Land, Water, and the Indigenous Archive: 
Art and Activism in the Mississippi River Network 
Newberry Consortium in American Indian and Indigenous Studies (NCAIS) 
Summer Institute / July 11-August 5, 2022 

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The summer 2022 NCAIS Institute centers on long-held Indigenous relationships to land and water and on recent Indigenous art, activism, and scholarship through which Indigenous peoples are addressing issues of climate change and sovereignty. We will focus on the Mississippi river and its networks, while looking to other water networks and activism for case studies and theoretical insights. This summer’s institute recognizes the gathering of Native Nations and water protectors to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline crossing the Missouri river at Standing Rock in 2016 as a cataclysmic moment of international reflection on Indigenous rights and responses to climate change. Over the course of four weeks, we will work to understand these ongoing Indigenous movements and connections to river spaces across time and within the particularity of relationships to place and homelands. Through reading Indigenous Studies scholarship, interacting with materials in Newberry archives, and engaging with Indigenous artists and artworks, we will seek to understand riverscapes through Indigenous Studies methods alongside contemporary Native responses to climate change.

In our inquiry into river relationships and the Indigenous Mississippi, we will consider various kinds of archives that speak to relationships between Native Nations and Mississippi river spaces. Our readings, Newberry collection presentations, guest speakers, and outings will help expand our idea of how knowledge and memory is collected, kept, and understood. Some guiding questions include: How are Indigenous artists and Native Nations responding to issues of climate change that affect Mississippi River networks? How are these responses drawn from long-standing relationships with these lands and waters? How do archival materials speak to both the histories of Indigenous relationships to Mississippi river spaces and ongoing efforts to respond to climate threats and protect Indigenous sovereignty? How do contemporary Native writers and artists use, interpret, and access both traditional Western and Indigenous archives? How might the riverscape, itself, be understood as an archive or repository of these histories and relationships?

Interested students should apply directly to NCAIS Faculty Liaison Richard Boles (richard.boles@okstate.edu) by Monday, March 28, 2022. Submit a CV, unofficial transcript, and a statement of interest (1- to 2-pages single-spaced).

The NCAIS Summer Institute is a four-week-long intensive graduate course held during the summer at The Newberry Library in Chicago. Participants are provided with housing in Chicago, receive a $600 living stipend, and will be reimbursed for travel expenses.

If you have questions about the institute, please contact mcnickle@newberry.org.