The Liberal Arts Program presents

**Liberal Arts Guest Speaker Series 13-14**

**“Cherokee Story in the Digital Archives: Revising the Tenets of the Imperialist Archive”**

**Dr. Ellen Cushman**

8 Apr 2014  
12-1 pm  
LH 238

**ABSTRACT INFO:**
As knowledge making increasingly relies on digital archives, scholars and archivists need to delink from the imperialist roots of archives to begin honoring the instrumental, historical, and cultural significance of the pieces therein.

In this talk, I consider the problems and promise of digital archives through an analysis of a digital story presented in the Cherokee Learning Center, a Cherokee Nation online archive of stories. The Cherokee tribe is the second largest indigenous nation in the United States, with over 300,000 citizens in three federally recognized nations: the Cherokee Nation, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians. Many Cherokees live in the northeastern corner of Oklahoma.

Drawn from six year-long ethnohistorical research on Cherokee language and identity with my tribe (the Cherokee Nation), I use Walter Mignolo’s (2012, 2003) decolonial framework to analyze the Cherokee Learning Center digital archive. The Cherokee Learning Center presents a particularly rich illustration of the promise of digital language preservation materials for one tribe. As one model of a decolonized archive, the Cherokee Learning Center offers ways to honor the instrumental, cultural, and historical significance of these stories that delink from the Western Imperialist tradition.

**BIO:**
Professor of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures at Michigan State University, Ellen Cushman is a Cherokee Nation citizen and has served as a Cherokee Nation Sequoyah Commissioner. She earned her PhD from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Rhetoric and Communication and has been with Michigan State University for twelve years. She currently serves with David E. Kirkland as Co-Director of the Center for Applied Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Arts and Humanities (CAITLAH). In August 2012, she and Mary Juzwik began their five-year term as co-editors of *Research in the Teaching of English*, the premiere research journal of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Her most recent book, *The Cherokee Syllabary: Writing the People’s Perseverance* (Oklahoma UP 2011), explores the evolution and historical importance of the Cherokee writing system for Cherokee peoples’ language perseverance.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**
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