

Junior Research Associate Scheme 2022 - Student Application Form

JRA projects can take place on campus or online as long as you follow the government and University Covid guidance in place at the time. Due to the pandemic, it is possible that projects will have to be undertaken remotely if the situation changes before summer. Please ensure you include in your application how you would adapt to online research and supervision, should that be required.

Before completing this form, please ensure you have read and understood the Conditions of Award and Further Information for the Junior Research Associate Scheme 2022 (JRA), and have read [the applicant guidance on the website](#) carefully.

When completed, this form should be sent to undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk along with the following documents:

1. **Academic CV** - this should focus on your academic experience and be no more than two sides of A4. It must include all modules and grades.
2. **Academic Reference**
3. **Proposed Research Supervisor Statement**

Both the Academic Reference form and the Proposed Research Supervisor Statement form can be downloaded from the [JRA Application Pack webpage](#). If your referee or supervisor does not want to disclose their statement to you, they can be sent separately to undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk.

The submission deadline is **12:00 noon on Monday 28th March 2022**. Incomplete and/or late applications will not be accepted.

If you need further information or have any queries please email undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk.

1. About you			
Are you a First Generation Scholar? (delete as appropriate) NOTE: This is not a selection criterion		Yes	
Name:		Student registration number:	
Year of study:	2	School of study:	Global Studies
Department/Subject Area:	Anthropology		
Email:		Telephone:	
Address:			
2. About your research			
Name of your proposed supervisor:		Name of your Mentor, if you have one: <i>Your mentor is usually a PhD student or Postdoc who offers additional support. If not known now, their details can be added later.</i>	
School of your proposed supervisor:	Global Studies/Cultural Studies		
Full title of your research:	An Indigenous-lead analysis of the presentation s of Native American powwow regalia in British museums.		
Research Summary: <i>Must be short and non-technical; max 150 words</i>	Indigenous scholars are gaining increasing influence on academia and reclaiming narratives within formerly colonial institutions. These efforts forms part of a larger social movement seeking to address European colonialism and its legacy. Drawing from my experiences as a person of Native American heritage, this research will provide an analysis of the presentation of Native		

	<p>American objects (particularly traditional ritual dress) in British museum contexts. My research will analyse how Britain's history of colonialism in the Americas and beyond is addressed in these exhibits and how effectively Native American traditions of expression are translated into British museum contexts. My research is intended to incorporate Indigenous voice into larger debates about the role and responsibility of museums and heritage in the 21st century. It will be the first study to do so on Native American objects from a British-Indigenous perspective.</p>
<p>Online delivery: Outline how the JRA research and supervision will be undertaken virtually, either as the expected mode or the fall-back if Covid rules change and online research and supervision is required. Max. 100 words</p>	<p>If museums close following COVID 19 safety measures, then the visitation part of my research will be substituted by accessing material from the museum's digital archives. This will mean that image analysis will become a facet of my methodology and semiotic analysis will forefront the originally intended semi-autoethnographic account of my visit.</p> <p>Contact with my supervisor is planned to take place online but may change to in person if my supervisor becomes available to do so.</p>
<p>Motivation: What is your motivation for undertaking a JRA research project? How will it benefit you / your future plans? Max. 200 words</p>	<p>Indigenous scholarship is being increasingly foregrounded within academia which has inspired me to seek involvement that movement and honour the systems of knowledge from my cultural heritage. I believe this form of research is relevant and important in a contemporary context; the conversation about objects of heritage has been propelled into the spotlight by the Black Lives Matter movement and increasing efforts are being made to decolonise within institutions of academia.</p> <p>I have a genuine passion for academic conservation and theory on museum heritage that I have nurtured through engagement with heritage projects and current debates by reading, engaging critically with museums and writing articles on the topic. This project will allow me to explore my interests in a cross-disciplined manner, interacting with theory and disciplines outside of my BA degree such as art history, postcolonial studies and museum studies.</p> <p>I believe that being able to see myself as a scholar who has conducted original research will be incredibly valuable to developing my confidence as a person from an Indigenous background with ambitions to continue academic study at Sussex with a specific interest in research. I aspire to generate a project that can be carried forward into further studies where this work will provide a foundation towards indigenous lead academic interventions on curatorial choices and ethical debates within British museums and anthropology in general.</p>
<p>Full Research Proposal/Statement: Max. 1,500 words</p>	<p>This research project aims to bring indigenous knowledge and dialogues of representation together with key debates in museology and wider anthropological theories of representation. I will analyse how Europhilic academic conventions of epistemology shape Native</p>

American¹ representations in museum contexts, considering how the wider politics of a post-colonial society are expressed through such curations.

