Welcome!

Thanksgiving Special: A Lib Guide investigates the historical and ongoing role of the heroic national origin myth that is Thanksgiving

Introduction

What were you taught about thanksgiving?

“Thanksgiving Special: A Lib Guide” explores the mythical history of Thanksgiving and its importance in constructing and reinforcing social cohesion at the macro-level of the nation. Moreeover, zooming in on the indvidual micro-level, it is our hope to guide students in an examination of the physic toll of settler anxieties (resistance, repression, deflection) in relation to the holiday. Throughout, this resource guide takes up the history of the Thanksgiviing tradition and defines settler colonialism, all while aiming to understand Indigenious perspectives (The National Day of Mourning) and the ideological operations of whiteness and tradition in America.

Ultimately, the value of our research guide lies in its aim to broaden the narrative around a holiday that is often drowned out by the noise of false histories and contemporary societies’ instantaneous consumerism.

Structure

Where to look first?

This guide is structured by subtopic, or collections, under the Knowledge tab. There you will find each topic and a list of featured recommended readings, as well as a short explanation of each collection, Click on the link to read the resource, or head over to the index page to discover related search terms and to learn more about subsequent themes of interest for further research. At the end will be a list of recommended databases that users can use to dig a little deeper into a topic on their own.

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The Project

“Thanksgiving Special: A Lib Guide” is a library guide that serves our university library, an institution that welcomes the surrounding community of high schoolers, undergraduates, and those that make up their lives. The history behind Thanksgiving can at times be dense, challenging material, oftentimes not only in its educational rigor but in its difficult regognitions. Despite this, it is our hope that this guide broadens the educational and informational scope of a topic caught up in a project of national myth-making and civic religion. In an effort to give an alternative and more honest look at this beloved and notable holiday, please read on.

Context

Underpinning this research Guide is an examination of the historical genesis, transformations, and contemporary implications of myth and tradition on American culture and society. The lack of an encounter with this past, on a history that bares almost no relation to how we remember it, reinscribes the truamas and the guilt on the minds of the living. Hence, in an effort for the creation of new possibilities, this library guide seeks to address a younger audience inclined to learn more about settler colonial histories in an American context, as well as its relation to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Further Resources

What’s a lib guide anyway?

Here there exists links to other lib guides to help you come to grips with what a lib guide is, especially as it relates to similar topics of exploration:

AMCULT 203: Early American Cultural History

The Library Research Process, Step-by-Step

United States History History (General)

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These Collections hold an inventory of resources on the following topics:
The Traditons of Thanksgiving; Commercialization & the Culture of Consumption;
Defining settler colonialism; Indigenious Perspectives;
The Holiday Syndrome; and The Ritual Meal & Social Cohesion.



Tradition of Thanksgiving

The Proclamation of the First Thanksgiving on June 20, 1676 had the American colonialist thanking God for their good fortune in settling in America, as well as the disappointment and destruction of their enemies. Additionally, the National Thanksgiving Proclamation by George Washington established November 26 as a national day of public thanksgiving and prayer.

Proclamation of the first Thanksgiving, 1676

Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1789

Customization of U.S. Holidays: Agency and Nonconformity

Abraham Lincoln Thanksgiving Proclamation, 1863

Pilgrims and Puritans and the Myth of the Promised Land

Pumpkin: The Curious History of an American Icon



Commercialization & the Culture of Consumption

Thanksgiving has increasingly been commercialized, starting in the latter half of the 19th century and continuing on to today. Original traditions, which were already problematic, were phased out in favor of new or altered ones more conducive to a capitalist society. Today, the act of consuming vast quantities of food, to indulge in bottomless need, acts as a celebration of America's overabundance.

