

SYLLABUS
R.250 Native American Religions
Spring, 2008

Dr. St. John
Comenius Hall-204
Phone: (O) 861-1585
(H) 691-1797
medps01@moravian.edu

Ofc. Hrs:
MWF 1:45-3:00 p.m.
T-Th 1:00-2:00 p.m.
Th 3:30- 4:00 p.m.

Course Description. A study of the traditional religious life of selected indigenous peoples of North America. Major religious phenomena will be explored, such as: life-cycle and kinship celebrations, the dream-vision experience, mythology, the shaman, healing ceremonies, 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

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. 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+). In-class writing assignments or assignments not turned in cannot be “made up.” Exceptions will be granted only for serious reasons.

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.

3) 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. Participation can positively affect one’s grade especially if one is one the borderline between two grades.
Missing in-class writing assignments may also affect one’s grade.

Required Texts

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

Deloria, Vine, Jr., *The World We Used to Live In*. Fulcrum, 2007.

Sullivan, Lawrence E., Ed. *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*. Continuum, 2003.

Tedlock, Dennis and Barbara, *Teachings from the American Earth*. Liveright, 1975.

Note: Certain dates and assignments in the following outline may be changed at the instructor’s discretion but with notification of students.

OUTLINE

Jan. 14 Introduction to Course

I. THE PLAINS: GENDER, KINSHIP, AND LIFE CYCLE

Jan. 16 The Plains Indians
Video. People of the Plains. Part One.
Read: Handout

Jan. 18 Lakota Religious Traditions
Read: Sullivan, Ch. 4 Lakota Religion

Jan. 21 MLK NO CLASS

Jan. 23 The Infant: It takes a Village
Read: Waterlily, Chs. 1-3

- Jan. 25 Growing Up Amid Relatives
Waterlily, Chs. 4-7
Vine Deloria,
- Jan. 28 Initiation into Womanhood
Read: Waterlily, Ch. 8
Video. "Mistaken Identity" (M.3)
- Jan. 30 CLIMATE CHANGE: THE WORLD OF INUITS (ESKIMO)
Research the Web
- Feb. 01 Life Cycle: from Girl to Woman
Read: " Sullivan, Ch.6 "In the Space..." Talamantez
Video. Apache "Sunrise Dance."
- Feb. 04 Life Cycle: From Boy to Man
Read: Waterlily, Chs. 9&10
Video. "Mistaken Identity" (M.3.)
- Feb. 06 The Vision Quest
Read: Tedlock, Ch.3, "Hanblecheyapi: Crying for a Vision"
Read: Vine Deloria, pp.16-39
- Feb. 08 The Sun Dance
Read: Waterlily, Ch. 11
- Feb. 11 Responsibilities: Caring for the Dead
Read: Waterlily, Ch. 12&13
- Feb. 13 Destiny
Read: Waterlily, Chs. 14 & 15
- Feb. 15 The Future
Read: Waterlily, Chs. 16 & 17
Video. People of the Plains. Part Two.
- Feb. 18 EXAM #1

A. THE EASTERN WOODLANDS: COSMOLOGY AND WORLD VIEW

- Feb. 22 Worldview and a Woodlands People
"Ojibway Ontology, Behavior, and World View"
Hallowell, in Tedlock, Ch. 10
- Feb. 25 Origin Myths and Sacred Universe
Read: St. John, *Iroquois Dream Vision*, Ch.1 (Online)
- Feb. 27 The Dream-Vision Experience
Read: St. John, *Iroquois Dream Vision*, Ch. 2
- Feb. 29 False Faces
Read: St. John, *Iroquois Dream Vision*, Ch. 3
- March 3-7 SPRING BREAK
- March 10 Handsome Lake of the Seneca
Read: *Iroquois Dream Vision*, Ch. 4
- March 12 Nativistic Prophets of the Eastern Frontier
Read: St. John, "Neolin," *Encyclopedia of Religion*
St. John, "Tenskwatawa," *Encyclopedia of Religion*

- March 14 Handsome Lake: Prophet and Reformer
Iroquois Dream Vision, Ch. 5
- March 17 St. Patrick's Day: Celts and Inidans
Read: handout
- March 19 Iroquois: The Medicine Societies
Read: St. John, *Iroquois Dream Vision*, Ch. 6
- March 21 & 24 Easter Break
- March 26 Iroquois: Thanksgiving & the Calendrical Cycle
Read: St. John, *Iroquois Dream Vision*, Ch. 7
- March 28 Death and Condolence
Read: Handout
- March 31 EXAM #2**

B. THE SOUTHWEST

- April 02 1. The Navajo
Navajo World
Read: "The Continuous Renewal ..." Griffin-Pierce
In Sullivan, Ch. 5
- April 04 Emergence and Holy People
Read: "Return to Origins" Donald Sandner
On Reserve
Video: Beatrice and Changing Woman
- April 07 Chantways and Healing
Read: "Navaho Religion: the...Parts," Sandner
Video: Bill Yellow and Healing
- April 09 2. The Pueblo
Tewa Pueblo Cosmology.
Read: "The Tewa World View," Alfonso Ortiz
In Tedlock, Ch 11.
- April 11 Hopi Cosmology
Read: "An American Indian Model of the Universe," Whorf
in Tedlock, Ch. 8

III. ANIMALS, LAND AND ECOLOGY

- April 14 Koyukons of Alaska
"Principles of Koyukon Worldview," Nelson
On Reserve
- April 16 Yup'ik Eskimos
"Eye of the Dance," Ann Fienup-Riordan
- April 18 Stories, Animals and the Land
"Cartier's Bear," Calvin Luther Martin,
On Reserve
- April 21 Beaver Indians of Canada

"Beaver Dreaming and Singing" Robin Ridington
On Reserve

April 23 The Land and the Cosmos
Read: Vine Deloria, Ch. Five

April 25 The Spiritual Universe
Read: Vine Deloria, pp. 193-206
"American Indian Circular Philosophy" in
The American Indian Mind in a Linear World

T.B.A. EXAM #3 (FINAL)

