

SYLLABUS
R.250.A Native American Religions
Spring, 2012

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Ofc. Hrs:
M. 6-6:30pm
T-Th 1:30-2:00 p.m.

Course Description. A study of traditional myths, rituals, symbol systems, religious experiences and lifeways of select indigenous peoples of North America. This semester we will focus on groups representing the Eastern Woodlands, Southwest, Northern Boreal Forests, and Plains regions.

Course Format. Lecture/Discussion.

Learning Outcomes. Students will:

- * become familiar with the acceptable methods used in the study of indigenous religions
- * develop the imaginative skills needed to enter the world of "the other"
- * appreciate the diversity, complexity and power of indigenous traditions
- * recognize biased judgments and cultural ideologies in presentations of "Indians"
- * foster a critical reflection on their own attitudes, beliefs, and values

Course Evaluation.

- 1) Writing-to-Learn Assignments. Either written prior to class at home or in class, these written assignments on the assigned reading (s) are intended to help you keep up with the reading assignments, to prepare for classroom participation, and to indicate to the instructor if you are having problems with the reading material. Assignments will be graded "S" or a "U." A missed assignment will automatically receive a "U." Upon request and only with due cause: illness, etc., will you be able to make-up an assignment. At the end of the semester, if you receive an "S" on 80% or more of your papers, your final grade for the course will be raised one notch (ex. B- to B+). If your total "S's" fall between 60 and 79%, your final grade does not change. If fewer than 60% are "S," your final grade (determined by three essay exams) will drop one notch (ex. B- to C+).
- 2) Writing to Demonstrate Comprehension. The major portion of your final grade will be determined by your performance on three take-home essays. These exams will be of equal weight. They will be non-cumulative except for the final exam where the instructor reserves the right to ask one question on an overall theme.

Attendance. Students are expected to attend each class and to participate in discussions, raise questions, etc. Roll will be taken. Attendance is essential if we have an in-class writing assignment. Regular participation will be noted and could affect the final grade if a student is on the borderline between two grades.

Electronic Devices. Please do not twitter, twirl, tweet, text or twist while in class. Turn everything off—except your mind!

Required Texts-In Order of Use

Grim, John *The Shaman*

Sandner, Donald, M.D. *Navaho Symbols of Healing*

Nelson, Richard K. *Make Prayers to the Raven*

Deloria, Ella Cara *Waterlily*

Neihardt, John. *Black Elk Speaks*

Learning Disability Statement – Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

January 17

* Introduction to the study of Indigenous Religions.

**I. EASTERN WOODLANDS
THE OJIBWAY AND THE STUDY OF SHAMANISM**

January 19

* Introduction to the study of Shamanism.

Grim, pp. 3-14; 26-32; Ch. 8

January 24

- * Classical Shamanism: Siberia

Grim, Ch. 2

January 26

- * Ojibway Shamanism

Grim, Ch. 3

Video: Millenium Pt. 4. Colombbian Shaman

January 31

- * Ojibway Cosmology and the Shaman

Grim, Ch. 4

February 02

- * The Shaman and Communal Sanction

Grim, Ch. 5

February 07

- * Ritual Reenactments of Initiation Experiences

Grim, Ch. 6

February 09

- * Visionary Experience and the Evocation of Power

Grim, Ch. 7 (pp.138-156)

*Video. Millenium. Pt.8. Huichol Shaman

B. The Iroquois (Ho-de-no-sau-nee): The Dream-Vision in Tradition and Crisis

February 14

- * Dekandawidah, Hiawatha and the League of the Iroquois
St. John, "The Iroquois" *Encyclopedia of Religion*
- * The Role of Dreams and Visions: Democratic Shamanism
St. John, *The Dream-Vision Experience of the Iroquois*
(Selections-Handouts)

February 16

- * False Faces and Medicine Societies
- * The Visions of the Seneca Prophet, Handsome Lake (1755-1815)
Read: St. John, *The Dream-Vision Experience of the Iroquois*
(Selections- Handouts) and Online Assignments

Take-home exam #1. Due date: Monday, February 21, 6:00p.m.

II. SOUTHWEST: NAVAHO (DINEH) CHANTWAYS & CULTURAL HEALING

February 21

- * Introduction to the Southwest Peoples
- * Symbolic/Cultural vs. Scientific Models of Healing
Sandner, Ch. 1

February 23

- * The Structure of Navaho Chantways
Sandner, Ch. 3.

Video. "Touching the Timeless" (Segment. M.6)

February 28

- * Healing: Return to Origins and Return to Health

Sandner, Ch. 6

Video: "At the Threshold" M.10

March 01

- Transformative Renewal and the Death-Rebirth Experience.

Sandner, Ch. 8

March 06 & 08- SPRING BREAK

III. FAR NORTH: THE KOYUKONS AND SACRED ECOLOGY

March 13

- * The Watchful World

Nelson, Ch. 2

Video: "Make Prayers to the Raven," #1

March 15

- * Animals of Earth and Sky

Nelson, Chs. 3 & 6

Video: MPTR, #3

March 20

- * The Life of the Bear

Nelson, Chs. 9 & 10 (163-172)

Video: MPTR, #5

March 22

- * Eco-patterns and Conservation

Nelson, Ch. 11

Video: MPTR, #4

March 27

- * Principles of Sacred Ecology

Nelson, Ch. 12

March 29

- * Lessons from the Koyukons

Nelson, Ch. 13

MPTR, #2

Take-Home Exam#2. Due Back: Monday April 02, 6:00p.m.

IV. THE NORTHERN PLAINS:

A. SOCIAL ECOLOGY: WOMEN, KINSHIP AND THE LIFE-CYCLE

April 03

- * Birth and Growth of a Dakota Girl

Deloria, Chs.1-4

Video: People of the Plains, I

April 05

- * Becoming a Woman: Symbolic and Social Meanings

Deloria, Chs. 5-8

Video: "Apache Sunrise Dance" or
Millenium 3.2

April 10

- * Becoming a Man: Bison, Braves and Spiritual Transformation

Deloria, Chs. 9-11

Video: "Mistaken Identity" Millenium 3.3.

April 12

- * Life Cycle: Death, Mourning and Letting-Go

Deloria, Chs. 12 & 13

- * Life Cycle: Marriage and a New Web of Kin

Deloria, Chs. 14 (Please read 15-17 on your own)

B. Prophets, Warriors and Resistance

April 17

- * Black Elk's Vision: Cosmic Powers and Historical Need

Black Elk Speaks, Chs 1-5

April 19

- * War, Hunger and the Lakota Courage of Resistance

Chs. 7-12. Video: "Sitting Bull"

April 24

- * Black Elk as Shaman: Vision and the Power of Ritual Reenactment

Chs. 13-18 (19 & 20-optional)
Handout "Vision Quest"

April 26

* The Ghost Dance, Wounded Knee and Beyond
B.E.S., Chs. 21-end

Take-Home Final: Due Back Friday, May 4th 1:30 p.m.