

SYLLABUS  
R.133Z. Native American Religions  
Spring, 2012

Dr. St. John

Comenius Hall

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Ofc. Hrs:

M. 6-6:30pm

T-Th 2:00-2:30 p.m.

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

Course Format. Lecture/Discussion.

Learning Outcomes. Students will:

- \* become familiar with the standard methods used in the academic study of religion
- \* 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"
- \* develop a critical awareness of their own attitudes, beliefs, and values

Course Evaluation.

1) Writing-to-Learn Assignments. Written prior to class at home or at the beginning of 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 "U." A missed assignment will automatically receive a "U." Upon request and only due to 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 exams. These essay 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.

**Plagiarism** on an exam will result in failure for the course. Plagiarism on a writing assignment will result in a reduction of your final grade by 1.0 (ex. C to D). A second event will mean failure. In all cases, the Dean's Office will be appropriately notified.

Attendance. Students are expected to attend each class from beginning to end and to participate in discussions, raise questions, etc. Roll will be taken. Attendance is essential if we have an in-class writing assignment—which may occur after the break. 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, tweet, text or sext 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.*

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS</u>
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<u>January 16</u>	* Introduction to the Course
	* Introduction to the Study of Indigenous Religions & Shamanism
	Grim, pp. 3-14; 25-32;
	Video: "The Northeast" <i>The Native Americans</i>

**I. EASTERN WOODLANDS:**

**A. The Ojibway (Chippewa) and Shamanism**

- January 23 \* Classical Shamanism: Siberia  
Grim, Ch. 2
- \* The Formation of a Shaman  
Grim, Ch. 8
- \* Ojibway Shamanism  
Grim, Ch. 3
- Video: Millenium Pt. 4. Colombian Shaman

- January 30 \* Ojibway Cosmology  
Grim, Ch. 4
- \* Shaman and Community
- Grim, Ch. 5
- Video. Millenium. Pt.8. Huichol Shaman

- February 06 \* Ritual Reenactment of Spiritual  
Grim, Ch. 6
- \* Trance Experience and Healing (pp.138-156)  
Grim, Ch. 7

### **B. The Iroquois Dream-Vision Experience**

- February 13 \* The Founding Vision and the League of the Iroquois
- \* The Role of Dreams and Visions: Democratic Shamanism
- \* Masks and Medicine Societies
- Read: St. John, *The Dream-Vision Experience of the Iroquois*  
(Selections-Handouts) and Online Assignments

**Take-Home Exam #1 Due Back: Friday, February 17 Noon**

## **II. SOUTHWEST:**

### **NAVAHO (DINEH) CHANTWAYS & CULTURAL HEALING**

- February 20 \* Introduction to the Peoples of the Southwest  
Video: "The Southwest," *The Native Americans*
- \* Chantways and the Symbols of Healing  
Sandner, Ch. 1
- \* Navaho Chantway. The Parts.  
Sandner, Ch. 3.

- February 27 \* Healing and the Return to Origins  
Sandner, Ch. 6  
Video: "At the Threshold" M.10
- \* Healing and the Death-Rebirth Experience.  
Sandner, Ch. 8  
Video. "Touching the Timeless" (Segment. M.6)

### **March 05- SPRING BREAK**

## **III. FAR NORTH:**

### **SACRED ECOLOGY & THE KOYUKONS**

- March 12 \* The Koyukons in the Natural World  
Nelson, Ch. 1, 2,  
Video: "Make Prayers to the Raven" #1
- \* Earth, Water, and Sky  
Nelson, Chs. 3 & 6

Video: "Make Prayers to the Raven" #3

March 19 \* Keeping Life in Balance: Hunting and Conservation  
Nelson, Chs. 9 and 10 (pp.163-172), 11  
Videos: MPTR Nos. 4, 5

March 26 \* Koyukon Ecology and the Land  
Nelson, Ch. 12, 13  
Video: MPTR, #2

**Take Home Exam#2 Due Back Friday, Mar. 30 Noon**

#### **IV. THE LAKOTA OF THE PLAINS**

##### **A. Social Ecology: Women, Kinship, and the Life-Cycle**

April 02 \* Birth into Community  
Deloria, Chs.1-4  
Video: "People of the Plains," Vol. I  
\* Becoming a Woman: Roles, Relationships and Ritual  
Deloria, Chs. 5-8;  
Video: "Apache Sunrise Dance"

April 09 \* Becoming a Man: Bison, Braves and Spiritual Transformation  
Deloria, Chs. 9-11  
Video: "Mistaken Identity" Millenium #3.2&3.3.

- \* Life Cycle: Mourning, Loss and Letting-Go  
Deloria, Chs. 12 & 13
- \* Life Cycle: Marriage and New Kinship Expectations  
Deloria, Chs. 14 & 15
- Note: Please finish novel at your convenience

## **B. Prophets, Visions, and Resistance**

April 16

- \* Black Elk's Prophetic Vision  
Neihardt, Chs 1-5
- \* War, hunger and Lakota Resistance  
Neihardt, Chs. 7-12  
Video: "Sitting Bull"

April 23

- \* Black Elk as Shaman: Vision and the Power of Ritual  
Chs. 13-18 (19 & 20-optional)  
Handout "Vision Quest"
- \* The Ghost Dance, Wounded Knee and Beyond  
Neihardt, Chs. 21-end

**Final Exam. Due back by Monday, April 30 at 6:30 p.m.**

**Note: If necessary, changes may be made to this syllabus. Any major changes will be discussed with the class.**