Format
We'll focus the project of "Understanding Universities as Colonial Institutions" by foregrounding the status of indigenous knowledge and new knowledge production as raised in two articles by indigenous feminist scholars Zoe Todd, and Eve Tuck, Maile Arvin, and Angie Morrill (links and docs attached).

In different yet overlapping ways, these articles might be said to interrogate the residual linkages between knowledge production and colonial power relations and inequalities involving indigenous peoples albeit from what the authors identify as an indigenous feminist critique of knowledge/colonial power. Among other issues, they touch on citational practices, questions of accountability, political stakes, cultural and knowledge appropriation, pedagogy, fieldwork, theory, method and approach. An important element is the role or status of affect as a site, both for the continuation of colonial power and efforts to fight it.

Key questions
What is indigenous feminist scholarship?
What kinds of questions is it raising of academic practice in general?
How do its concerns speak to, if not challenge your understanding of your field, discipline, or your understanding of broader academic culture?

Required:


Suggested
Outline:
I. Introduction
II. Key Terms

*Colonial: a) adverb and adjective for type of rule; b) an era, an aesthetic, bereft of any notion of power inequality

*Colonialism: denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire.
(Maldonaldo-Torres 2007)

*Coloniality: different from colonialism, coloniality “instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday.” (Maldonaldo-Torres 2007)

*Post Colonial: residual or continuous forms of colonialism despite or because of independence and nation state building, oppression through elite class; insufficient critique and failure to see how colonialism operates discursively, through construction of subjectivity, through culture, etc.

*Settler Colonialism: “a persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous peoples that are there. Within settler colonialism, it is exploitation of land that yields supreme value. In order for settlers to usurp the land and extract its value, Indigenous peoples must be destroyed, removed, and made into ghosts.”(Arvin, Tuck and Morrill, 12).

--“settler colonialism must be understood as a multi-fronted project of making the First Peoples of a place extinct; it is a relentless structure, not contained in a period of time.” (13) See also Hurwitz

--“characterized by a persistent drive to supersed the conditions of its operation” (Verazini 2011, 3), [that is, “to make itself seem natural, without origin (and without end), and inevitable.” (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 14)

*Anticolonial: opposing, but not going far enough

*Decolonization: process of resolving all of the above

III. Why Indigenous, Why Feminist, and Why Indigenous Feminist Criticism

a. Indigenous = calls out colonialism, especially settler colonialism; more frequently than any other movement; society = settler colonial society

--Indigenous: aboriginal; first nation status, “native” sovereignty and nationhood not “equality” within larger nation…not “civil rights” but “treaty rights,” “human rights”, sometimes not “rights” discourse at all, or “human” for that matter; calls out Settler Colonialism

--Indigeneity: claims and conditions of nativeness or aboriginality, vernacular practices, claims to specific places/localities. Counterpart/point to coloniality,
b) Feminist: critique of gender and sexuality; of heteropatriarchy; Society is gendered heteropatriarchal, academia is gendered …

c) Indigenous Feminist Criticism: invokes the indigenous call and marks whiteness of feminist critiques to advance indigenous feminist criticism

--- entails the indigenous struggles against settler colonialism but calls for it to engage critiques of heteropatriarchy; sees heteropatriarchy as part of settler colonialism, indeed, sees settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy as deeply interconnected,

--In fact for many native women fighting for Native Issues and fighting for Womens Issues are “coiled together” (Arvin, Tuck and Morrill 15); seeing them as separate is a false binary;

--- also sees white or mainstream feminist criticism as part of settler colonial; critiques indigenous politics and theory as heteropatriarchy; these are only resolved through decolonization and sovereignty;

--“Native feminist analysis is crucial if we are determined to decolonize as Native peoples. (According to Goeman and Denetdale 2009, 10); but also, decolonizing Native peoples and ending settler colonialism also fights heteropatriarchy.

Concerning Academia

--“at the forefront of many of the most exciting and challenging works coming out of Native and Indigenous Studies.” (Arvin, Tuck and Morrill 2013, p.11). beginning in the 1960s and “thriving in the last five years” (11), yet received “far too little attention…” in academia.

-- “Native feminist theories at their heart challenge the academy’s common modes of disciplinarity; they exhort ethnic studies and Indigenous studies, as well as gender and women’s studies, to address the erasure of Indigenous women and Native feminist theories in ways that are not simply token inclusion of seemingly secondary (or beyond) issues, but rather shift the entire basis of how disciplines see and understand their proper subjects.” (Arvin, Tuck, Morrill 14)

IV: The Readings:

1. Arvin, Tuck and Morrill: Native Feminist Theorizing to Decolonize Natives from Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy in Academia.

