This course will introduce students to the cultures, social issues, and global predicaments of Pacific Island worlds in the region of Polynesia. Particular attention is given to theoretical issues of space, place, and cultural identity. The course begins with an overview of some of the official geography, history, linguistics, and global dimensions of Polynesia in the world region of Oceania. It proceeds with an introduction to indigenous place-making, cultural memory, and representation of the region proposed by Tongan anthropologist Epili Hau‘ofa. The course continues with an examination of ethnographic studies of four Polynesian island worlds of Oceania: Hawai‘i, Tahiti, Tonga, and Rapa Nui. While the focus of the course is ethnographic representations of Polynesian cultures, key voices in Pacific Islander literature and the arts are also introduced occasionally.

**TEXT BOOKS**

Kahn, Miriam  

Small, Cathy  

Tengan, Ty Kawaika  
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

EXAMS (250 points): There will be one mid-term and a final exam (100 points for the mid-term; 150 points for the final). The exams will be take-home style to fit with the “on-line” nature of the course. The exams will consist of a combination of essay, short answer, and identification questions.

TERM PAPER (150 points): Students are to write an approximately 6-8 page paper analyzing postcards in Hawai‘i that articulates with the principles introduced in Kahn’s text on Tahitian postcards and issues of Kānaka Maoli introduced by Tengan’s text as well as other course materials. Detailed instructions to follow.

PARTICIPATION ASSIGNMENTS (100 points): During the course of the term I will occasionally have class assignments organized. This may involve reflections on readings, on-line chats, etc. Students will be given points for their contributions to these assignments. Details will be provided as the course develops.

GRADING: Students will be graded according to the standard UHM grading scale. The total points possible will be 500.
COURSE SCHEDULE
INTRODUCTIONS

The course begins with a review of anthropological, geographic, and linguistic definitions of Polynesia and Polynesian. We note some of the genealogy of the concept of Polynesia—the social conditions in which the term developed and who coined the term. We note how the concept foregrounded peoples and cultures within a typology that contrasted Polynesia to Melanesia and Micronesia and develop critical perspective on this knowledge production.

Readings:
Kiste, Robert C.

Marck, Jeff

PLACING POLYNESIAN CULTURES

Having examined Western concepts of Polynesia and the Pacific Islands, we turn to consider Tongan anthropologist Epili Hau’ofa’s indigenous cultural memory and cartography of the region. Hau’ofa introduces a central analytical concern of the course: that Pacific Islander “place-making” in Oceania, and hence “Polynesia” is contested and embedded in complex struggles for identity and power in the region. We proceed by exploring Pacific Islander place-making in selections of contemporary Pacific Islander Literature (poetry and short stories) to further explore the cultural sensibility of Hau’ofa’s perspective.

Readings:
Hau’ofa, Epili


Grace, Patricia

Wendt, Albert
PLACING TAHITI

Origin Stories

In these classes we examine Kahn’s analysis of “Tahitian” (Maohi) issues of space and place in the context of French governed global tourism. We learn how popular culture like postcards, and tourist industry development entangles the island worlds of Tahiti in symbolic and material violence. We also read a short story by Mataeta-Allain on globalization for Tahitians as well as a poem by Henri Hiro—a major Maohi poet—to broaden our understanding of issues of culture, place, and globalization in Tahiti.

Readings:

Hiro, Henri

Kahn, Miriam

Mataeta-Allain, Kareva

KĀNAKA MAOLI PLACE IN HAWAI’I

Readings continue this week with issues of settler colonialism in Polynesia. We examine Ty Kawika Tengan’s work on masculinity among Kānaka Maoli in Hawai’i nei. We compare and contrast Kānaka Maoli struggles for place with our prior studies of Tonga and Tahiti.

Readings:

Tengan, Ty Kawika
GLOBAL PLACES OF TONGANS

While the case study of Tahiti and Hawai‘i focused on indigenous senses of place within the island worlds of Polynesia, the Tongan case study examines issues of Tongan cultural identity and social predicament as migrants in the global system. Discussion will focus upon ways Tongans retain and transform their traditional practices in response to the global political economy. To broaden our understanding of Tonga, we also read a short poem of a leading Tongan poet, intellectual, and educator: Konai Helu Thamen.

Readings:
Small, Cathy

Thamen, Konai Helu

PLACING RAPA NUI

The course concludes considering issues of Rapa Nui cultural identity and place amidst increasing tourist and military development under Chilean settler colonialism. Special attention is given to the role of Rapa Nui language in stabilizing identity and place. Recent occupations and state violence in the island in 2010 are foregrounded and discussed.

Readings:
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

Young, Forrest Wade