Introduction:

A fictional conversation between Jose, a 20-year-old Mexican ranch hand, and Johnny (N’Chai Chidn), a White River Apache teenager living off-reservation with his father in southern California. Time: early 1920s.

Jose ...carried on a desultory conversation with Johnny and he thought that Johnny wasn’t very bright.

“Cuántos Años?” he finally asked, and when Johnny said nothing he asked in English, “How old are you?”

Johnny didn’t know what to answer. He was sixteen but he didn’t know it.

“You’re kinda dumb,” Jose said. “Didn’t you go to school?”

“No,” said Johnny.

“Don’t you know nothing?” Jose asked.

“No,” said Johnny.

“If I was you I’d go to school and learn something. Reading and writing. Everybody has to read and write. Why don’t you go to school and learn something, huh?”

“No sabe,” said Johnny.

Jose laughed. He rolled over on one side and rested his head on his arm and elbow. He chuckled at Johnny, and presently he spat, and then spoke some more.

“You’re never gonna get no place,” he said. “You’re never gonna get any money, or any wife, or any Ford car. I went to school and now I got a job and wife and a Ford car. I speak English just like American and I’m the best dancer in the valley. You don’t know nothing.”

Johnny didn’t understand all of this but he understood the reproach and the criticism. He felt that Jose was a superior person and he envied him.

“You don’t know the first lesson they say in school,” said Jose. “Who was the father of your country? Can you tell me who was the father of your country?”

“No,” said Johnny.

“Everybody knows that,” Jose said. “I know it. My wife knows it. Mr. Mack knows it. Everybody in the valley knows who was the father of your country. Everybody except you.”

“Who,” said Johnny.

Jose laughed again.


“George Washington,” said Johnny.

From *Fig Tree John*, a novel by Edwin Corle published in 1935, pp. 120-121.
Readings:

Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion.*


Selected articles, electronic archives, and websites

General purposes:

The seminar is partly a response to the longstanding criticism that United States history, including the history of education, has kept silent about American Indians. Specifically, it is designed as an inquiry on Indian education, the process of cultural formation and change that began thousands of years ago, resisted European hegemony and colonialism, and survived epidemics, genocide, and dislocations. The aim is not to reconstruct a narrative of Indian victimization, although the story is tragic and shameful, but analyses of the particular ways various nations, tribes, and clans have sustained themselves, formed cultures, and organized their societies. In short the seminar is interested in the places and products of learning. We will look for them inductively without assuming they can be traced merely to European-style institutions or curricula.

These inquiries are possible because of research conducted in recent decades by anthropologists, archaeologists, ethnohistorians, and scholars in several scientific fields. Other new sources are available in electronic archives and websites maintained by Indian organizations. Students will contribute to this advancing knowledge through original research to be shared in seminar sessions.

Requirements:

1. Organize and lead discussions of readings.
2. One-page research proposal, due September 11.
3. Outline of research project, due October 9.
4. Research presentations, November 27
6. Expertise on at least one American Indian website.

Procedures:

Because we are entering relatively unexplored territory, a key aim of the seminar is to provide time for discussion and critique of primary and secondary sources and our individual work. I will meet with each student for a scheduled conference early in the semester. Analyses of the readings will be organized and led by student teams. Everyone will serve on at least two teams, composed of volunteers to the extent possible. By the end of the seminar, we should have a
beginning bibliography of useful websites and online archives. Guidelines for the research presentations and papers will be agreed upon as the seminar progresses. We will also take time to consider additional published and electronic sources located by seminar members, including myths, legends, oral traditions, fiction and poetry, visual arts, dance, music, crafts and artistic creations, and any other promising clues to the history of American Indian learning.

**Preliminary bibliography:**

Consult references cited in the assigned readings and the two attached articles.

**Preliminary schedule:**

8 – 28: Introductions. What is education? Where do we look for and how do we frame relevant educational questions? What criteria help us identify the phenomena of learning? What may be key substantive and methodological issues related to American Indian history?


9 – 11

10 – 2 –

10 – 23

11 – 6


12 – 4: Concluding discussion, constructing an agenda of historical research on American Indian education. **Research papers due.**