For nearly a century, Native American communities and our objects have received prominent ethnographic attention. They are often sought out as examples of ‘primitivism on the doorstep’ to the Euro-American anthropologist wishing to examine the imagined notions of the past that Indigenous communities were supposed to inhabit (Fox 1991). These exploitative and extractive tendencies of anthropology form part of a much larger concern with the history of the discipline and are built on foundations of colonial violence (Bickham 2008); the transformative works of Edward Said among others represented concerns for the “unpopular notion that the discipline would forever be tainted by its colonial origins” (Iskandar, 2009, p86). The deeper philosophical role of these anthropological tendencies of “othering” Indigenous communities has been explored by the work of Johannes Fabian, who examines the unspoken assumption that anthropologists live in the ‘here and now’, and that the indigenous individual lives in the ‘there and then’, constructing the somewhat illusion of ‘culture’ by confronting the ‘enlightened’ European spectator with answers about what they are *not*. (Fabian 1983). I believe such colonial narrativization of the indigenous experience can be seen in the epistemological history of museums: “to essentialize identities and create and articulate idealized, hierarchical relationships between British people and ‘savages’” (Peers, 2009, p87). Whilst museum discourse has expanded to address the interests of a postcolonial society, many current works indicate that colonial narratives are still deeply embedded in European museums (Mackey 1995, Perry 1999). My research will apply analysis to how the spectator- object binary of museums embeds colonial notions of cultural ‘othering’ through curatorial choices.

Increasingly, Indigenous scholars of the Americas have pushed back against the culture of fetishization and ‘othering’ that has restricted indigenous scholarship through Europhilic systems of knowledge-making (Simpson 2014, Todd 2016) that can be seen in spaces where ‘culture’ is examined. This emerging class of Indigenous scholars (such as Echo-Hawk 2010, Left Handed 2018, Todd, 2016) has inspired me to articulate my own experiences and intersections within spaces of cultural representation and academicization. As a person of Indigenous heritage and a British citizen, I have experienced the often dichotomic philosophies of Native American and British cultures of ‘art’ in museum contexts. I have often been troubled by the totally disjunctive and problematic presentation of Native American objects of heritage in British museums where they are presented devoid of context and frozen in a state which obscures much of the philosophy, creativity and tradition attached to these objects. An examined example of this clash can be drawn from the presentation of Navajo (Hopi/Dine) ‘sand paintings’ which are intricately designed sand paintings often found in museums. However, as Classen and Howes explain, Hopi sand paintings

¹ I use the terms Native and Indigenous interchangeably: whilst these two descriptors represent different ways of existence in pre-colonial America, their distinction has been rendered mostly irrelevant in the modern conventions of the state of America.

are not intended to be objects d'art as understood in a western enlightenment sense, but in fact are used in healing ritual and are usually destroyed/deconstructed before sundown (Classen and Howes 1996). James Clifford (1988) similarly examines how museums selectively curate indigenous objects to present them as a form of art history from which the 'modern' western artist may draw "inspiration" (Clifford 1988). This mode of curating centres the extractive European gaze and epistemological theories about the purpose of representing indigenous objects. These examples highlight how Indigenous articulations of experience have often clashed with western ideas of a desirable packaging of Indigenous culture.

My research would provide an analysis of these disjunctions of interest and philosophy through examining Indigenous powwow regalia, a form of clothing used for dance performance in communal ritual ceremonies known as powwows. I have chosen to focus on powwow regalia because of the central importance of powwows to Indigenous cultural expression, and because of the highly artistic nature of powwow regalia designs and use. Existing anthropological work on regalia supports the assertion of its importance to Native American identity and expression. Brown (2021) documented Indigenous articulation of regalia as "*Amxsame' su sa 'Nawalakw* (the supernatural spirit wraps around us)" for its deep significance in identity and community wellbeing. Such articulations are consistent with my personal experience of regalia.

Existing works on cultural 'clashes' between the representer and the represented within museums curation draws attention to key analytical discourse to consider in my research. A significant intersecting factor in analysing the narrativization of Native American experiences of colonialism is the role of museums as centres of tourism and academic truth-making. Eva Mackey's work on the 1989 "Into the Heart of Africa" exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada demonstrates how 'expert' knowledge and museum representations of objects pertaining to colonisation of Africa clashed with groups whose heritage was tied to such objects. Through examining the conflict between protestors and museum academics, Mackey showed how museum exhibitions function as political truth-making centres. This role is further problematised when museums are examined as tourist centres for white Europeans, benefitting from 'comfortable' narratives about colonialism (Mackey 1995). These observations are relevant to my research in analysing the narrativization of Native American experiences of British colonialism and the role of museums as centres of tourism and academic truth-making about the British colonial project. My research will add important perspectives to Native American objects that have hitherto been mainly considered in the Americas.

