:

- advocacy, activism and community organization
- compact and contract negotiations
- creation of national databases on First Nations demographics, issues and educational research
- cultural and economic resource planning and management
- documenting, preparing and presenting legislative, political, economic and social policy, reports and testimony
- grant writing and effective resource allocation
- preparing and analyzing impact and need analysis
- historical research, cultural preservation and enhancement
- tribal management and organizational skills

The development of the curriculum and teaching styles which exhibit sensitivity to the cultural backgrounds and learning styles of First Nations students, is intended to provide a tremendous opportunity for Haskell Indian Nations University to serve as a national resource center for research on First Nations education, cultural experiences and research opportunities.

The curriculum is also unique because of the curriculum and pedagogical approaches that create bridges between the University and traditional elders, scholars and tribal leaders in the educational process, marking a powerful shift in higher education for American Indian people. Students interested in cultural knowledge and tribal experiences have the option of relying on traditional teachers and knowledge in First Nations communities through the use of internship experiences, thereby, revitalizing the teaching responsibilities of First Nations elders and scholars.

Existing Programs at Other Universities

Traditionally, American Indian Studies programs are viewed as an extended study of the historical, political or ethnic issues confronting First Nations People. Often isolated from academic mainstream curriculum and university resources, these programs are effectively excluded from contributing to systemic change within academia and are relegated responsibility for cultural sensitive initiatives.

Perpetuating an educational system which has failed to accurately integrate the parallel knowledge and wisdom of First Nations People within the standard academic disciplines, these approaches fail to recognize the strengths and resiliency of First Nations People and unnecessarily fragment understandings of the multiple factors that have contributed to disruption within First

Nations communities. Such approaches limit the development of strategies, programs and actions which are culturally sensitive and congruent with the world view of First Nations communities.

Haskell Indian Nations University recognizes the importance of holistic approaches and culturally relevant curricula in the educational success of First Nations students. Emphasizing the interconnectedness of the various disciplines, the critical need for academic research and scholarship which advances practical, relevant solutions and approaches for dealing with contemporary issues found in First Nations families, communities and organizations are hallmarks of the American Indian Studies degree at Haskell Indian Nations University.

This program proposes a revisiting of the role played by traditional elders, scholars and professionals in the educational preparation of American Indian people. It suggests eliminating the historic banishment such knowledge bearers have traditionally experienced in the arena of higher education, with the establishment of a "credential of eminence" appointment for visiting traditional elders.

Established thematic foundations of this degree provide a framework for interdisciplinary collaboration to teach "the story of the people" and to ensure the most effective use of institutional resources. Additionally, preparing students with cross-cultural and interdisciplinary perspectives will strengthen leadership potential as graduates engage social institutions as First Nations professionals.

The Need for American Indian Studies

The social, political, economic and cultural problems facing First Nations People provide evidence of the risks and needs which exist for individuals, families and communities comprising this population. Soaring poverty rates, ongoing legal battles to protect lands and resources, economic development issues, and the continuing erosion of First Nations cultures and languages are issues of common concern for First Nations People.

The educational preparation of First Nations professionals, as reflected by retention and graduation of students with undergraduate degrees, is an essential ingredient in the creation and implementation of culturally appropriate solutions for these challenges. Providing education that recognizes the political, social, economic and cultural needs of First Nations People, as well as the learning styles of First Nations students is a key ingredient in the graduation of First Nations students in higher education.

The need for First Nations professionals who understand the complexity of problems which exist in these communities and who have the ability to integrate knowledge into culturally appropriate solutions is essential. Effective First Nations advocates and activists who understand First Nations and other social structures are equally important as new systems, models and theories are

developed which truly reflect the vision of sovereignty and self-sufficiency for First Nations People throughout the United States.

Equally important are the issues of cultural differences and First Nations learning styles, particularly in higher education. Recognizing the implications of approaching First Nations cultures as dynamic ways of living significantly impacts the contextualization of culture in the learning environment and the inevitable cultural conflict which occurs when it is absent. Education for First Nations students then shifts from a repudiation of all that is known to an embracing of the foundations of knowledge shared among Indigenous nations. Learning is as related to family, community and Creation, as it is to cultural mannerisms or communication styles of First Nations students.

