

**17.523: Ethnicity and Race in World Politics-Fall 2005**  
**Prof. M. Nobles**  
*Lecture 25: Wrapping Up*

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Article on indigenous people in Brazil

- Indigenous groups living in Brazil's Amazon forest.
- Trying to remain autonomous, against developer, rancher, and government encroachment.

How has the world dealt with indigenous people?

- Student: Typically pretty bad. Impose policies and social movements ostracize the indigenous groups. Seen in the US and Australia.
- US: sovereignty largely ignored. Trail of Tears, Andrew Jackson's policies decidedly displaced Native Americans. Set up Oklahoma as a reservation to put Indians forced west from Georgia.
- Student: very antagonistic relationship. Conditions on the reservations today is poor, health conditions poor, access to education isn't very good. They're trying to make it separate but equal, but it's of course inherently unequal.
- Student: European diseases were initially brought over and killed many Native Americans.
- Assimilation as a forced policy occurred in the US, New Zealand, Canada.
- Removed children from the home, placed them in Indian schools and supposedly "civilized" the children.
- Children weren't allowed to speak their native languages.

What would be the arguments for such policies?

- Student: Everyone is on the "same page"

What are the arguments against what happened in the US?

- Student: It's essentially ethnic cleansing. Forced them to assimilate, but we lied to them.
- Student: How can you preach about civil liberties, etc. but take it away from the indigenous population. Internally hypocritical.

Brazil is going through something similar, although at a very different point in time.

- Pharmaceutical industry is interested in exploiting the resources in the Amazon.
- Conservationists want to preserve the Amazon.
- Loggers are interested in the trees
- Aboriginal groups want to continue to exercise self-determination.
- There are many competing interests.

Where does the Brazilian government fit in all of this?

- FUNDAI: Department of Indian Affairs wasn't very friendly for a long time.
- The new head person is friendlier and more open to Aboriginal peoples. Sees himself as their "protector."

Should the indigenous groups be protected and saved?

- Is it an utopian vision to save these groups? Or is it the morally right thing to do?
- Student: it sets a bad precedent. “We’re more powerful than you and your culture doesn’t matter.” Social dominance.
- A dominant idea has been that there would be a gradual transition and that they will eventual disappear.

Is the interest in their lands recent?

- There’s always been interest, but it’s intensified recently.

Student: You don’t lose culture of the tribe when you introduce some level of technology into the area. Well, logging is obviously out of the question, but maybe they could bring in Pharmaceutical companies in a regulated way.

How open do you think Brazilians are in general to the indigenous population?

- Student: it’s a far-fetched idea to think the indigenous people moving to Rio or another large town. If it’s a border town, there’s going to be some skepticism coming from Brazilians.
- Student: there is already antagonism between the two groups. I don’t think it would end well.
- In the article, they were called “wild Indians” by Brazilians who were quoted.
- There is not a positive attitude about the indigenous population among many Brazilians.

How are Native Americans viewed now?

- Student: if you asked a child, they would probably think Indians don’t exist anymore.
- Student: still have Indians in the Central Coast. Student taught that white people abused the Indians.