

ASHLEE HOPE BIRD

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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Professor of American Studies, University of Notre Dame. August, 2023-Present
 --Concurrent in Poverty Studies and the Department of Film, Television, and Theater

Moreau Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of American Studies, University of Notre Dame.
 August, 2021-July 2023

EDUCATION

PhD, Native American Studies, University of California, Davis (2021)

- **Dissertation:** “Representation and Reclamation: The History and Future of Natives in Gaming”

Ndakinna School of Abenaki (2020)

- Completed Ndakinna IG A200: Intermediate Guide to Abenaki
- Certified instructor of BG A100: Beginner Guide to Abenaki

Middlebury College Language School (2020, 2022, 2023)

- Pilot Program in Abenaki Language

MA, Native American Studies, University of California, Davis (2017)

MA, American Studies (Literature), University of Nottingham (2014)

- **Master’s Thesis:** “The Colors of Power: A Comparative History of the Black Power Movement and the American Indian Movement”

BA, American Studies with a focus in Indigenous Studies Middlebury College (2013)

BA, English and American Literatures, Middlebury College (2013)

- **Senior Thesis:** “What Makes the Red Man Red: The Figure of the Native American in Modern Literature and Popular Culture”

PUBLICATIONS

Book Manuscript:

- *Red Dead Redemption*, University of Chicago Press. (Under contract, in second round of peer review, expected 2026)

Edited Volumes:

- Indigenous Video Games through De Gruyter with Ann De Leon, Naithan Lagace, and Wendi Sierra. (De Gruyter, In Progress)
 - reviewed abstracts and edited ¼ of the essays.
- Game Studies Special Issue: *Configurations*, vol. 32 no. 2, 2024 with Ed Chang. Johns Hopkins University Press (Spring 2024).
 - Co-authored introduction with Chang, worked on reviewing abstracts to be accepted, conducted ½ of initial round of reviews done by editorial team, contacted and arranged external peer reviewers, split work on organization of the issue.

Single Author Peer Reviewed Articles:

- "(In)Hospitable Games: Playing God, the *Minecraft* Effect, and the Supraphylogensis of *SimEarth*." in *Configurations*, vol. 32 no. 2, 2024, p. 197-211. Edited by Ed Chang and Ashlee Bird. Johns Hopkins University Press. (Spring, 2024).
- "Playing at SLISA: A Game Studies Stream Retrospective" in *Configurations*, 31:351-65. Johns Hopkins University Press (November 2023).
- "Narrative" in "Reparations and Visual Culture" a special issue of the *Journal of Visual Culture*. Edited by Adrienne Huard and Gabrielle Moser. SAGE Journals. (January 2023).
- "Digital Dispossession: The Importance of Regional Specificity and Sovereign Spaces in Video Game Representations of Native American Cultural Heritage." *Studia Neophilologica*. Edited by N. Katherine Hayles and Sofia Ahlberg. Taylor & Francis. (May 2021).

Single Author Peer Reviewed Book Chapters:

- Saving Silas Greaves: Revising the Revisionist Western in *Call of Juarez: Gunslinger*” in *Playthrough Poetics: Gameplay as Research Method*. Ed. Milena Droumeva. Amherst College Press. (2024).
- “The Mechanical Machinations of Manifest Destiny: Winning the West and Vanishing the Indian in Red Dead Redemption 2” in *Red Dead Redemption: History, Myth, and Violence in the Video Game West*. Eds. John Wills and Esther Wright. University of Oklahoma Press. (2023).
- “Synthetic Spaces and Indigenous Identity: Decolonizing Video Games and Reclaiming Representation” in *Return to the Interactive Past: The Interplay of Video Games and Histories*. Edited by Csilla E. Ariese-Vandemeulebroucke, Krijn H.J. Boom, Bram van den Hout, Angus A.A. Mol & Aris Politopoulos. Sidestone Press. (2021).

