INSTITUTE 2015: SUMMARIES OF READINGS/VIDEOS

These summaries are offered so you have a sense of why we are reading the materials. It's a good idea to take notes where you agree or disagree or don't understand things, so we can talk about them. What each of us has to say is important! Try to remember that if you get stuck or think "I don't know enough to have a valid opinion."

These pieces give us a common language and knowledge, so think about them in advance as much as you can.

Most of the workshops are pretty lite on readings and preparation. The last one, on Sustainability, has one priority reading, two recommended. Even if you can't read all the recommended reading, at the least, read the summaries of them, because they offer important food for thought.

General Reading (good as background for everything)

--**Clifton Evers**, *Notes for a Young Surfer* (2010, Melbourne University Press, Australia)

There aren't a lot of memoirs about surfing yet (2015), and none of them like this one. We are reading the first two chapters. The memoir by an Australian surfer, who becomes a professor, and though he doesn't call attention to being a professor in the memoir, you can tell he's writing with a strong consciousness about masculinity and revising masculinities, and he's been influenced by feminist ideas and by his own evolving personal gender ethics.

The first two chapters of this memoir seemed good for us because they teach readers about the process of learning to surf and, interestingly, how it goes hand in hand with him learning to be a certain kind of domineering man – to think all the waves belong to you, to think your local scene is under your control and you and your group of male bloke buddies should police it. By addressing the memoir to "young surfers," Evers is trying to offer a lesson to younger guys, saying it's ok to question models of manhood. When he was growing up, he didn't realize he had any say in defining ideals of manhood. As he gets older, he finds he can have a say, and that some of what he has learned about being a man is harmful to himself and others (not revealing your feelings, taking up all the space in the water or on the sand, looking down on women or making them uncomfortable by hassling them or turning them into sex objects). The book is telling the story of him learning to do masculinity differently.

For us, there also is a lot of material on storytelling, and he talks about storytelling through the concept of "Talking Story." This term gets used in Asian American literature and Hawaiian storytelling and it refers to a kind of kitchen-table talk, informal talk, gossip, loose history telling, telling secrets, speaking truths, the give-and-go of unofficial knowledges. "Talk Story" also is a term that gets used to mean spiritual story practices, healing story rituals. So this kind of storytelling is *communal* and not quite the same as storytelling in a magazine, in a novel, in surf film, it's not done for a marketplace, with an eye to commercial sales or to formal authority.

The different story Evers is trying to tell here is about the gendering of storytelling itself and about the ways surfers learn from one another to talk about waves and chasing them. Evers asks us to look critically at "adventure stories" (p15-21), at "The Warrior Myth" (p 22-24), at Pioneer Stories (p 11), and at the anti-shopping signals ironically transmitted by a lot of consumer products sold in surf stores. He also speaks to the need of younger guys to challenge the storytelling assumptions and initiation practices of older guys who "gatekeep" (32-3) traditions that should be changed.

Finally Evers challenges his readers to learn from stories told by Aboriginal surfers, gay surfers, women surfers (33).

Questions for us from Evers:

- What are the elements of "warrior stories?" Who is a "warrior" and why are surf warriors admired (what skills/values do they have)? What about "adventure stories," "pioneer stories," or "Other Stories?" How or where do you see these stories in your own lives?
- Can this text help us to think about women, gender, and femininity? How so? How is it useful?

Krista Comer, Overview of *Surfer Girls in the New World Order*
Also general reading/viewing: YouTube summary of my book (and see 2104 curriculum for actual Intro)

I have included the YouTube summary of my book because it takes up lots of relevant questions. The intro talks about why I wrote the book, the big ideas of the book, it links women's surfing in the 90s to girl power, to political economy, to specific geographies of surfing, and to the effort by women surfers to make their livelihoods in surf subcultural economies such as: surf shops, international surf camps, responsible tourism, surf lessons and organizations, photography, filmmaking, magazine work, etc.

Workshop #1 Led by Dina Gilio-Whitaker
What does it mean to "be from a place?"