A. Academia identified in terms of, or as:

--An important institution in settler colonial societies, hence, also a bastion of heteropatriarchal normativity;

-- racial formation (whiteness and its privileges, fragilities), which in turn perpetuates Settler Society)

--bastion of nationhood (US or America-based)

--key site of struggle (professors, graduate students); key site of “Indigenous Feminist Theorizing” (11)

--via specific disciplines (Education; those that have not paid attention to IF “who might benefit from it the most” (11)

--via specific interdisciplines (WGS, ES, Native or Indigenous Studies;

--theory, analyses, methods social transformation (Indigenous, Feminist, Indigenous Feminists;

--frameworks for decolonization)

--curricular matters

-the target of their passion and desire to “unsettle” it (and WGS)
B. Keyterms Defined
Native Feminist Theories 11-12
Settler Colonialism 12
Heteropatriarchy and Heteropaternalism 13

C. The Five Challenges (for Decolonizing, For battling heteropatriarchy, in Academia
1. Problematize (read Theorize) the Intersectionality among Settler Colonialism, Heteropatriarchy and Heteropaternalism (14-17)
2. Refuse the erasure of Indigenous women within gender and women’s studies and reconsider the implications of the end game of (only) inclusion (17-19)
3. Craft Alliances That Directly Address Differences (19-21)
4. Recognize Indigenous Ways of Knowing: on land, Native Sovereignty, Futurity and Decolonization (21-24)
5. Question Academic Participation in Indigenous Land Dispossession (24-29)


A. Vignette 1 Listening to the Great Bruno Latour and feeling erased
“Once again, I felt as though I was just another inconvenient Indigenous body in a room full of people excited to hear a white guy talk around themes shared in Indigenous thought without giving Indigenous people credit or a nod.”

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“Because we still practice our disciplines in ways that erase Indigenous bodies within our lecture halls in Europe, we unconsciously avoid engaging with contemporary Indigenous scholars and thinkers while we engage instead with eighty year old ethnographic texts or two hundred year old philosophical tomes.”

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“As Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee scholar Vanessa Watts (2013) points out, the appropriation of Indigenous thinking in European contexts without Indigenous interlocutors present to hold the use of Indigenous stories and laws to account flattens, distorts and erases the embodied, legal-governance and spiritual aspects of Indigenous thinking. So there is a very real risk to Indigenous thinking being used by non-Indigenous scholars who apply it to Actor Network Theory, cosmopolitics, ontological and posthumanist threads without contending with the embodied expressions of stories, laws, and songs as bound with Indigenous-Place Thought (Watts 2013: 31) or Indigenous self-determination. Her writing affirms what I witnessed directly as an Indigenous woman from North America moving through the halls of the UK academy: Indigenous stories are often employed without Indigenous peoples present to engage in the application of them in European work. However, there is a risk as well, to Indigenous thinking not being acknowledged at all. How do we hold these two issues in tension and apply them accountably in anthropology? I concede that there are elements of post-humanism, cosmopolitics and the Ontological Turn that could potentially be promising tools in the decolonial project, if approached with an attention to the structural realities of the academy. In my current work (Todd 2015a; Todd 2015b) I now cite Juanita Sundberg (2013) extensively, who describes her own efforts to engage with post-humanism as a decolonizing tool kit, while flagging how euro-centric the project of post-humanism remains. Specifically, she points out (2014: 35) that Euro-American framings of post-
humanism have a tendency to erase Indigenous epistemes and locations. Further, she argues that posthumanist thought makes a common error of asserting the nature/culture split as a universal phenomenon rather than a reality localised to specific knowledge traditions (Sundberg 2014: 35). Sundberg and Watts both provide Euro-Western scholars with practical tools for employing Indigenous ontologies in their work with care and respect: account for location (Sundberg 2014) and Indigenous Place-Thought (Watts 2013: 31) - and consider the ongoing colonial imperatives of the academy.

Ultimately, the issue I am describing here is a structural one: it is a critique of systems and practices that culminate in events such as the one I attended. It is a critique of a discipline and intellectual environment that currently claims to be striving for the worthy goal of ‘ontological self-determination’ (Holbraad et al. 2014; Viveiros de Castro 2003) but failing to create the conditions wherein many of its practitioners respect our physical self-determination (and right to ensure Indigenous thinking is employed accountably) and intellectual presence as Indigenous peoples within its very own bricks-and-mortar institutions.”