Co-Authored Peer Reviewed Book Chapters:

- “Games and Gaming” co-written with Matthew Payne for the second edition of *The Craft of Criticism* edited by Michael Kackman and Mary Celeste Kearney. Routledge (2025).
 - Authored sections “Case Study” and “Revisionism for Whom?”. Split work revising and expanding upon all other sections to apply to the new chosen case study.
- “Playing Difference: Toward a Games of Color Pedagogy” with Edmondy Y. Chang and Kishonna L. Gray in *Critical Pedagogy: Teaching for Racial Inclusion in the Digital Age* (1st Edition). Eds. Susan Flynn and Melanie Marotta. Routledge. (2021)

Peer Reviewed Publications in Progress:

- “Indigenous” in *Keywords in Game Studies*. Edited by Amanda Phillips Christopher B. Patterson. New York University Press. (expected 2026, submitted May 7, 2025)
- “On ‘Being an Idiot’: Embracing Relationality and Letting Go of Narcissism in Indigenous Epistemologies” in *Sand Walk: On the Path of Interreligious Engagement* edited by Mahan Mirza. Interreligious Studies Press (Submitted December, 2022, expected, 2026)

Other Publications:

- “10 Years of ‘Indigenous Circuits’: A Conversation between Lisa Nakamura, Ashlee Bird, and the University of Michigan’s Digital Inequality Lab”, *American Quarterly* 78.1 (Forthcoming March 2026 issue (78.1))
 - Authored the introduction and conducted interview.
- “Not Playing Around: How Indigenous Designers are Changing the Landscape of Video Games.” In M. Byrne & E. LaPensée (Eds.), *Night of the Indigenous Devs Proceedings*, 36-46. Pittsburgh, PA: ETC Press. (2019)
- “Playing Wrong: The Horse Girl Takeover of *Red Dead Online*” in the Historical Games Network blog for the theme of (Post) Colonialism. (November 24, 2021).
<https://www.historicalgames.net/playing-wrong-horse-girl-takeover-of-red-dead-online/>

CREATIVE WORK AND EXHIBITIONS

Video Games:

- *Full of Birds*. (Video Game). 2019. Installed in:
 - Merging Mindsets Conference, Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg, Canada, March 13-14, 2020
 - “Indigenous Futurisms: Explorations in Art and Play” exhibition at the C. N. Gorman Museum, featured Oct. 2, 2019-Jan. 31, 2020
 - InDigital Space at the 2019 ImagineNATIVE Film & Media Festival and Featured at the *Night of the Indigenous Devs*.
- *One Small Step*. (Video Game). 2017. Installed in:
 - InDigital Space at the 2018 ImagineNATIVE Film & Media Festival.
 - Heritales Film Festival. Evora, Portugal, September 21-23, 2017.

Film:

- *The Valedictorian of Carlisle Indian School* (Short Film) with Rachel Nez. Screened at:
 - VOICE exhibit at the Roseville Maidu Museum, which featured the work of Indigenous women artists. September 2017-January 2018.
 - ImagineNative Film & Media Festival, 2016. Nominated for Best Experimental Piece, and received the second most votes.

Curatorial Projects:

- Gaming Curator of the “Indigenous Futurisms: Explorations in Art and Play” exhibition, featured Oct. 2, 2019-Jan. 31, 2020, at the C. N. Gorman Museum.
<http://gormanmuseum.ucdavis.edu/Exhibitions/exhfmst.htm>

Contracted/Industry Work:

- Strategic consultancy for Ubisoft as an external Diversity & Inclusion expert working on Diversity and Inclusion recommendations 2023-present

GRANTS AND AWARDS

- NEH Grant to fund Notre Dame Program on AI and the Development of Ethics in Agents (ND-PAIDEIA)
 - Serving as member of the advisory board
 - Contributing Investigator on research on Generative AI, Citizenship, & Justice and Generative AI, Creativity, & Judgment, and be the liaison to the Native American Students' Association of Notre Dame (NASAND).
- Teaching Beyond the Classroom Grant, with Matthew Payne and Ranjodh Singh Dhaliwal. 2024.

