

SYLLABUS

R.250 Native American Religions Spring, 2007

Dr. St. John
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Ofc. Hrs:
MWF 1:30-2:30 p.m.
T-Th 1:00-2:00 p.m.
3:30- 4:00 p.m.

Course Description. A study of the religious life of selected indigenous peoples of North America, representing the Eastern Woodlands, The Far North, the Southwest and the Plains cultural-geographical regions. In addition, certain religious phenomena will be explored, such as: the shaman figure, the dream-vision experience, mythology, healing ceremonies, calendrical, life-cycle and kinship celebrations, and sacred ecology. Contemporary issues such as the environment, gender relations, and alternative healing methods will also be examined.

Course Format. Lecture/Discussion.

Learning Objectives. Through the readings and discussions, students will develop an understanding of the way religious symbols and cultural traditions shape peoples' view of and relationships with other people, the natural world and sacred beings. Through written exploration and discussions, students will demonstrate a capacity to reflect on their own cultural and personal beliefs, attitudes, and values pertaining to nature, gender, health and healing, and sacred beings.

Snow or Illness Policy. Even when blizzard conditions prevail, if the college has not declared itself officially closed (call the Moravian weather hotline), students should assume that classes will be held (off-campus residents should exercise prudence, however). When the instructor is ill, snowed in or otherwise unable to make class, he will contact the Registrar who will notify the HUB and place a notice on the classroom door prior to class time. In such a case a student is not responsible for showing up for or remaining in the classroom for the usual twenty minute courtesy period. If class is cancelled, please read the assignment for the next class.

Evaluation Methods.

1) Writing-to-Learn Assignments. These one-page exercises are written either prior to class at home or at the beginning of class in the room and are intended to improve classroom participation, indicate to the teacher if a student is having

problems with the work and help the student to keep up with the reading assignments. They will be marked with a "S" or a "U." If you are absent you receive a "U" if a writing assignment was given in class. There will be no make-up writing assignments with rare exceptions. At the end of the semester the records will be tallied: if you receive an "S" on 80% or more of your graded (S or U) papers, your final grade for the course will be raised one notch (ex. B to B+). Between 51 and 79%, your final grade does not change. If 50% or fewer are marked with an "S," your final average grade for the three essay exams drops one notch (ex. B- to C+).

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

Attendance and Participation. Students are expected to come to each class. Roll will be taken. They are expected to have read the material for that class and to be prepared to raise and answer questions or to otherwise participate in discussions. Poor attendance also means little participation and hence will affect the final grade negatively depending on the degree of non-participation.

Required Texts (In Order of Use)

Grim, John. *The Shaman*. Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1987.

Tooker, Elisabeth, ed. *Native North American Spirituality of the Eastern Woodlands*. Paulist Press, 1979.

Nelson, Richard K. *Make Prayers to the Raven*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983.

Sandner, Donald, M.D., *Navaho Symbols of Healing*. Healing Arts Press, 1991.

Deloria, Ella Cara, *Waterlily*. Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1988.

OUTLINE / READING SCHEDULE

Jan 15	Introduction to the Course
Jan 17	Religious Experience and Interpretation Read: Grim, "Introduction" pp.3-14; 25-32
	I. Ojibway Shamanism: Individuals and Societies
Jan 19	The Shaman and Siberian Shamanism Read: Grim, Ch. 2
Jan. 22	The Formation of a Shaman Read: Grim, Ch. 8 Video. "Ecology of the Mind"
Jan. 24	Ojibway Cosmology and the Shaman Read: Grim, Ch. 4
Jan. 26	Tribal Sanctioning of Shamanic Performance Read: Grim, Ch. 5

Jan. 29 Reenactment of Dreams in Ritual
Read: Grim, Ch. 6

Jan. 31 The Trance Experience
Read: Grim, Ch. 7

II. Northeast Woodlands: The Iroquois

Feb. 02 Introduction to Northeast Woodland Peoples
Video: "The Northeastern Indians"
Read: Grim and St. John, "The Northeast Woodlands"

Feb. 05 The Iroquois: An Introduction
Read: St. John, "The Iroquois"

Feb. 07 A Seneca Cosmological Myth
Read: Tooker, pp. 31-55

Feb. 09 Dreams, Visions, and the Forest Tradition
Read: Tooker, 83-94 and
St. John, "The Iroquois Dream-Vision Experience"

Feb. 12 Handsome Lake, Seneca Prophet
Read: St. John, "Handsome Lake"

Feb. 14 Iroquois Ceremonies: The Calendrical Cycle
Read: Tooker, Ch. VIII and

Feb. 16 Iroquois False Face Societies, The Condolence Ceremony
Read: Fenton, "Iroquois False Faces"

Feb. 19 EXAM #1

II. The Far North The Koyukons: Sacred Ecology

Feb. 21 The Koyukons of Alaska
Read: Nelson, Ch. 1
Video. MPTR #1

Feb. 23 Nature as the Watchful World
Read: Nelson, Ch. 2

Feb. 26 Powers of Earth, Air and Water
Read: Nelson, Chs. 3 & 6
Video. MPTR #3

Feb. 28 The Predatory Mammals
Read: Nelson, Ch. 9
Video. MPTR #4

Mar. 02 The Large Mammals
Read: Nelson, Ch. 10
Video. MPTR #5

MARCH 05-09 SPRING BREAK

Mar. 12 Koyukon Worldview: Principles
Read: Nelson, Chs. 12 & 13

III. The Southwest: Navaho Healing and the Chantways

- Mar. 14 Navaho (Dine) Religion
Read: Handout
- Mar. 16 Symbolic and Scientific Healing
Read: Sandner, Ch. 1
- Mar. 19 Navaho Religion: The Parts.
Read: Sandner, Ch. 3
- Mar. 21 Navaho Religion: The Whole
Read: Sandner, Ch. 4
Video. "Touching the Timeless" M.6.
- Mar. 23 Healing & the Return to Origins
Read: Sandner, Ch. 6
Video. "At the Threshold" M.10
- Mar. 26 The Death-Rebirth Experience
Read: Sandner, Ch. 8
- Mar. 28 EXAM #2**
- IV. The Plains:
The Lakota: Gender and Kinship
- Mar. 30 The Plains Indians
Video. People of the Plains. Part One.
Read: Handouts
- Apr. 02 Lakota Religious Traditions
Read: Sullivan, Ch. 4 Lakota Religion
- Apr. 04 The Infant: It takes a Village
Read: Waterlily, Chs. 1-3
- April 06-09 EASTER BREAK**
- Apr. 11 Growing Up Amid Relatives
Waterlily, Chs. 4-7
- Apr. 13 Initiation into Womanhood
Read: Waterlily, Ch. 8
Video. "Mistaken Identity" (M.3)
- Apr. 16 Life Cycle: from Girl to Woman
"In the Space Between Earth and Sky," Talamantez
Video. Apache "Sunrise Dance."
- Apr. 18 Life Cycle: From Boy to Man
Read: Waterlily, Chs. 9&10
Video. "Mistaken Identity" (M.3.)
- Apr. 20 The Sun Dance
Read: Waterlily, Ch. 11
- Apr. 23 Responsibilities: Caring for the Dead
Read: Waterlily, Ch. 12&13
- Apr. 25 Destiny
Read: Waterlily, Chs. 14 & 15
- Apr. 27 The Future

Read: Waterlily, Chs. 16 & 17

FINAL EXAM. T.B.A.