**Vignette Two** (being told to “lighten up” in response to her criticism about the perils of “going native,” and what it stands for. This second vignette is “include(d) … to assure you that the problem outlined in this essay is … due, rather, to the European academy’s continued, collective reticence to address its own racist and colonial roots, and debt to Indigenous thinkers in a meaningful and structural way.”

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“To lighten up is to whiten up, as Ahmed points out. And, I argue that to whiten up is to thrive in the British academy.”

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“My mind wanders to a time a peer in the UK told me my own advocacy and theorising regarding Indigenous architecture and re-claiming space in my hometown of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada was an example of me ‘going native’, a statement none of my (all white) peers in the room challenged. There was no irony in the usage of the phrase that day--the inflection was not jovial. It was an earnest, clear dismissal of my work because, ostensibly, Indigenous thinkers cannot maintain objectivity when working with our own political, legal and intellectual concerns. Apparently, to be seen as credible in the European academy, Indigenous thought must be filtered through white intermediaries. Trusty interpreters, usually male, usually middle class, can birth Indigenous thinking into the mainstream. In other words: the revolution will be mediated. As Ahmed (2014) demonstrates: the knowledge of Indigenous people or People of Colour (POC) is not accepted in Europe until the white balance is adjusted.”

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“This brings me to the ongoing reality of ‘anthropology as white public space’ (Brodkin et al. 2011): that space that anthropologists Karen Brodkin, Sandra Morgen and Janis Hutchinson describe in their research on racism in North American anthropology. This concept is so instructive to my current work within the discipline and I keep citing their work in almost everything I write (see Todd 2015a, 2015b) because I believe it bears repeating until anthropology takes its whiteness of praxis seriously. Brodkin et al. demonstrate (2011: 545) that, for People of Colour within anthropology departments in North America, racism operates in two ways: first through a racial division labour whereby those responsibilities assigned to faculty and graduate students of color have lower status and rewards than those of white colleagues. The second praxis is cultural and discursive, including a range of departmental and individual practices that carry racial baggage but also deny their racial subtexts and racially unequal outcomes.

I experience anthropology as white public space: in the hostilities that some scholars express towards my use of Indigenous scholarship in my work; in the subtle but pervasive power
afforded to white scholarship (Ahmed 2013; Ahmed 2014) that distorts or erases or homogenises distinct Indigenous voices. I must note here that I am a white-passing Indigenous woman, so I carry the privilege of ‘passing’ for white within ‘white public space’ (Brodkin et al. 2011). This article must be read in the context of my experiences as someone who is Indigenous, but who is not read as Indigenous by many academics. I do not want to conflate my experiences as a white-passing person with those of my peers, family members and friends who experience direct and hostile racism based on the colour of their skin. As someone who experiences the world through whiteness, I have a curious access into spaces where people ‘say what they really think’ about Indigenous issues or People of Colour when they assume everyone in the room is Caucasian. This is a space that must be acknowledged and problematised, for it is a space that deeply influences how Euro-Western thought is produced within the academy. The vast gulf between ‘what is’ and ‘what can be’ within a discipline like anthropology lies within those spaces where whiteness protects itself when it assumes there are no POC (and/or Indigenous peoples) to bear witness to its insecurities, hostilities. I witness the complex ways that Di Angelo's (2011) concept of ‘white fragility’ manifests and consoles itself when white supremacy is challenged within the academy. I therefore have a front seat to the whole spectacle of whiteness—how it is practiced when it claims to be dismantling itself and in turn how it is practiced when it shores itself up against necessary critiques from Indigenous scholars and Scholars of Colour. These are the under-acknowledged spaces where official academic discourse and promises of decolonial ethos mingle with the real practice, and prejudice, of our disciplines. Where racism and whiteness are reinforced and reproduced (but also where they can be challenged and dismantled). This is the space that Sara Ahmed (2014) writes so powerfully about.

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“When we talk of ‘white men’ we are describing an institution. ‘White men’ is an institution. By saying this, what I am saying? An institution typically refers to a persistent structure or mechanism of social order governing the behaviour of a set of individuals within a given community. So when I am saying that ‘white men; is an institution I am referring not only to what has already been instituted or built but the mechanisms that ensure the persistence of that structure. A building is shaped by a series of regulative norms. ‘White men’ refers also to conduct; it is not simply who is there, who is here, who is given a place at the table, but how bodies are occupied once they have arrived; behaviour as bond.

What I have experienced in the UK academy is what Ahmed describes: white men as an institution that reproduces itself in its own image. It is important to note that Ahmed speaks to the structures of whiteness, and indeed we must remember that a critique of whiteness is meant to draw attention to the structural, routinised aspects of ‘white public space’ (Brodkin et al. 2011). Ahmed (2014) goes on to describe how this reproduction is citational—one must cite white men to get ahead.”