Topic: UnErasing the Native in Surfing and Sustainability
Reading and Discussion: Indigenous People & Settler Colonialism
Exercises: Uncovering Myths: Beyond “Discovery” and “Adventure” Stories

Advanced Prep: 2 very short ONLINE readings, one short YOUTUBE video
Below are short summaries of these readings.

Settler Colonialism 101 and 102 (these are links, see the email for the live webaddresses)

This reading and cluster of ideas is really important to conversations in surfing about “locals,” and who belongs or doesn’t belong in a specific place. Because of course, many surf spots around the world happen to be located in places where indigenous people made homes formerly, or where homes/communities exist today. Most people in surfing understand this idea of native “locals” vis a vis Hawaii, where native Hawaiians and rights of access to surf breaks are public controversies. We can use that understanding to expand our thinking and apply it to places that are not Hawaii, and this will be part of Dina’s talk, to raise our consciousness about California Native people and what they bring to understandings of environment and politics.

Scholars tend to talk about these kinds of issues about place and occupation through the language of colonialism and settler colonialism. The ONLINE readings (Settler Colonialism 101 and 102) define the terms clearly and helpfully. Colonialism refers to those cases in which one country (the “mother country”) comes to control another country, even when the indigenous population remained the majority. India is a good example. Settler colonialism, by contrast, refers to situations in which the settlers come to outnumber the indigenous population (the US or Australia/NZ and Mexico are examples). In the U.S. context, this has meant the (intentional) elimination of Natives and Native cultures. This has happened in history through genocide, forced cultural assimilation, attacks on language and indigenous knowledge, or imposing unfamiliar ways of life and ways of thinking onto indigenous peoples.

It continues today as well; in other words, colonization is not over, in the past, it continues. When you hear about “treaty battles,” “fishing disputes,” you can think of these as examples of the ongoing nature of settler colonial processes and indigenous fights against them. Violence against native women is another example of ongoing colonial processes of cultural assault and domination.

Settler Colonialism 102 is an expansion of Settler Colonialism 101. Taken together and considered within the context of the Institute, these online articles encourage us to ask several questions: What do we mean by “place” and “space?” How are such ideas constructed, contested, and bound to power? How are race and place connected in intricate ways? And how might we discuss place and race differently in our activist projects?

Native American Boarding Schools 101

People who know about Native history and communities have likely heard about boarding schools. But many people who are less familiar with Native history don't know as much about boarding schools. This short video produced by NPR, provides an overview of this history, and describes how boarding schools were a central feature of forced assimilation of indigenous people. It details some of the abuses of this system for individuals, families, communities, and cultures. While most boarding schools have closed due to these very abuses, some remain today. The clip closes by sharing the story of one Native boarding school that is still open, reminding us that issues we often think of as historical (as over, as in the past) continue today.

Why might people believe Native people and issues are in the past? What are the politics of doing so?

Workshop #2, Led by Michelle Habell-Pallán
Storytelling & Activist Community

Topic: What Happens is . . . Dialogue: Archivista Praxis
Reading/Discussion:
Feminist Oral History Ethics and Dialogue as Community Building

For this workshop with Michelle, we read a really great article that tells the story of her collaborative project: Women Who Rock (WWR). Women Who Rock is a group of people (academics, artists, musicians, activists, non-profits etc) who collaboratively explore the role of women in popular music as well as how women in music create culture and social justice. We learn about the group's ethical and practical models of working together, with focuses on experimentation, dialogue, and open structure. Women Who Rock roots their collaborative model in women of color feminism, queer of color critique, feminist media studies, and the digital humanities. What all these terms mean can be topics of discussion. The article describes the importance of self-reflexivity – reflecting on one's own practices and approaches – to the WWR project as well as the benefits and challenges associated with academic and activist collaborations. The article also alerts us to some of the pressing issues involved in projects like WWR -- issues centering around labor, scale, and sustainability. Sections three and four detail what collaborative curriculum building, teaching, and mentoring look like with the context of this type of social justice/academic/activist collaboration. Sections five and six outline the contours of the group's community engagement and describe how the group digitally archives their work. The article provides examples of and sets the bar for the kind of politically engaged work we can do together through the Institute. It makes us think about the ethics, challenges, and political possibilities associated with collaboration. It makes the important point about archiving one's work somehow, since these kinds of collaborations tend to not be documented effectively and then others can't learn from them.