PRESENTATIONS

Invited Speaker:

- “Performative Pasts and Speculative Histories: Playing in and with the Digital West in *Red Dead Redemption*”. New Directions in Digital Scholarship Series, Brown University. April 25, 2024.
- “Performative Pasts and Speculative Histories: Playing in and with the Digital West in *Red Dead Redemption*” American West Center, University of Utah. November 16, 2023.
- “Representation and Reclamation: The History and Future of Native Americans in Video Games”. Critical Game Studies Initiative and American Indian and Indigenous Studies program speaker series, UNC Chapel Hill. September 14, 2022.
- “From Custer’s Revenge to Red Dead Redemption: Changing the Language of Indigenous Representation in Games.” Games Communities Workshop and Speaker Series at the Games Institute, University of Waterloo. May 10, 2022.
- “Representation and Reclamation: Native Americans in Video Games”. California State University, Long Beach. Playing with the Past lecture series. April 19, 2022.
- “From Custer’s Revenge to Red Dead Redemption: Changing the Language of Indigenous Representation in Games.” Ohio University. Keywords for Video Games Studies Speaker Series. February 28, 2022.
- “(Post) Colonialism and Historical Videogames”. Historical Games Network. December 15, 2021.
- “Organic Mechanics: Video Game Constructions of the Earth and Indigenous Resistance” Indigenous Perspectives on the Environment speaker series at University of Washington. December 2, 2021.

- “From Custer’s Revenge to Red Dead Redemption: Changing the Language of Indigenous Representation in Games.” Duke University. Virtual Realities, Fictional Worlds, and Games Focus Cluster. November 15, 2021.
- “From Custer’s Revenge to Red Dead Redemption: Changing the Language of Indigenous Representation in Games.” University of Tampa. English and Writing Outreach Lecture Series. October 18th, 2019.

Invited Panelist:

- Queer Advocacy and Leadership in Academia Panel at New Jersey Institute of Technology, through the department of Engineering. March 27th, 2024.
- Native American and Indigenous Heritage Month Virtual Panel. New Jersey Institute of Technology. November 29, 2022.
- Moderator for 2021 Native American Art Studies Association. Plenary Panel. Virtual Conference. November 4, 2021.

Conference Presentations:

Research:

- “The Roleplay is the Thing: Player Agency as the Defining Dynamic of Digital ‘RPGs’” Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts. Arizona State University, Phoenix Arizona. October 26-29th, 2023.
- “Decolonial Design: Dismantling Colonial Constructs and Centering Indigeneity Through Code”. Visible Designs: The Arts of Race and Capitalism Conference. University of Chicago. Chicago Illinois. October 12-13th, 2023.
- “Digital Disposessions: The Importance of Regional Specificity and Sovereign Spaces to Video Game Representations of Native American Cultural Heritage.” Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts. UC Irvine, Irvine, CA. November 7-9, 2019.
- “Synthetic Spaces and Indigenous Identity: Decolonizing Video Games and ROM Hacking *Super Mario Bros.*” Society of American Archaeology. Albuquerque, NM. April 10-14, 2019.
- “Synthetic Spaces and Indigenous Identity: Decolonizing Video Games and ROM Hacking *Super Mario Bros.*” Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts. Toronto, ON, Canada. November 15-18, 2018.
- “Representation and Reclamation: The History and Future of Natives in Gaming” UC Davis Native American Studies Graduate Student Symposium. University of California, Davis. November 1-2, 2018.
- “Synthetic Spaces and Indigenous Identity: Decolonizing Video Games and ROM Hacking *Super Mario Bros.*” Interactive Pasts Conference 2, Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision. October 8-10, 2018.
- “Living at the Edge of the Galaxy: Queering *Mass Effect* with the Asari” Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts. Tempe, AZ. November 7-12, 2017.

- “Synthetic Spaces and Indigenous Identity: Decolonizing Video Games and ROM Hacking *Super Mario Bros.*” Turtle Island Symposium at UC Davis. November 2-3, 2016.

