

SYLLABUS
R.133 Native American Religions
Spring, 2009

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Ofc. Hrs:
MWF 11:00a.m.-12:00p.m
T-Th 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Course Description. A study of the traditional religious life of selected indigenous peoples of North America. The Lakota, Navaho, Koyukon and Yu'pik will be explored along with material from Eastern Woodlands peoples. Major religious phenomena will include: 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.
Neihardt, John, *Black Elk Speaks*. Univ. of Chicago,
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.

OUTLINE

- I. THE PLAINS (Tradition and Change)
 - Gender, Kinship and the Life-Cycle
 - Jan. 20 Introduction to Course
The Plains Indians
Video. People of the Plains. Part One.
 - Jan. 22 The Infant: It takes a Village
Read: *Waterlily*, Chs. 1-3
 - Jan. 27 Growing Up Amid Relatives
Waterlily, Chs. 4-7
 - Jan. 29 Initiation into Womanhood
Read: *Waterlily*, Ch. 8
“Preparing for Womanhood” On Reserve
 - Feb. 03 Life Cycle: From Boy to Man
Read: *Waterlily*, Chs. 9&10
Video. “Mistaken Identity” (M.3.)

- Feb. 05 The Sun Dance
Read: Waterlily, Ch. 11
- Feb. 10 Responsibilities: Caring for the Dead
Read: Waterlily, Ch. 12&13
- Feb. 12 Destiny
Read: Waterlily, Chs. 14 & 15(Complete on own)
TAKE HOME EXAM #1
- Feb. 17 Black Elk and the Search for Renewal
Video. People of the Plains. Part Two.
- Feb. 19 Black Elk's Great Vision
B.E.S., Chs I-III
- Feb. 24 Boyhood on the Plains
BES, Chs. IV-VI
- Feb. 26 The Time of Crazy Horse and Custer
BES, Chs. VII-IX (Video "Little Big Horn")
SPRING BREAK
- Mar. 10 Fears and The Ritualization of Vision
B.E.S., Chs. X-XIV
- Mar. 12 Vision, Reenactment and Healing
B.E.S., Chs. XV-XVIII
- Mar. 17 The Messiah and the Ghost Dance
B.E.S., Chs. XIX-XXII
- Mar. 19 Wounded Knee and Beyond
B.E.S. Chs. XXIII-end.
TAKE HOME EXAM #2

II. Cultural Dimensions of Healing Southwest: Navaho Chantways

- Mar. 24 Medicine, Meaning and Healing
Read: Sandner, Chs. 1&2
- Mar. 26 Navaho Religion: The Parts.
Read: Sandner, Ch. 3
- Mar. 31 Navaho Religion: The Whole
Read: Sandner, Ch. 4
Video. "Touching the Timeless" M.6.
- Apr. 02 Healing & the Return to Origins
Read: Sandner, Ch. 6
Video. "At the Threshold" M.10
- Apr. 07 The Death-Rebirth Experience
Read: Sandner, Ch. 8

III. The Ecological Component: Sub-Polar

- Apr. 09 The Koyukon Peoples
Read: Nelson, Ch. 1

Apr.. 14 Video. MPTR #1
Nature as the Watchful World
Read: Nelson, Ch. 2

Apr. 16 Powers of Earth, Air and Water
Read: Nelson, Chs. 3 & 6
Video. MPTR #3

Apr. 21 The Predatory Mammals
Read: Nelson, Ch. 9
Video. MPTR #4

Apr. 23 From Girl to Woman...Apache
Read: " Sullivan, Ch.6 "In the Space..." Talamantez
Video. Apache "Sunrise Dance."

Apr. 28 The Large Mammals
Read: Nelson, Ch. 10
Video. MPTR #5

Apr. 30 Koyukon Principles & Practices
Read: Nelson, Chs. 12 & 13
Video. MPTR #2
FINAL EXAM TBA