Why American Indian Studies?

The curriculum and pedagogies within the American Indian Studies Department offer students opportunities for working closely with an interdisciplinary cadre of faculty and fellow majors over four years. Central in this relationship is the refinement of student knowledge of past and present American Indian cultures, ecologies, genders and sexualities, histories, languages, mixed-race, music and soundscapes, repatriation goals, sovereignty, and the cultivation of strategies for community engagement and research through culturally relevant practices and shared passions. American Indian Studies faculty are devoted to undergraduate and graduate teaching, serves as capable advisors for ensuring timely progress to degree within the major, and represents knowledgeable resources for students needing referral to advisors for university requirements. A trademark pedagogical practices of the faculty is to invite an array of community elders and experts to guest lecture, which enables student understanding of the community-based concerns behind what is learned and taught in the college classroom. As a major in American Indian Studies, your courses will ground you in a breadth of literatures, lived realities, and research, so that by your senior year, you will have the skills necessary to take advantage of opportunities for learning through community service and cultivate your own area of theoretical expertise in senior seminar. The latter of which enables you to carry forward the College of Ethnic Studies’ mission of “relevant education” and fulfill San Francisco State University's mission goal of being prepared to understand the diversity of twenty-first century American Indians.

**The American Indian Studies major is more than General Education (GE) and will teach students to cultivate the following life-long learning skills that will never be obsolete:**

**Learn from research**: On the internet, everyone claims to be an expert; however, few have had their facts checked or supported by multiple specific examples. Major local and international companies pursue majors, like those in AIS, because they haven’t only learned facts about American Indians, they can also explain how society can communicate better with – and about - American Indians from information that has been peer-reviewed and well supported by primary sources.

**Read effectively and for pleasure:** American Indian Studies literature is based in life histories, fiction, poetics, and research. Course teach students how to enjoy and understand the surprises within American Indian language play and written word that brings the aims, complexities, and values of non-western meanings to life.

**Understand diversity:** American Indian cultural diversity is the most numerous in the United States. Students learn the consistencies and inconsistencies between American Indian, everyday American, and scientific (e.g., biological, racial, etc.) understandings of being, belonging, and culture. What will you do with this varied knowledge?

**Write well:** Although many courses at San Francisco State University will train you to write well, American Indian Studies courses will do this by teaching you to recreate both Indigenous and western best practices in ethnographic, ethnomusicalogical, historical, legal brief, and professional letter writing and citation.