



# Milton Snow's Photographs and the Modernization of Navajo: An Indigenous Feminist and Queer Reading



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Dept. of American Studies

Wednesday, October 15

12:00-1:00 PM

SUB Cherry/Silver

This lecture offers a reading of Milton Snow's photographs of Navajos in the aftermath of the draconian federally imposed livestock reduction where Navajos were forced to reduce their livestock by fifty percent. In the aftermath of the reduction, Navajo leaders were encouraged to look to the

development of their natural resources as a way to bring about prosperity. Snow, who was hired by Navajo Civil Service, took over twelve thousand photographs to show how Navajos had embraced modern prosperity and progress, which included natural resources development. This presentation illuminates how visuals like photographs were used to suggest that Navajos were successfully entering the modern era and at the same time, used to encourage Navajos to embrace modernity as their present and future. A critique of this portrayal of modernization reveals the biopolitics of reproducing Navajos as (hetero)normative patriotic subjects who differ little from their non-Indian American counterparts, even as they were and are citizens of their own sovereign nation. Such a critique, which draws upon Indigenous feminist and queer theories, shows that the assaults and destruction of a subsistence system included a sustained assault on Navajo formations of nation, community, and family.



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