Bio Sketch

Deborah Madsen is Professor of American Studies at the University of Geneva. Her work focuses on issues of settler-nationalism, indigeneity, and migration, exemplified by her work on American Exceptionalism and the white supremacist ideology of Manifest Destiny. She is co-editor with Gerald Vizenor of the SUNY Press series "Native Traces" and the convener of the annual Geneva Native Studies Master Class. She has held visiting appointments at the Universities of Cape Town, Adelaide, and Cambridge, and is an honorary life member of Clare Hall, Cambridge.

Area(s) of Expertise

Comparative Indigenous Cultural Studies  
Theoretical Approaches to Native Literatures  
Post-colonialism  
Feminism

Current Research Activities

Madsen’s early work on postmodernism informs her study of innovative contemporary Native writers such as Gerald Vizenor, the subject of her monograph Understanding Gerald Vizenor (University of South Carolina Press, 2009), and Gerald Vizenor: Texts and Contexts (co-ed. University of New Mexico Press, in press). She is currently completing the monograph, Contra Trauma: Reading Theory through Native American Culture, an interdisciplinary critique of dominant white-settler paradigms of trauma that fail to account for the specific historical experiences (of dispossession, disempowerment, and genocide) of indigenous peoples and, as a consequence, inform failing models of social services (medical, judicial, educational) directed towards indigenous communities. This project brings together her earlier work on poststructuralist, postcolonial, and feminist critical theory, allegorical rhetoric, and representations of cultural crisis in a comparative and interdisciplinary indigenous context. At the center of the project is a comparative study of the traumatic impact of the residential school systems that were used by the settler-states of Australia, Canada, and the US as part of the effort to create and sustain white supremacist nationalisms.

Two Key Publications