Johnathon Haas' work focuses on the Native American Graves and Reparations Act (NAGARA) of 1990, a historic piece of legislation in the United States that allowed Native communities to reclaim certain objects from academic and museum archives, as well as ensuring

Native communities had some consultation in the presentation of their objects of heritage (Haas 1996). Haas's analysis on the way Native American communities interact with museums provides a useful framework for considering the ways Native American groups have enacted and may enact curatorial interventions. Drawing on Haas' conclusions assists in generating a similar analysis on intentions and issues of representation in a British context, where legislation such as NAGARA are absent.

Research on decolonial discourse within British museums has been analysed by Laura Peers, writing as curator for the Americas section of the Pitt Rivers Museum. Peers discusses the museum's choice to remove human remains and objects of the body from its displays, as well as repatriating certain objects to indigenous communities as part of ongoing decolonising efforts. This includes visits from Indigenous community representatives (Peers, 2009). All these works provide examples of Indigenous intervention in European museum projects and current museum attitudes and efforts towards decolonisation and accountability of curators.

My research will follow the work of Indigenous scholars and existing work on decolonising museums projects (Mackey, Peers 2009, Haas 1996) to provide a critical platform to assess the validity of contemporary presentations of objects of Indigenous heritage in British Museums. I will analysis how colonial narratives, particularly those of British engagement with Native American communities, obscured, explored or avoided in the presentation of Native American Regalia. Building on this, I will analysis how more subversive methods of colonialism function in the disjunctive representation of Native American objects as objects d'art (Clifford J 1988).

Proposed methodology

My research would begin with visiting 3 major British museums in which powwow regalia is exhibited: The British Museum, London, The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, American Museum and Gardens, Bath. I will provide a semi-autoethnographic account of my reflections on the visit. The autoethnographic model is here inspired by the success of Zoe Todd's analysis of engaging in academic spaces as an Indigenous person (Todd 2016). I will perform desk based discursal analysis of the intentions, outcomes and semiotics of the exhibits, including further analysis of controversies and debates relating to the colonial contexts of the museums visited. I will analyse my findings against my own knowledge and existing indigenous scholarship- paying attention to potential synergies of colonial narratives or 'othering'. Furthermore, I will assess the presence of innovation in such curations as seen in Peers 2009, comparing these to new forms of innovation and curatorial endeavours emerging in the heritage industry.

A two-week period for visit and analysis will be dedicated to each of the museums. The remaining two weeks will be dedicated to comparative analysis and the production of the finalised writing and the academic poster.

	<p>Through this project, I want to begin a foundation towards indigenous led museum-anthropological engagement with British curation and British museology discourse, drawing in forms of indigenous philosophy and expression which is excluded through euro-academic convention.</p> <p><i>Bibliography at bottom of document</i></p>
<p>Widening Participation Statement (Optional): <i>Max. 250 words</i> <i>See the JRA website for guidance on writing a WP statement.</i></p>	
<p>Ethical Approval <i>Does this research require ethical approval? If you are unsure, please refer to Sussex's self-assessment checklist. If your project does require ethical approval, it will be your responsibility to ensure such approval is attained before the JRA project commences.</i></p>	<p>My research project involves only myself as a human participant, I will only be engaging the work of other academics. I will not be attempting to engage museum visitors and will follow the rules and regulations set by the museums for visitors. My research project will not involve animals. My research project is not likely to expose myself or anyone else to harm: the project of engaging with colonialism and the violent history of the British against my community can prove difficult emotionally, but I am well supported by my community and professors. I do not believe my project presents a significant risk to the environment or society, although I acknowledge my research will be contributing to a larger sensitive social discourse on British coloniality. I have not identified any ethical issues raised by this research project that require further ethical review.</p>
<p>Fieldwork <i>Does your research involve fieldwork away from the university campus? Any students wishing to undertake off-campus fieldwork must ensure that they attain ethical approval for the proposed fieldwork and must subsequently complete the necessary risk and insurance applications. If your fieldwork takes you outside of the UK, you will need to apply for insurance cover. For more information on the University's insurance policy, please consult the University's Travel Risk Assessment webpages. (Note: this does not involve trips to museums and archives).</i></p>	<p>My research involves visits to 3 museums in Britain but does not involve direct contact with human subjects, just an analysis of objects on public display in museums.</p>

If you have any questions regarding this form please email undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk

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