Service to American Indian Nations

As federal policies have retreated from educational mandates promoting assimilation through education, the value placed on higher education by First Nations People has increased and provided avenues for First Nations participation in the decision making processes. Examples of the dramatic shifts which have occurred in the relationship between the federal government and First Nations governments can be found in the passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. This legislation ensures a legal/political basis for American Indian involvement in issues of self-government and in the education of their children which has continued into this decade. The work of the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force identified areas of critical importance to First Nations People nationally. Inadequate academic preparation of First Nations children and adults was one of the most significant concerns raised. The erosion of American Indian language and cultural foundations, looming battles over lands and natural resources, and the preservation of self-determination and governance rights are equally pressing issues identified in the Indian Nations at Risk Final Report.

Degree requirements including course titles, hours and catalog descriptions

The degree requirements for a Bachelor of Arts in American Indian Studies requires completion of 120 credit hours. Students complete 10 hours of institutional requirements, including nine hours of American Indian and Alaska Native citizenship courses in the topic areas of history, government and law; culture and philosophy; literature and fine arts or contemporary tribal issues.

In addition to the institutional requirements, students are required to complete 44 hours of general education requirements distributed across the humanities, natural sciences and the social sciences.

Upon completing 45 hours of the institutional and general education requirements, students interested in pursuing advanced study in American Indian Studies apply for admission into the program. Selection for admission is based

on:

- a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.50
- no grade less than a B in the American Indian Alaska Native Citizenship courses
- two completed reference forms (at least one from a faculty teaching American Indian Citizenship courses)
- student essay describing future educational and professional plans and the role of a degree in American Indian Studies in accomplishing these goals.

Curriculum Design for American Indian Studies Degree

The interdisciplinary approach of the Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) American Indian Studies Program is reflected throughout the development and design of this degree. The use of thematic areas, taught by interdisciplinary faculty from across campus is established at the freshmen and sophomore level and expanded at the junior and senior year.

Coursework in five thematic foundation areas is required at the junior and senior level to complete the American Indian Studies degree. These include: 1) history, sovereignty, or government; 2) health, social, wellness and community issues; 3) language/culture acquisition and preservation; 4) literature and the arts and; 5) philosophy and religion.

Courses falling within these categories are taught by the American Indian Studies core and cross-discipline appointed faculty representing each academic department. Students complete a total of 45 hours in the major that includes a 6 hour academic or community internship, a 3-hour symposium seminar and 21 elective hours. Courses fulfilling junior/senior requirements can be taken in American Indian Studies, Business Administration or Environmental Sciences. Courses can also be taken through the HINU/KU Course Exchange Program at The University of Kansas. Courses currently offered by American Indian Studies meeting requirements for the major include:

AIS301 Introduction to American Indian Studies - 3 credit hours

Introduces students to the American Indian Studies (AIS) discipline, but also challenges the standard assumptions and practice the discipline has about research, academic writing, education and critical thinking. Students will look at a) what has gone on before and is currently happening in AIS; b) what can happen (posing questions and alternatives to standard academic and AIS approaches and practices); and c) what should happen (individual/student responsibility and action). By developing an understanding of the historical context that has produced the modern day AIS discipline, students will be able to develop skills and knowledge in critical thinking and writing that will enable them to address current issues facing

the AIS discipline and any First Nations student pursuing an academic degree.

AIS312 American Indian Experience in the 20th Century - 3 credit hours

A sophomore/junior level course providing students with the opportunity to experience history as told by American Indian elders representing diverse geographic regions and tribal traditions. This course provides for an extended study of American Indians in the twentieth century using a "contextualized chronology" approach in which a rigorous analysis of early twentieth century government policies and history is paralleled with oral history interviews from the Haskell Indian Nations Oral History Project.

AIS310 Environmental Protection in Indian Country- 3 credit hours

Examines the nature and scope of tribal sovereignty and the interplay between tribal sovereignty, environmental protection and tribal culture. Criteria to consider when developing tribal environmental protection programs and key environmental issues facing tribes will be studied throughout the semester.