Panel/Roundtable:

- “Teaching Queer Media” roundtable with Jason Ruiz, Anna Wald, and Ashlee Bird. Society for Cinema and Media Studies. Chicago, IL, April 4, 2025.
- Roundtable: “Teaching Games at the End of the World” with Tof Eklund, Dorothy Kim, Takeo Rivera, and Sam Tobin. Society for Cinema and Media Studies., Boston. March 16, 2024.
- Plenary Roundtable: “Solidarities and Futures” for the Race in Games and Game Studies Conference, University of Waterloo. December 7 and 8, 2023.
- Works in Progress Roundtable. Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts. Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana. October 6-9th, 2022.
- “Interrupting the Indian Princess: Re-centering Native Women in Games.” Digital Games Research Association for a panel on “Why Video Games Need Feminism; Why Feminism Needs Video Games” with Shira Chess, Bonnie (Bo) Ruberg, and Emma Westecott. Tampere, Finland, June 2-6, 2020. Cancelled due to COVID.
- Panelist at Night of the Indigenous Devs at the ImagineNATIVE Film & Media Festival October 22-27, 2019. Toronto, CA.
“Disrupting Digital Spaces: Changing the Language of Video Games,” in panel:
“Embodied Spaces: Community Based Practices of Indigenous Revitalization and Maintenance.” Native American and Indigenous Studies Association. University of Waikato, Hamilton, NZ. June 26-29, 2019.

Workshops:

- “A Practical Guide to Close Playing: A Workshop” with Edmond Chang, Timothy Welsh, and Ashlee Bird. Popular Culture Association. New Orleans, LA, April 16, 2025.
- “A Practical Guide to Close Playing: A Workshop” with Edmond Chang, Timothy Welsh, and Ashlee Bird. Alt+F4: Rebooting community after Gamergate. Lawrence Technological University, Detroit, Michigan. September 27, 2024.
- “Teaching (with) Queer & Indigenous Games”. With Ed Chang. QGCon 2021.
- “Teaching (with) Queer & Indigenous Games”. With Ed Chang. HASTAC 2019: “Decolonizing Technologies, Reprogramming Education”. University of British Columbia, Vancouver, CA.

Presentations at Notre Dame:

- Moderator and Panelist for Multi-faith Symposium for Nasr Book Prize through the Ansari Institute for Global Engagement with Religion, University of Notre Dame, Indiana. October 2-3, 2022.
 - Moderator for “public yarning” session with prize winner, Tyson Yunkaporta and other scholars.

- Panelist on panel on Indigenous spiritualities, presented talk entitled: “On ‘Being an Idiot’: Embracing Relationality and Letting Go of Narcissism in Indigenous Epistemologies”.
- “Uncovering a Hidden Crisis: Panel on MMIW”. Invited Speaker for the panel for the Gender Relations Center at Notre Dame. November 30, 2021.
- “Redskins, Reservation Dogs, and Residential Schools: A Conversation on Indigenous Media Coverage” Invited Speaker for the Native American Alumni of Notre Dame. November 17, 2021.

TEACHING

Courses Taught:

- **AMST 30150 Decolonizing Gaming: Critical Engagement Through Design and Play**
This course aims to change the way students think not only about the way that we play games, but also about the way that video games teach their players to behave within their digital worlds. This course encourages students to reflect on and utilize their lived experiences as players, and utilize these experiences to locate themselves within their analysis and writing as well as their design practices. This course undertakes an intensive, interdisciplinary focus on the history of video game development, representation in video games, and the languages that digital games work in as well as decolonial theory and diverse theories of design. This class will engage with a variety of scholarly texts, video games, media posts, videos, and design exercises, in order to illustrate the ways in which video games have shaped the ways we play, think, and behave within their spaces. Students will be required to write and design around these lessons and address and push back against the problematic behaviors and colonial narratives around violence, race, gender, sexuality, and relationship to the land that these gamic languages and lessons have created
- **AMST 30186 Indigenous Cinema**
This course examines the global field of Indigenous Cinema. This class utilizes screenings of Indigenous film along with accompanying lecture, reading, discussion, and assignments to examine the ways in which Indigenous filmmakers, actors, and communities are subverting genre and decolonizing the industry to tell and reclaim Indigenous stories and make room for Indigenous futures. This course aims to change the way students think not only about what film can be as a medium, but why creators make the work that they do, what purposes/people these works serve, and how they sit within the broader contexts of history and culture. This course will encourage students to reflect on and utilize their lived experiences as consumers of media, participants in culture, and their own studies/knowledge of history, and utilize these experiences to locate themselves within their analysis and writing. This course will undertake an intensive, interdisciplinary focus on Native American history, histories and themes of representation in film, and engagements with decolonial theory and Indigenous film makers’ employment of visual sovereignty. Students will be required to write and discuss around these lessons, films, and readings, and address the aforementioned topics in an interdisciplinary manner.