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“Recent studies demonstrate a disconcerting lack of People of Colour in the UK academy. As I have noted in other recent pieces on decolonising the academy (Todd 2015a, 2015b), in 2013, of the 18,510 Professors in the UK, there were only 85 Black Professors, 17 of whom were women (Grove 2014). Recently, a spotlight was focused on the reticence of the UK academy to support black scholarship when University College London (UCL) declined to implement a Black Studies program (Lusher 2015). The course was developed by one of the very few Black philosophy scholars in the entire UK, Dr. Nathaniel Coleman (Lusher 2015)—and when the course was rejected, a representative of the University stated that ‘it became apparent that UCL is not yet ready to offer a strong programme in this area’ (Lusher 2015). But the inevitable postponing of critical scholarship about race, racialisation and racism forestalls the ability of Indigenous scholars and POC to invest our careers in these topics within the academy. If Universities are not yet ready to challenge white supremacy, will they ever be? And if a program on critical race thinking is not supported today, how can White Scholars advance claims that academy is in fact a
safe space for Indigenous scholars, let alone claim that decolonisation is occurring within the halls of the academy itself?

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“To survive the push-pull rollercoaster of hoping for decolonial scholarship to take root within British institutions, and the inevitable heartbreak when colonial and racist trends rear their unruly heads, I have developed coping strategies to maintain my sanity as an Indigenous person infiltrating the British academy. Therefore, as an Indigenous woman, I have tried, over the last few years, to find thinkers who engage with Indigenous thought respectfully; who give full credit to Indigenous laws, stories and epistemologies; who quote and cite Indigenous people rather than only citing anthropologists who studied Indigenous people 80 years ago. This is not always easy. I am so grateful to scholars like David Anderson, Barbara Bodenhorn, Julie Cruikshank, and Ann Fienup-Riordan, among others, for giving me hope amidst the despair I've felt as the ‘Ontological Turn’ gains steam on both sides of the Atlantic. I am so grateful too, for the Indigenous thinkers who wrestle with the academy, who position themselves to speak back to Empire despite all of the polite/hidden racism, heteropatriarchy, and let's face it—white supremacy—of the University writ large.”

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“So why does this all matter? Why am I so fired up at the realisation that (some) European thinkers are replicating Indigenous thought, seemingly with no awareness? Well, it's this little matter of colonialism, see. Whereas the European academy tends to discuss the ‘post-colonial’, in Canada I assure you that we are firmly still experiencing the colonial (see Pinkoski (2008) for a cogent discussion of this issue in anthropology).”

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“(with) the wave of the post-colonial wand, many European thinkers seem to have absolved themselves of any implication in ongoing colonial realities throughout the globe. And yet, each one of us is embedded in systems that uphold the exploitation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. The academy plays a role in shaping the narratives that erase ongoing colonial violence. My experience in Britain has been incredibly eye-opening: as far as the majority of Britons seem to be concerned, their responsibility for, and implication in, colonialism in North America ended with the War of Independence (in America) or the repatriation of the Canadian constitution (1982).”

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“Olbraad et al. (2014) reference Viveiros de Castro’s (2009) call for the ‘permanent decolonization of thought’. This is a worthy goal, one I support. However, if the academic structures through which this decolonisation of thought is being carried out continue to reproduce the white supremacy of the academy so eloquently described by scholars like Sara Ahmed (2014), can we expect lasting change, or decolonization, to occur? Can the hopeful goals outlined by Holbraad et al. (2014) be borne out in current academic environments? My personal experiences within the discipline of anthropology in the UK suggest that the decolonisation of thought cannot happen until the proponents of the discipline themselves are willing to engage in the decolonial project in a substantive and structural and physical way, and willing to acknowledge that the colonial is an extant, ongoing reality.

