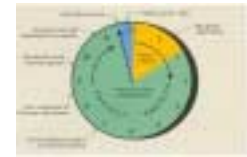


The First American Women

How to characterize Native American Societies?

- Connotations of the term “pre-history”
- Change over time
- Migration across Bering Straight approx. 20,000 years ago
- 11,000 years ago – extinction of big-game animals
- 8,000 B.C. – hunter-gatherer societies
- 2000 B.C. - agriculture



- Approx. 100 million Indigenous people at the time of Columbus's arrival throughout the Americas
- 10-25 million in North America
- 2,000 languages

Diversity of cultures and societies



How to characterize Native American gender systems?

- Separation of gender spheres
 - Male and female responsibilities
 - Different physical realms
- Separate but Complementary?
- What gives particular groups power?
 - Authority, autonomy



village world versus forest world

Women's Access and Control of Resources and Skills

- Food
 - Farming, gathering, fishing, meat processing
- Shelter and Household
 - Oversee/build homes and villages
 - Clothing, crafts, household goods
- Trading and constructing means of transportation
- Ownership of land and property
- How was this different from European gender systems?



Created by 16th C. European artist

Family Structure

- Matrilineal vs. Patrilineal
- Matrilocal vs. Patrilocal
- Extended vs. Nuclear
- Formation and dissolution of marriages
- Polygyny vs Monogamy
- Sexuality and marriage

Gender and Sexuality

- Gender Variance
 - Third and Fourth Genders
 - Women-Men and Men-Women
- Two-Spirits
- Homosexuality and Heterosexuality vs. Homogender and Heterogender



Spiritual Beliefs and Roles

- origin myths
- vision quests
- religious rituals and societies
- connection between land and life
- Connection between spirituality and cultural beliefs and social roles

Political influence/power?

- Men
 - Internal and external chiefs
 - Diplomacy
 - Warfare
- Women
 - Nomination and deposition
 - Women's councils
 - Resources and Cultural Influence vs. Formal Political Representation

Impact of European Contact

- Pre-face-to-face contact
- Disease
- Trade

The “Middle Ground”

- Fur Trade Societies and Expeditions
- Women as guides and negotiators
- Partners in trade and exploration
- Sexual and marital partners
- Metis Societies



“I do not know what to do without these articles [snowshoes in winter] – see what it is to have no wives!” Scots Trader, late 18 century

“My woman brings home eight hares and fourteen partridges” English Trader, 1815

How to interpret women who engaged in interracial partnerships?

- Women “pitch our tents, make and mend our clothing, keep us warm at night; and, in fact, there is no such thing as traveling any considerable distance, or for any length of time, in this country without their assistance.” – European Wilderness Guide 1770s
- Noticing the inferior quality of goods, she “ketch’d him by the nose, push’d him backwards, and call’d him fool, and told him if they brought any [goods] but such as they were directed [to bring] they could not be traded.” - English official
- “She dreamed continually of a white man, who approached her with a cup in his hand....She fasted for ten days...[and] when satisfied that she had obtained a guardian spirit in the white stranger who haunted her dreams she returned to her father’s lodge.” - European visitor
- “Women living with the white men eat of ...[the] forbidden morsels...without the least inconvenience.” - English observer
- “The whites...take [Indian] women not for wives – but to use them as sluts – to satisfy their animal lust, and when they are satiated, they cast them off, and another one takes her for the same purpose, and by & by casts her off again, and so she will go on...soiled by everyone who chooses to use her.” Ojibwa Chief, circa 1800
- What motivated these women?

Images of Native American Women: “Squaws”

- “Squaws share in the same vices attributed to Indian men –drunkness, stupidity, thievery, venality of every kind –and they live in shacks on the edge of town rather than in a woodland paradise.
- “Here, Squaws are shamed for their relationships with white men, and the males who share their beds.... When they live with Indian males, Squaws work for their lazy bucks and bear large numbers of fat ‘papooses.’”
- “They too are fat, and unlike their Princess sisters, dark and possessed of cruder, more ‘Indian’ features.”
 - Rayna Green, “The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture”

“Indian Princesses”



The multiple portrayals of Pocahontas/Matoaka/Rebecca Rolfe (1596?-1917)



- “The only good Indian – male or female, Squanto, Pocahontas, Sacagawea....rescues and helps white men.”
- “To be ‘good,’ she must defy her own people, exile herself from them, become white, and perhaps suffer death.”
 - Rayna Green, “The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture”

Metis Societies



1825

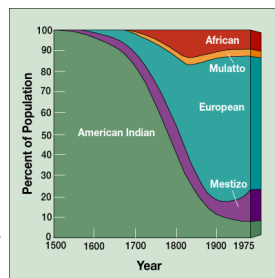
Religious Contact

- Catholicism vs. Protestantism
- Religion combined with gender expectations
 - Sexuality
 - Marriage
 - Gender roles
- Yet why did women convert at higher rates than men?
- Hybrid religions and cultural negotiations



European Farmers and Settlers

- British settlement
- Family units vs. male traders
- Intensification of racial boundaries and conflict
 - Warfare
 - Demands for access to resources
- Options: Assimilation, segregation, extermination, cultural negotiation?



Gender implications of assimilation

- Family arrangements
 - Extended to nuclear
 - Male-headed households
 - Sexuality
- Economic roles
 - Farming
 - Housework
 - Ownership of Property
- Political Roles
 - Who speaks on behalf of Native Americans?
 - Who is perceived as representative?
- Cherokee constitution of 1828
 - Right to vote and to hold office in the General Council restricted to “free male citizens”
- Is Cultural Negotiation possible?

