Kyle Boggs. 2025. *Recreational colonialism and the rhetorical landscapes of the outdoors.* The Ohio State University Press. ISBN 978-0-8142-5945-0. US$34.95

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What does it mean to ski on stolen land? What does it mean to ski on sacred land? To bike? To climb? To run?

In *Recreational colonialism*, Boggs takes up these questions. Drawing on his time as a journalist covering the Indigenous resistance to ski development in Arizona, USA, Boggs upends the traditional notion of outdoor recreation as an innocent pastime, as divorced from the history of its natural arenas, and as nonaligned in the ongoing structure of settler colonialism that continues to reshape American landscapes. Instead, readers and recreators are faced with a choice of complicities.

Recreational colonialism introduces the titular analytic of recreational colonialism, or the idea that outdoor recreation can be an aspect of settler colonialism, one of the ways settlers have and continue to lay claim to stolen Indigenous land. Through outdoor recreation, settlers reify their colonial relationships to land, and their (our) investment in outdoor recreation launders difficult histories and the desecration of sacred Indigenous spaces. In a classic move to innocence, outdoor recreation's role in settler colonialism has not just been rendered invisible; these sports have been framed as a bulwark against the "real" dangers of extractive industry and other less innocent uses of public lands.

Boggs grounds this argument in a number of case studies, most prominently the conflict over the Snowbowl (Arizona Snowbowl Ski Resort), a ski area in Arizona's San Francisco Peaks, but also the sports of bike-packing, rock climbing, and ultra-running. These chapters, which make up the first half of the book, deftly weave together a journalistic approach to storytelling with deeper dives into settler colonial theory—including settler geographies, an analysis of authenticity, and settler-indigenization. While each chapter is relatively self-contained, the theoretical asides, when carried through, add complexity to all the examples.

The second half of the book moves from a settler colonial lens—centering settler recreators and their complicity in the colonial project—to an Indigenous studies lens, centering Indigenous activism and resistance to the narratives of outdoor recreation. Again, drawing from his work covering the San Francisco Peaks conflict as a journalist, Boggs shifts his focus to how Indigenous activists navigate and push back against what he describes as rhetorical exclusion and strategic silencing, or the ways that the language and discourse around these debates intentionally and inherently disregard Indigenous voices and worldviews.

As a professor of rhetoric, it makes sense for Boggs to use rhetoric as his handle for analyzing these conflicts, but the stories he tells far exceed a written or even representational dialectic. They are political, ecological, and embodied. For example, in his final chapter, Boggs describes the murals of activist and artist Chip Thomas as a form of community writing, a practice both rooted in place and actively relational, a form of resistance both individual and collective. Whether enacted through recreation, art, or activism, Bogg's shows how our values are relational and written into the landscape.

With *Recreational colonialism*, Boggs joins an emerging conversation of writers bringing a scholarly lens and critique to outdoor recreation and the industries that support it. These scholars are moving beyond a traditional understanding of outdoor recreation as inherently good and expanded access to the outdoors as the primary goal, complicating the history, ethics, and economics of these sports. In particular, I see resonances with Rachel Gross's (2024) recent book *Shopping all the way to the woods: How the outdoor industry sold nature to America*; Pheobe K. Young's (2021) *Camping grounds: Public nature in American life from the Civil War to the Occupy Movement*; and the work of Annie Coleman who, with Young, edits the University of Washington's new outdoor recreation book series.

Boggs also contributes to the growing critique of colonial outdoor recreation. This critique builds on earlier work by scholars such as Mark David Spence and Karl Jacoby who have interrogated the colonial histories of public land, pushing for a new understanding of the complicity of industry and recreation in the processes of dispossession and ongoing settler colonialism. This includes people like April Anson (2019) in her article, "'The President Stole Your Land': Public lands and the settler commons," Jason Laurendeau (2024) in

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"Settler Colonialism, Sport, and Recreation," and my recent book, *Marketing the wilderness: Outdoor recreation, Indigenous activism, and the battle over public lands*.

The book builds on these existing conversations in several important ways. First, the case studies themselves are valuable additions to the corpus of evidence undergirding our understanding of recreation as colonial. This is especially the case for the in-depth look at the San Francisco Peaks conflict, as well as for the bike-packing and ultra-running sections, two sports that have received much less attention than skiing or climbing in this context. The breadth of examples helps frame recreational colonialism as systemic and not attached to any outdoor sport. Second, the analysis of recreational colonialism, while writing about the phenomenon, others have indirectly approached or engaged, gives us a strong handle to continue deconstructing the role and complicity of outdoor recreation in settler colonialism. Specifically, it gives us a rhetorical lens for understanding how the way people talk, write, argue, and represent these sports and their conflicts are the critical parts of the conflicts themselves.

However, for me, Boggs' most important contribution is his clear and compelling call-to-action in the book's conclusion. Just as our investment in a certain kind of outdoor recreation has made us complicit in settler colonialism, Boggs invites us to be actively complicit in resisting colonialism. He provides steps we can take to change the narratives we believe and reproduce about the outdoors, to challenge the structures and assumptions embedded in recreational colonialism, and to begin crafting a version of outdoor recreation that repairs relationships to land and people rather than damages them. In my own work around public lands and recreation, I am often asked, "Ok, so what do I do now? What is the better way?" There is no perfect answer to this, but from now on, the first thing I will do is share Boggs' list.

As a journalist turned academic, Boggs keeps an eye toward his audience and attempts the herculean task of deeply engaging with the kind of rich scholarly genealogy and layered social theory that moves academic discourse forward while still trying to make his work as accessible as possible to a more general audience. He admirably succeeds in the first goal, and I could easily see *Recreational colonialism* as an important classroom and research text in a variety of fields, including environmental studies, Indigenous and settler colonial studies, leisure studies, English and rhetoric, and adjacent areas. His responsible and clearly articulated research methods could serve as an especially useful model for non-Indigenous researchers engaging in any kind of community listening and writing.

However, while much of the personal reflection and story-driven narrative could easily be read by a wider audience interested in the topic, the heavily theoretical sections—especially parts of the introduction and Chapter One—might be stumbling blocks. Still, the core ideas expressed in these sections are brought alive in the more narrative sections, and less academic readers willing to work their way through a little Foucault and De Certeau will be rewarded with clear stories and careful arguments that bring together all the right pieces.

As Americans, we move across a landscape deeply scarred by our history of colonialism, where layers of violence, broken promises, and strained relationships continue to shape how we connect to and interact with the land. *Recreational colonialism* reminds us that skiing, biking, running, and climbing are not exempt from this story and that, even in recreation, neutrality is not really an option. The sacred mountains we built ski hills on can never truly be restored, but the relationships broken in the process, with both land and people, can be and must be. Boggs gives us a path forward, a way to begin coming to terms with what it means to recreate on stolen land, a blueprint for a better way of engaging in the activities we love.

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