Four Peaks interview with Michelle Habell-Pallán (14 min)
Watch this clip and prepare to be "jazzed" for our workshop with Michelle! In this interview, Michelle discusses how typical archival practices and stories can enforce individual and cultural disappearance. In the case of the history of music, Latinos and women have largely been left out of the record and out of our stories. As she says, "we can curate people out of existence." But her collaborative work also suggests that we can curate people *into* existence in new ways, and that this process of curation is, indeed, an act of intervention or social change. It is a way of changing the stories, the record, our memories, and our imaginations. For Michelle and her collaborators, the process of curation is an act of care, she talks about caring for a community's "souls." She asks us to think critically about how we tell stories, for whom, and in what ways. Because many of us Institute participants are collecting, crafting, and disseminating stories—our own and others'—we can draw from this work to ask: What models do we use to be reflective about the ethics of story gathering?

What does it teach us that WWR uses terms that mix Spanish and English, like "feminista," "archivista?"

Workshop #3 Sustainability as a Feminist Issue

Topic: What do we mean when we say "sustainability?"
What do we mean when we say "sustain a movement?"

This workshop will be the most free-form, and will include time for groups of like-minded people to meet and discuss. The above questions will shape our discussions and we can add other questions that come up from Saturday's workshops.

We have three readings summarized below. The first one, by Escobar, is the priority reading.

The last two articles, one by Lipsitz and one by Briggs, are recommended (not required). They help us think about political allies, and about people being changed by activisms (ie transformative alliances).

Laura Briggs is very insightful and very challenging . . . it's there for those who are up for it, it's about the ethics of specifically feminist collaborations, about labor, activism, and the knowledge coming out of these blended sites of new thinking. It is very helpful for us as we think about how we sustain the Institute itself.

Priority: Arturo Escobar, Sustainability: Design for the Pluriverse (2011)

This short reading brings “big ideas” in pretty accessible language. Escobar is an anthropologist who has worked in social justice thought and environment in Latin America. He brings the basic idea that “sustainable development” on capitalist development models has never been sustainable (it’s just less unsustainable), so this isn’t a focus or advocacy of proposals of “green development,” “green industries.” Instead, through the concept of “transitional development” (TDs), he’s trying to help us think toward a bigger notion of “sustainability” which involves thinking toward a whole different world, social order, relation between humans and non-humans, a new way of being that would answer what he sees as a widespread crisis in being (an “ontological crisis”) of the present.

To think in these directions, he draws from the thinking of Zapatistas in Mexico, and from Ecuadoran and Bolivian sources, all of which exhibit strong indigenous world views and languages. His beginning entrance into conversations about sustainability, then, involve a “biocentric” world view, new ethical relations, and what he calls a new forms of “buen vivir.” This is a strong piece for us to think about, and to put in conversation with feminist thinking and gender issues, which are not directly present, but which seem to undergird the critique of everyday life he advances.

Recommended reading
“Walleye Warriors and White Identities: Native Americans’ Treaty Rights, Composite Identities, and Social Movements”
By George Lipsitz

In this article, Lipsitz tells the story of one fight over Native fishing rights. He shares how people come to be allies in struggles that are, seemingly, not theirs—in this case, how Native activists worked with White people to address an issue that impacts Native communities. Lipsitz suggests that the White people who engaged in this project were fundamentally transformed, that they developed new racial identities, and they came to see the world differently. This article raises questions about how we might build unlikely collaborations, and also, shows us that it is possible for activism to transform those involved. To be clear, this is not an activism that is solely directed at improving or changing our individual selves. To the contrary. Activism that is geared toward understanding and changing the social world can also transform those involved in deeply meaningful ways that allow for broader collaborations. How might we see our activist work as transforming us? What is required to be a good ally? And how might our thinking about the simultaneous transformation of the social and of ourselves make possible deeper collaborations? What “best practices” in recruiting allies are suggested by the specific talented example of Anishinaabe peoples living in present-day Wisconsin.

