

## ***[A Brief Outline of U.S./Native American History]***

Film Screening — 19 Oct. 2011 — Bailey Library

Presented & Introduced by Prof. Tom Gannon, English & Native American Studies

—*Fighting terrorism since 1492*

### The FILM:

**Wounded Knee.** Dir. Stanley Nelson. Part 5 of *We Shall Remain*.

American Experience/WGBH International, 2009.

### The HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

#### **A Brief SUMMARY of [Euro-American/]U.S. POLICY towards NATIVE AMERICANS**

**I. EXTERMINATION** ("Indian Wars" ([1600's-]1890 [**Wounded Knee**]))

**II. REMOVAL** (1830's: the **Trail of Tears**)

**III. RESERVATIONS** (1851-)

A. 1887: Dawes Act (land allotment -> individualism; agrarianism)

B. 1934: Indian Reorganization Act (tribal govt. -> U.S.-style "self-rule")

**IV. ASSIMILATION**

Boarding Schools (1879 [Carlisle]-1960's[-present!])

Relocation (from reservations -> cities, 1950's & 60's)

**"MASSACRES & TEARS"—(A Few) Dates that Live in Infamy (and Some Subsequent**

**Attempts of Redress)**—with an emphasis on events that have become "rallying points" in contemporary Native American literature & culture—

☛ **1830—Indian Removal Act:** federal policy to (forcibly) move southeastern tribes west of the Mississippi—incl. Choctaw, Seminole, Creek [Muskogee], Chickasaw, and Cherokee; thus **Oklahoma** and environs were originally the "Indian Territory"

☛ **1838-1839—"Trail of Tears":** forced march of the Cherokee from Georgia, etc., to the Indian Territory; plus, a similar fate for the other southeastern tribes mentioned above, & the Seminole (although some of the latter got to stay in Florida to root for FSU football!)

☛ **1864—Navajo "Long Walk":** forced march of the Diné to Fort Sumner in New Mexico; more than 2,500 perish; returned to homeland in 1868

☛ **1864—Sand Creek Massacre:** slaughter of approx. 140 Cheyenne & Arapaho (incl. women & children) at Sand Creek (CO); the Southern Cheyenne chief Black Kettle survived, until . . .

- ☛ **1868—Washita River: Custer's** Seventh Cavalry's massacre of Black Kettle's Cheyenne band in Indian Territory (OK); approx. 100 Native dead, incl. women & children
- ☛ **1868—Fort Laramie Treaty:** THE "broken treaty": prelude to the Little Bighorn, the Black Hills land controversy, and the **American Indian Movement (AIM)**
- ☛ **1876—Battle of the Little Bighorn: Custer's** Seventh Cavalry versus the Lakota & allies, led by such luminaries as Sitting Bull & Crazy Horse . . . "Hey, at least Custer was well dressed! (He was wearing an Arrow shirt.)"
- ☛ **1883-1934—Federal ban** on the Lakota **Sun Dance** (comparable restrictions on other tribes' major ceremonies also standard during this same period)
- ☛ **1887—Dawes Act:** allotment (i.e., division) of Natives' lands in Oklahoma; first of a series of similar laws that divided reservation lands into **individual allotments** (a pro-assimilationist strike, ultimately, at Natives' traditional communalism)
- ☛ **1890—WOUNDED KNEE Massacre:** slaughter of largely unarmed Lakota Ghost Dance adherents near Pine Ridge (SD); Native dead: >300, incl. many women & children
- ☛ **1934—Indian Reorganization Act** (the I.R.A.): As with the Dawes Act, this restructuring of reservation tribal governments further diminished Native traditionalism; ostensibly a positive change in policy to allow for greater self-government/tribal sovereignty, this law actually promoted assimilation by forcibly transferring power from traditional Native leadership to U.S.-style constitutional/elective governmental forms (i.e., tribal councils w/ tribal chairpersons)—creating internal tensions between traditional (aka "blanket") Indians and "I.R.A." (more assimilated) Natives.
- ☛ **1952—(start of the) Indian Relocation Program:** Federal government initiative to move Natives off the rez, to the cities, with job-employment offers; (closet) rationale: more assimilation = Native-culture erasure; one unintended effect: rise of pan-Indian (trans-tribal) consciousness
- ☛ **1973—WOUNDED KNEE Occupation:** 71-day stand-off between federal authorities and A.I.M. (the American Indian Movement), led by Dennis Banks & Russell Means; demands: recognition of treaties, etc. (failed); death of two FBI agents led to arrest of Leonard Peltier—deemed by Amnesty International as a "political prisoner"
- ☛ **1978—American Indian Religious Freedom Act** (which Vine Deloria, Jr. claimed is largely toothless)
- ☛ **1990—Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)**