AIS321 Human Behavior in American Indian Communities - 3 hours

Course examines human behavioral issues within First Nations communities using a social system approach. The course will provide students with a frame of reference for understanding the effect of social, political and cultural dynamics on the behavior of Indigenous People and the overall functioning of social structures within First Nations communities. This course will increase students understanding of human behavior and provide a base for understanding effective social work practice.

AIS340 American Indian Poetry - 3 credit hours

Explores the continuity between traditional verse forms and contemporary songs and poetry. Students will become familiar with major contemporary American Indian poets and their themes. Attention will be paid to bilingual poets such as R. Young Bear, L. Tapahonso and L. Hanson. Continuity of cultural traditions will be looked at in the work of American Indian writers, both in the context of American Indian communities and of mainstream literary publications. The course will include analysis of British poetics and its influence on the hybridized forms of contemporary writers as well as tribal traditions, as seen in the verse of N.S. Momaday, James Welch, James T. Stevens and others.

AIS341 American Indian Narratives: 3 credit hours

Explores the continuity between traditional oral narratives and literary prose including novels, short fiction, essays and memoirs. Themes such as

twins, geographic sites, renewal, healing and elements of nature will be followed through a variety of histories and genres, including film. Attention will be paid to the author-function as it shifts from members of an oral tradition to specific writers of contemporary texts.

AIS342 American Indian Music: 3 credit hours

Survey of the development of American Indian music from Pre-Columbian through contemporary times.

AIS343 American Indian Film: 3 credit hours

Film has become an important medium for literature in the twentieth century. This course surveys images of American Indians and Alaska Natives in film. Critical analysis of social roles of Indian characters will be included as well as literary critique of plot, character development, setting and imagery. Techniques of film direction will also be considered in shaping the impact of each film.

AIS350 Foundations of Indigenous Philosophy - 3 credit hours

Introduces the philosophies of specific Meso-American and North American Indigenous peoples. The relationship of land and culture and its connection to world view will be explored. Specific cultures to be examined include those of the Huron, Mayan and Mound builders. Prerequisite—American Indian Philosophy and Spirituality: The Sacred.

AIS410 American Indian Literature Seminar - 3 credit hours

A class in a selected American Indian literary topic, genre, time period, or author(s). The topic will change and the course can be repeated for six hours of credit. The seminar allows for in-depth exploration of a single topic, such as the oral tradition; or as a genre, such as autobiography; or a historic time period, such as pre-contact literature; or a significant author or related group of authors, such as Leslie Marmon Silko and Southwestern writers of the 1980's. Students will be expected to participate as readers, as researchers, and also as presenters. A substantial research project from each student will be presented and critiqued within the forum of the seminar.

AIS421 Community Social Work Practice with Indigenous People - 3 credit hours

This courses offers a broad and in-depth examination of critical, social, cultural and political variables important to improving the health of First Nations People and their communities. These variables are presented within macro, mezzo and micro frameworks and are linked to strengthening traditional culture, empowering the community and contending with historical and contemporary oppression. A major goal of this course will be 1) to assist students to become familiar with how various critical variables affect

the well being of First Nations and 2) how to employ various radically progressive social work approaches to decolonize and empower First Nations communities.

AIS397/497 Academic or Community Apprenticeship - 6 credit hours

Students will be required to complete an academic or cultural apprenticeship with supervision provided by an internship liaison. Students will have the option of being taught by tribal elders using traditional methods of instruction or interning in: urban Indian Centers, tribal government offices or national organizations providing services, advocacy for American Indian peoples. Students will be expected to apply knowledge and utilize skills acquired, i.e., computer technology skills.

Collaboration Initiatives

Haskell Indian Nations University has a history of collaborative relationships with existing disciplines on campus offering baccalaureate degrees (Environmental Science, Elementary Teacher Education and Business/Tribal Management). Universities and academic programs throughout the region cooperate, with student and faculty exchanges occurring in social welfare, law, environmental science, geography, speech pathology and business, to provide a foundation to build upon.

The American Indian Studies initiative complements local collaboration between Haskell Indian Nations University and The University of Kansas which began in 1992 and has resulted in the establishment of similar collaborative relationships with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium of tribal colleges. The feasibility of establishing additional collaborative agreements with additional tribal colleges and mainstream universities is being evaluated.