The Commercialization of the Calendar: American Holidays and the Culture of Consumption, 1870-1930

"We Gather Together": Consumption Rituals of Thanksgiving Day

Beware Of Post-Thanksgiving 'Brown Friday' AKA Plumbers' Busiest Day Of The Year

God, games and national glory: thanksgiving and the ritual of sport in American culture



Defining Settler Colonialism

Thanksgiving is a national holiday that is rooted in a settler colonial history. But what does that mean? It is oftentimes associated with the Pilgrims and their harvest meal with the American indigenous peoples. This perspective not only ignores the rupturing traumas that indigenous peoples went through (dispossession of their land, cultural erasure, and mass death), but also fails to view the violence as a structure, as a paradigm for economic and state formation. The following articles discuss the term settler colonialism, providing a brief survey of its implications.

Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native

Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview

All the Real Indians Died Off: And 20 Other Myths about Native Americans

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States

Mahmood Mamdani's lecture, "Settler Colonialism, Then and Now"



Indigenous Perspectives

The currents of a white nationalists ideology ripple through the political, cultural, and economic developments of our country—a product of the centuries. An ultimate counterpoint to this traditional understanding of Thanksgiving is the perspective of indigenous peoples. Such perspectives expose the mythic origins of the holiday, but also furnish additional perspectives about the activity of giving thanks. The following links discuss counter-memories and indigenious activism, or resitance.

This Land is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving

United American Indians of New England National Day of Mourning Homepage

Red Nation podcas, "National Day of Mourning: 400 years of genocide and resistance"

Indigenous Continent: The Epic Contest for North America

Lakota Historian Nick Estes on Thanksgiving



The Holiday Syndrome

The Holidays should be a happy moment of the year for most people, but there are some for whom that is not the case. The Holiday Syndrome is when a person's mental health is stressed out, caused by factors that happen during busy holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's. The following links give a psychoanalytic look at this phenomenon, arguing that the traditions and norms of the holidays can cause a regression into childhood for susceptible patients

The Holiday Syndrome

HOLIDAY, SYMPTOM AND DREAM

The Psychodynamics of the "HOLIDAY SYNDROME"



The Ritual Meal & Social Cohesion

The Thanksgiving rituals of performative thankfulness and the obligatory meal are methods of socializing that increase the social cohesion of American society. The comparatively lavish meals that marines had on Thanksgiving in the past (USS Augusta 1942 Thanksgiving Day Dinner), compared to their normally rationed meals, are one example. Additionally, media companies like the Centron Corporation sought to form the opinions of the American youth through programming such as "A Day of Thanksgiving" (1951), where a family extolls the virtues of the American values the holiday represented.

A Day of Thanksgiving, 1951

USS Augusta 1942 Thanksgiving Day Dinner

"We Gather Together" Food and Festival in American Life

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Index is a dynamic directory of everything Thanksgiving