- **AMST 30141 Native American Literature**

Native Americans have long been trapped in a betwixt and between state, caught by the forces of past and present, tradition and assimilation, romanticization and caricature. Yet through it all, Native voices have continued to speak of the Indian experience with great power and eloquence. This course will introduce Native American literature as a distinctive contribution to American and world literature. We will examine a wide range of expressive culture from the last century, including novels, poetry, graphic stories, children's literature, film, digital media, autobiographies, performances of oral literature, and music. Through the passion, creativity, and humor of Native authors, we will learn something of the historical experience of Native men and women, and how they have reacted to massacres and mascots, racism and reservations, poverty and political oppression. Above all, we will try to understand how Indigenous authors have used literature to engage crucial issues of race and culture in the United States that continue to influence their lives: identity, self-discovery, the centrality of place, cultural survival, and the healing power of language and spirituality. Class discussions will incorporate literary, historical, and ethnographic perspectives of Native expressive culture and the agency of authors as artists and activists vis-à-vis the wider American literary tradition.

- **AMST 30157 Queer Mediascapes, Co-created and co-taught with Jason Ruiz**

From early silent films to contemporary video games, media have not only been informed by but have actively shaped our culture, including how we think about sexual and gender minorities, who have always been present in screen cultures. This course examines GLBT/Queer representational practices across a wide variety of media forms. It will cover foundational understandings of both queer studies and media studies in order to provide students with the necessary tools to engage with a diverse array of media texts, including texts such as *Life is Strange*, *The Last of Us* series, *The L Word*, and *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Students will discuss and write about both primary sources and theoretical works that ask them to consider the politics of representation as well as the promises and perils of self-representation. This class will feature blog posts, lectures, class discussion, class activities, presentations, and frequent writing assignments to develop critical thinking and compositional skills.

Graduate Student Dissertation Committees:

- Stephanie Kinzinger, "Playing Reality: The Promise and Peril of Compositional Realities". PhD in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, UNC Chapel Hill, 2024.

SERVICE

Professional Service:

- Program Committee for 2025 Native American and Indigenous Studies Association. Reviewer in the field of Media Studies and Digital Humanities.
- Program Committee for 2024 Digital Games Research Association conference. Reviewer in the field of Game History and Cultural Context

- indigiNES Gaming News Zine, Editor in Chief.
- Transformational Leaders Program Faculty Fellow Spring Semester 2024-Present
- Conference Advisory Committee Member for Race in Games and Game Studies Conference, December 7 and 8, 2023.
- Religions for Peace Advisory Committee for Templeton Grant on Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Summer and Fall 2023
- Video Game Studies Stream co-organizer with Ed Chang for Society of Literature, Science, and the Arts. 2021-present
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University Service:

- Advisory Board member for NEH funded Notre Dame Program on AI and the Development of Ethics in Agents. Also a contributing researcher on project in the fields of Generative AI, Citizenship, & Justice and Generative AI, Creativity, & Judgment, and am the liaison to the Native American Students' Association of Notre Dame (NASAND)
- Organized and served as host and discussant for Native American Heritage Month Film Series, November 2023
- Indigenous American Consultation Committee for Raclin Murphy Museum of Art, Spring 2023-Fall 2023
- Faculty Advisor for NASAND (Native American Students at Notre Dame) 2022-present
- Member of NAI (Native American Initiatives) at ND
- MC and co-organizer for Native American Student Commencement Ceremony, Spring 2023
- Discussion of games and game development for Girls Who Code event at ND, April 24th, 2022.
- Panelist on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women at ND, November 30th, 2021

Departmental Service:

- Organizer of Colloquium Speaker Series for Department of American Studies (2025/2026)
- Awards committee member for Department of American Studies (2025/2026)
- Co-organizer for 3-part Native American Studies Speaker Series (Spring, 2023)