

## **CUSO Workshop: Literary Texts and Legal Epistemologies in North American Indigenous Studies**

- Date:** Thursday, 03 October 2019
- Place:** University of Fribourg
- Guest Speaker:** Prof. Jill Doerfler (University of Minnesota-Duluth)
- Organizers:** Patrizia Zanella and Prof. Thomas Austenfeld

### **Workshop Description**

This workshop aims to cater to doctoral students interested in the intersections between legal epistemologies and literary expressions. Critical readings of legal documents are especially urgent for scholars interested in literary productions by individuals pertaining to social groups that are often excluded from the process of legal construction in mainstream society. As Marlee Kline notes in her article “The Colour of Law: Ideological Representations of First Nations in Legal Discourse” (1994): “Law provides one of the discourses in which racism is constructed, reproduced and reinforced. Law has been and continues to be implicated in racist processes in a variety of ways” (452).

The multiplicity of ways in which Indigenous people in North America are regulated by federal and provincial/ territorial/ state law means that legal discourse pervades and affects the everyday life of Indigenous people and, therefore, the everyday life of Indigenous characters in literary texts. As a consequence, it is indispensable to develop a basic legal understanding in order to better read, analyze, and teach Indigenous literatures. This is especially important in order to understand Indigeneity as a political rather than an ethnic category. The mantle of ethnic literatures under which Native American authors are often subsumed erases Indigenous sovereignty and participates in the colonial project of eliminating the “Indian” as an inconvenient political category as Cherokee writer and scholar Thomas King put it in his 2012 bestseller *The Inconvenient Indian*. Instead, in the inherently interdisciplinary field of Indigenous studies, scholars and writers alike are intent on revitalizing Indigenous legal epistemologies.

The workshop aims to attract a broad segment of doctoral students interested in considering legal aspects. While the keynote and the article selection will focus primarily on the intersections between law and literature in a North American Indian context, questions of interdisciplinarity, methodology, and the mutually constitutive nature of law and literature will be transferable to other fields of English literatures.

### **Speaker Bio**

Professor Jill Doerfler is the department head of the American Indian Studies Department at the University of Minnesota-Duluth and a renowned specialist in the field of American Indian law and literatures. Her award-winning monograph, *Those Who Belong: Identity, Family, Blood and Citizenship among the White Earth Anishinaabeg* (2015), combines historical research on federal law, treaty sovereignty, and literature.

### **Preliminary Program**

10am – 10.30am	Coffee and introductory remarks
10.30am – 12:30pm	Discussion of articles (Kimberly Blaeser’s “Wild Rice Rights” and Edgar Garcia’s “Pictography, Law, and Earth”)
12:30pm – 2pm	Lunch break
2pm – 4pm	PhD student presentations Cécile Heim (University of Lausanne) and others TBA
4pm – 4:30pm	Coffee break
4:30pm – 6pm	Keynote lecture by Jill Doerfler: “A Philosophy for Living: Anishinaabe Literatures on Law, Citizenship, and Activism”
6pm	Closing remarks and apéro

### **Location**

The university is located five minutes from the train station (Avenue de l’Europe 20).

The morning session will take place at **MIS10 room 01.13** (downstairs).

The afternoon session will take place at **MIS 3013** opposite the mensa.