TITLE	CONTRIBUTIONS	Search Terms	Collection
A Day of Thanksgiving, 1951	Centron Corporation	Patriotism Social Roles Thankfulness	The Ritual Meal & Social Cohesion
Pumpkin: The Curious History of an American Icon	Cindy Ott	Holiday Foods Cultural history National identity	Traditions of Thanksgiving
This Land is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving	David J. Silverman	Wampanoags Ousamequin Pequot War	Indigenous Perspectives
Lakota Historian Nick Estes on Thanksgiving	Democracy Now!	Indigenous Resistance Indigenous Futures Occupation	Indigenous Perspectives
Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1789	George Washington	Proclamation Thanksgiving Constitutional Government	Traditions of Thanksgiving
Pilgrims and Puritans and the Myth of the Promised Land	Heike Paul	Puritan ideology Pilgrims Plymouth Colony	Traditions of Thanksgiving
HOLIDAY, SYMPTOM AND DREAM	Jean Rosenbaum	Holiday neurosis dream analysis Freud	The Holiday Syndrome
The Holiday Syndrome	J.P Catell	Holiday anxiety Family conflict dynamics Resistance and guilt	The Holiday Syndrome
Red Nation podcas, "National Day of Mourning: 400 years of genocide and resistance"	Kisha James and Mahtowin Munro	Day of Mourning Pilgrim mythology, Indigenous activism	Indigenous Perspectives
Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview	L Veracini	Screen memory Non-encounter Primal scene	Defining Settler Colonialism
The Commercialization of the Calendar: American Holidays and the Culture of Consumption, 1870-1930	Leigh Eric Schmidt	Retail history Commodification Holiday calendar	Commercialization & Culture of Consumption
Mahmood Mamdani's lecture, "Settler Colonialism, Then and Now"	Mahmood Mamdani	Political Economy Nativism Exogenous others	Defining Settler Colonialism
Proclamation of the first Thanksgiving, 1676	Massachusetts Bay Colony	Proclamation Thanksgiving God	Traditions of Thanksgiving
"We Gather Together": Consumption Rituals of Thanksgiving Day	Melanie Wallendorf	Ritual feasting Abundance Cultural icons	Commercialization & Culture of Consumption
USS Augusta 1942 Thanksgiving Day Dinner	NHHC	WW2 opposing forces divine providence	The Ritual Meal & Social Cohesion
Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native	Patrick Wolfe	Settler Colonialism Indigenous dispossession Structural Violence	Defining Settler Colonialism
Indigenous Continent: The Epic Contest for North America	Pekka Hämäläinen	Indigenous power Indigenous empires Indigenous diplomacy	Indigenous Perspectives
Abraham Lincoln Thanksgiving Proclamation, 1863	President Lincoln	Deliverance Civil War Observance	Traditions of Thanksgiving
Customization of U.S. Holidays: Agency and Nonconformity	Robert M. Carini	Rituals Resistance Leisure	Traditions of Thanksgiving
All the Real Indians Died Off: And 20 Other Myths about Native Americans	Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz	Decolonization Stereotypes Land rights	Defining Settler Colonialism
An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States	Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz	Indigenous genocide Militarization Imperialism	Defining Settler Colonialism
The Psychodynamics of the "HOLIDAY SYNDROME"	Sarah Mullooly Sattin	holiday anxiety psychodynamics transference	The Holiday Syndrome
God, games and national glory: thanksgiving and the ritual of sport in American culture	Steven W. Pope	Civic Religion Nationalism Spectacle	Commercialization & Culture of Consumption
"We Gather Together" Food and Festival in American Life	Theodore C. Humphrey Lin T. Humphrey	Foodways Family folklore Festival	The Ritual Meal & Social Cohesion
United American Indians of New England National Day of Mourning Homepage	UAINE		Indigenous Perspectives

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Databases



Archive of Americana
https://www.readex.com/products/archive-americana
This database is a comprehensive collection of specifically American resources that shed light on its history and culture. Many primary source documents about Thanksgiving are available here.

Proquest
https://www.proquest.com/index
A search engine that will let you search over 100 databases for dissertations/theses, books, articles, archives, etc. Using Boolean operators along with pertinent search terms like "Thanksgiving" and "alternative perspectives" will give pertinent results

Google Scholar
https://scholar.google.com/
A free search engine/database that allows access to the full text of scholarly literature, including peer-reviewed articles, books, theses/dissertations, etc. Using the search terms "thanksgiving," "history," and "settler colonialism" will give you pertinent results.

PEP-Web Psychoanalytic Library
https://pep-web.org/
A database that houses countless examples of academic psychoanalytic research. Use this database for the psychology behind the ideas of Thanksgiving.

Institutes & Museums



Aquinnah Cultural Center
Aquinnah Cultural Center



Historic Patuxet Homesite
Learn about the 17th-century culture and lifeways of Wampanoag People at the Historic Patuxet Homesite.
Plimoth Patuxet Museums



PILGRIM HALL MUSEUM
Home
Encounter the 400-year-old story of the Mayflower Pilgrims and the Indigenous Wampanoag people in the world's most significant Plymouth Colony collection.
Pilgrim Hall Museum



Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
Homepage
gilderlehrman.org

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