

SYLLABUS
R. 250A. Native American Religions
Spring, 2006

Dr. St. John
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MWF 1:00-1:30
3:30-4:00
TR 3:30-4:00

Course Description. This course seeks to understand the cultural values experienced and expressed in the religious life of American Indian peoples as well as their contribution to contemporary cross-cultural discussions on issues of: health and healing, ecology and morality, community and individuals, and issues of conquest, genocide and the rights of indigenous peoples.

Course Goals. (1) Through reading and discussing ethnological narratives (*Shamanic Voices*) and historical novels (*Waterlily*) students will come away with an enhanced appreciation of the influence that culture has on the way peoples construct and experience their relationships with one another, with nature, and with sacred persons, powers, and objects. (2) Through the study of scholarly works on healing rituals, native ecologies, and cultural genocide, students will come to understand how the traditions and historical experiences of native peoples can shed light on issues of global relevance today. (3) Through discussion and written exploration, students will demonstrate a capacity for critical reflection on their own cultural and personal attitudes, values, and ways of conducting relationships with the human, natural and divine dimensions of reality

Evaluation of Performance.

1) Writing-to-Learn Assignments. Either written at home prior to class or in the classroom at the beginning of class, these one-page exercises are intended to help the student keep current with the reading assignments, improve classroom participation, and indicate problems in comprehension or expression. They will be graded "S" or "U." One cannot "make up" a missed writing assignment. If a student is absent for an in-class assignment, he or she receives a "U" unless legitimately excused. In the latter case, and after presenting acceptable documentation, he or she will have the opportunity to complete an alternative assignment.

At the end of the course, if 80% or more of graded assignments receive an "S," the final grade for the course will be raised one notch (e.g. B to B+). If 51 to 79% receive an "S," the final grade does not change. If 50% or less, the final grade will drop one notch (e.g.. B- to C+).

2) Essay Exams. There will be three essay exams, weighed equally. They will be non-cumulative except for the final where the instructor reserves the right to ask one question on overall course content.

Plagiarism. Please check the Student Handbook on the Moravian College Honesty Policy. Plagiarism on a writing to learn assignment will result in a "U" for that assignment and the dropping of the final grade for the course by one notch (e.g. B to B-). A second offense will mean an "F" for the course. Plagiarism on one of the essay exams will result in an "F" for that exam but if deemed flagrant enough may result in an "F" for the course. In all cases of plagiarism the Academic Dean will be notified.

Course Format. Lecture/Discussion.

Attendance is expected. Absences may affect that part of the grade drawn from the writing assignments (see above). Participation will be recognized and may affect one's final grade, especially if "borderline."

Class Trip. If arrangements are successfully completed, members of the class will take a bus to Carlisle, PA to tour the site of the Carlisle Indian School (1879-1918). The trip is tentatively scheduled for Friday, April 21, 2006. The estimated cost will be \$12.

Snow or Illness Policy. If the weather is bad but the college is officially open, students should check the Moravian Weather Hotline to determine whether or not the instructor has cancelled class. If class is cancelled for weather or for other reasons, please read the assignment for the next scheduled class.

Required Texts

Churchill, Ward. *Kill the Indian, Save the Man*. City Lights Press
Deloria, Ella Cara, *Waterlily*. University of Nebraska Press
Halifax, Joan *Shamanic Voices*. Viking Penguin.
Nelson, Richard K. *Make Prayers to the Raven*. Univ. of Chicago Press.
Sandner, Donald, M.D. *Navaho Symbols of Healing*. Healing Arts Press.

NOTE: This outline has had to be revised due to the sudden unavailability of *Shamanic Voices*.

DATE **TOPIC AND READING**

**I. Ecology, Morality and Spirituality:
The Koyukon of Alaska**

Jan. 20 The Koyukon Peoples

- Read: Nelson, Ch. 1
Video. MPTR #1
- Jan. 23 Nature as the Watchful World
Read: Nelson, Ch. 2
- Jan. 25 Powers of Earth, Air and Water
Read: Nelson, Chs. 3 & 6
Video. MPTR #3
- Jan. 27 The Predatory Mammals
Read: Nelson, Ch. 9
Video. MPTR #4
- Jan. 30 The Large Mammals
Read: Nelson, Ch. 10
Video. MPTR #5
- Feb. 01 Koyukon Principles & Practices
Read: Nelson, Chs. 12 & 13
Video. MPTR #2