Recommended
“Activisms and Epistemologies: Problems for Transnationalisms”
By Laura Briggs
This text helps us think through the possibilities and pitfalls of collaborative efforts. Definitely it’s a challenging read. It will take some time to work through. It is ok if everything in this article doesn’t make complete sense or if you don’t know any of the authors cited throughout the text. One approach to reading a text like this is reading the summary below first, reading the article second, and then re-reading the summary.

This article is included here because it helps us to think about relationships between scholars and activists, especially those that span and tie together different places. The Institute emerged out of collaborative scholar-activist relationships across multiple places and continues to bring together activists and international scholars as well as artists and non-profit directors. As such, this article can help shape our ethics and raise questions about collaboration, labor, knowledge production, and political commitments.

What does our collaboration look like? Who is doing the work? Who is willing to do the work? How does this impact the activist projects we do? How can we bring together the contributions that are unique to activists/artists as well as those that are unique to scholars? The following summary—as well as the article—can help us as we begin to address these questions.

The following quote from Laura Briggs provides a good starting point: “My basic suspicion is that [scholars’] account of activism has been at once too much and not enough. That is, we give activists or oppressed people too much credit for always having a good analysis of their situation and always resisting it, something that often gets expressed through the term *agency*, on the one hand, and too little credit for their intellectual work, on the other hand.”

Let’s break this down, and do so in a way that helps us to take away other key points from this article:

- A lot of feminist, anti-capitalist, and anti-colonialist academic scholarship (and queer scholarship too, though Briggs doesn’t address that here) is indebted to activist efforts. Where people get their ideas is important. We must be able to ascribe ideas to political movements and to take seriously the intellectual contributions of activism. Activism is not a site where thinking stops, and no one should view it as such. This point should make us refuse any simple scholar/activist divides.
- Briggs raises the issue of “speaking for” others. She cautions against speaking for others, but also recognizes that this position is limited. She draws from Gayatri Spivak (a famous postcolonial thinker originally from India) who warns that we link exploitation with knowledge or its absence in too simple a

way. In other words, just because someone is oppressed or exploited does not necessarily mean that they will have a good analysis of their situation. So, we should question why and how people have come to "speak for" others, and also question those who believe it is *always* unethical to "speak for" others. Briggs is helping us to develop a politics of solidarity, and we should think about how "speaking for" has its limits and benefits. We should also think about what counts as "speaking for."

- We need to remember that activists and academics bring different skills to the table. Crafting "a politics of solidarity" requires that academics respect the intellectual work—among other work—that activists do and skills that activists have developed. It requires that academics remain willing to speak up in these collaborative spaces to challenge ideas in ways that scholars' intellectual training makes possible. It requires that scholars believe in activists' ability and willingness to engage in difficult, intellectually-driven conversations. And scholars must see activists as working from a place of generosity and a desire for social justice.

- On the activist side, crafting a politics of solidarity requires that activists respect the work that academics do. Scholars in the humanities and social sciences have been trained to examine dominant perspectives and to develop perspectives that challenge common ways of approaching the world. This is work that is socially useful, and activists can make this work even more socially relevant. A politics of solidarity requires that activists remain open to constructive critique and to drawing from the intellectual work of socially-engaged scholars. It requires that activists hold on to the belief that those scholars doing engaged activist work (something sometimes called "public humanities") are doing so from a place of generosity and a desire for social justice.

- In short, our separate work as activists and as academics, as well as our collaborative projects, are all better when we think and work alongside one another and also when we come to the table in the spirit of generosity, willing to admit mistakes and correct them, and willing to live and learn.