What I am critiquing here then, really, are the silences. It is not that current trends in the discipline of anthropology or the Euro-academy more broadly are wrong. It is that they do not currently live up to the promises they make. I do think many people making claims regarding the promise of current turns in anthropology have very good intentions. However, these cannot always easily translate into long-term structural change. Our interventions as Indigenous feminists are thus necessary to hold our colleagues up to the goals they define for themselves. …”

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“Hunt (2013) critique coincides with Watts’ (2013) work described above: both of these Indigenous scholars demonstrate that Indigenous thinking must be seen as not just a well of ideas to draw from but a body of thinking that is living and practiced by peoples with whom we all share reciprocal duties as citizens of shared territories (be they physical or the ephemeral). A point I am making in my dissertation, informed by the work of Indigenous legal theorists like John Borrows, Kahente Horn-Miller, Tracey Lindberg, and Val Napoleon, is that Indigenous thought is not just about social relations and philosophical anecdotes, as many an ethnography would suggest. These scholars have already shown that Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies represents legal orders, legal orders through which Indigenous peoples throughout the world are fighting for self-determination, sovereignty. The dispossession wrought by centuries of stop-start chaotic colonial invasion and imposition of European laws and languages is ongoing. It did not end with repatriation of constitutions or independence from colonial rule. Europe is still implicated in colonial exploitation, whether it likes it or not.

So the argument I make here is that Indigenous peoples, throughout the world, are fighting for recognition - fighting to assert their laws, philosophies and stories on their own terms. When anthropologists and other assembled social scientists sashay in and start cherry-picking parts of Indigenous thought that appeal to them without engaging directly in (or unambiguously acknowledging) the political situation, agency, legal orders and relationality of both Indigenous people and scholars, we immediately become complicit in colonial violence. When we cite European thinkers who discuss the ‘more-than-human’ but do not discuss their Indigenous contemporaries who are writing on the exact same topics, we perpetuate the white supremacy of the academy. At the moment, it is by-and-large the academy that creates, legitimises and reproduces anthropology. However, for Indigenous academics like me, it is also the structures of academy that prevent the discipline from realising its loftiest, most transformative goals. The academy is anthropology's 'human error': the white supremacist, Imperial human dimensions of the academy itself prevent the re-imagining of disciplines like anthropology.

In order for the Ontological Turn, post-humanism, cosmopolitics to live up to their potential, they must heed the teachings of North American Indigenous scholars who engage similar issues such as Dwayne Donald, John Borrows, Val Napoleon, Audra Simpson, Kim TallBear, Chris Andersen, Rob Innes, Tracey Lindberg, Sarah Hunt, Vanessa Watts, Glen Coulthard, Leanne Simpson, Eve Tuck, Cutchka Risling Baldy, Erica Violet Lee and so many other brilliant thinkers (this list is not exhaustive!). And they must heed the teachings of Indigenous and racialised scholars from all around the globe. The systems through which thought is produced in the Euro-Western academy would do well to incorporate the reciprocity Donald (2009: 6) references in his work on ‘ethical relationality’: Ethical relationality is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other. This form of relationality is ethical because it does not overlook or invisibilize the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts from which a particular person understands and experiences living in the world. It puts these considerations at the forefront of engagements across frontiers of difference.

Donald's (2009) concept of ethical relationality invokes a reciprocity of thought, and this concept is central to my own dissertation on the negotiation of both ‘sameness and difference’ across legal pluralities that Inuvialuit fishermen mobilise, with respect to fish as non-human persons, in the context of colonialism in northern Canada. Reciprocity of thinking requires us to pay attention to who else is speaking alongside us. It also positions us, first and foremost, as citizens embedded in dynamic legal orders and systems of relations that require us to work constantly and thoughtfully across the myriad systems of thinking, acting, and governance within which we find ourselves enmeshed. Before I am a scholar or a researcher, I am a citizen of the Métis Nation with duties and responsibilities to the many different nations/societies/peoples with whom I share territories. This relational approach means that my reciprocal duties to others guide every aspect of how I position myself and my work, and this relationality informs the ethics that
drive how I live up to my duties to humans, animals, land, water, climate and every other aspect of the world(s) I inhabit. An ethical relationality means that more than just the Indigenous scholar in the room would have expected Latour to reference his Indigenous interlocutors on a topic as broadly discussed and publicised, and as intimately linked to political claims by many Indigenous nations and peoples, as climate change.

So, for every time you want to cite a Great Thinker who is on the public speaking circuit these days, consider digging around for others who are discussing the same topics in other ways. Decolonising the academy, both in Europe and North America, means that we must consider our own prejudices, our own biases. Systems like peer-review and the subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle violence of European academies tend to privilege certain voices and silence others. Consider why it is okay to discuss sentient climates in an Edinburgh lecture hall without a nod to Indigenous epistemologies and not have a single person openly question that. Consider why it is okay for our departments to remain so undeniably white. Consider why it is so revolutionary for Sara Ahmed (2014) to assert a ‘citational rebellion’ in which we cite POC, women and others left out of many academic discourses. And then, familiarise yourself with the Indigenous thinkers (and more!) I reference here and broaden the spectrum of who you cite and who you reaffirm as ‘knowledgeable’.”
References