II. Cultural Dimensions of Health and Healing Navaho Chantways

- Feb. 03 Medicine, Meaning and Healing
Read: Sandner, Chs. 1
- Feb. 06 Navaho Religion: The Parts.
Read: Sandner, Ch. 3
- Feb. 08 Navaho Religion: The Whole
Read: Sandner, Ch. 4
Video. "Touching the Timeless" M.6.
- Feb. 10 Healing & the Return to Origins
Read: Sandner, Ch. 6
Video. "At the Threshold" M.10
- Feb. 13 The Death-Rebirth Experience
Read: Sandner, Ch. 8
- Feb. 15 Symbolic Shamanism
Read: Sandner, Ch. 10
- Feb. 17 **EXAM #1**

III. Kinship and Gender Relationships The Plains Indians

- Feb. 20 The Plains Indians
Video. People of the Plains. Part One.
Read: "Lakota Religion" in Sullivan (On Reserve).
- Feb. 22 The Infant: It takes a Village
Read: *Waterlily*, Chs. 1-3
- Feb. 24 Learning Kinship Behavior
Read: *Waterlily*, Chs. 4-7
- Feb. 27 From Girl to Woman: Identity and Rites of Passage

- Read: *Waterlily*, Ch. 8
 Video: "Mistaken Identity" (M.3.4.)
- Mar. 01 Initiation Ceremony of Girls: the Mescalero Apache
 Read: "...Contemporary Mescalero Apache Ceremonialism" by I. Talamantez. in Sullivan (Reserve)
 Video: "Apache Sunrise Dance"
- Mar. 03 Life Cycle: From Boy to Man
 Read: *Waterlily*, Chs. 9&10
 Video. "Mistaken Identity" (M.3.3)
- March 6-10 NO CLASS SPRING BREAK**
- Mar. 13 The Sun Dance
 Read: *Waterlily*, Ch. 11
- Mar. 15 The Vision Quest
 Read: Handouts
- Mar. 17 Responsibilities: Caring for the Dead
 Read: *Waterlily*, Ch. 12 &13
- Mar. 20 Destiny
 Read: *Waterlily*, Chs. 14 & 15
 (Finish on your Own)
- Mar. 22 **EXAM #2**

IV Shamans, Prophets Dreams and Visions

- A. Cosmic Powers, Shamanic Vision
- Mar. 24 What is a Shaman?
 Read: John Grim, "Ojibway Shamanism" (On Reserve)
 from *The Shaman*
- Mar. 27 Dream-Visions: the Iroquois
 Read: St. John "The Dream Vision Experience of the Iroquois"
- B. Prophets and History
- Mar. 29 Dekandawida and Hiawatha: Dreams of an Empire
 Read: Online Assignment for the Iroquois Constitution
- Mar. 31 Neolin and Pontiac
 Read: St. John "Neolin"
- Apr. 03 Handsome Lake and Cornplanter
 Read: St. John "The Legacy of Handsome Lake"
- Apr. 05 Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa
 Read: St. John "Tecumseh"
- Apr. 07 Wovoka and the Ghost Dance
 Read: Online assignment "The Ghost Dance"

V. Genocide: Physical, Biological and Cultural

- Apr. 10 A Question of Genocide
 Read: "Confronting Columbus Day" (On Reserve)

from Ward Churchill, *Acts of Rebellion*
Apr. 12 Cultural Genocide and Schools
Read: Churchill, *Kill*, pp.1-16
Look Up on Web: The Carlisle Indian School

Apr. 14&17 No Class. Easter Break

Apr. 19 Cultural Genocide and Boarding Schools
+ Forced transfer of Children
+ Destroying the Culture of the Oppressed
+ Imposing the Culture of the Oppressor
Read: Churchill, *Kill*, pp. 16-33

Apr. 21 NO CLASS. TRIP TO CARLISLE INDIAN SCHOOL

Apr. 24 Death and Debilitation
+ Starvation
+ Disease
+ Forced Labor
Read: Churchill, *Kill*, pp. 34-51

Apr. 26 Long-Term Emotional and Cultural Effects
+Torture
+ Sexual Predation
+ Residential School Syndrome
Read: Churchill, *Kill*, pp. 51-82

Apr. 28 Educational Imperialism
Read: "Preface" By George Tinker
In Churchill, *Kill the Indian* (xiii-xli)

