



Course Syllabus

SYLLABUS FOR REL2388/ANT3930

INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF THE AMERICAS ANT3930,

Section 266F, REL2388, Section 0096: Spring, 2018 PROFESSOR ROBIN M.

WRIGHT (Anderson Hall 107C, 352-392-1625)

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hours: by apptmt.)

AND101: MWF 10:40 – 11:30

Objectives of the Course: This course introduces the student to the historical and contemporary religious beliefs and practices of Native peoples of North and South America, and the Caribbean. With such a vast and diverse universe to study, our approach will (1) highlight key features of indigenous religious traditions throughout the Americas; (2) discuss central features of religious traditions in various of the major historical civilizations; and (3) focus on religious ethnographies of contemporary native peoples in all three macro-regions of the Americas. Thus, the course is a mix of what we understand about the religions of the historic great indigenous civilizations of the Americas, and what we understand about contemporary indigenous religiosities. The main emphasis in all three objectives is on historical change and continuity in indigenous religious traditions.

Reading List (Required Books):

1) Title: QUEST FOR HARMONY. NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

Author: William Young

Edition: 2006

Publisher: Hackett Publishing

This text is required

2) Title: IROQUOIS CREATION STORY. MYTH OF THE EARTH GRASPER

Author: John C. Mohawk

Edition: 2005

Publisher: Mohawk

This text is required

3) Title: TAINO: A Novel

Author: Jose Barreiro

Edition: 2012 (Kindle e-book)

Publisher: Fulcrum

This text is required

4) Title: TO WEAVE AND SING

Author: David Guss

Edition: 1990

Publisher: UC Press

Required

Course Requirements:

1.) Students are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to each class meeting. Class participation does count in final grade evaluation (10%). Discussion will be scheduled on Fridays of every week. Continued absences will not be tolerated; following the third absence, 3 grade points will be taken off the final grade for each day of absence. More than 6 absences will lead to administrative withdrawal from the course;

2) Three papers on indigenous religious traditions from each of the geographical areas studied in the course (North America, South America, and the Caribbean). Topics emerging from the Readings/ Videos/ Discussions will be distributed at the beginning of each major section (Parts II, III, and IV). Each paper should be 6-8 pages in length, to be uploaded to the **Assignments** tab on the website during the week following the final day of each of the three major sections. Each paper is worth 25% of the final grade. Papers should be formatted in Times New Roman 12 double-spaced. Feedback will be provided on all written assignments; a Writing Rubric can be downloaded from the Assignments tab.

3) A 15 minute in-class oral presentation (powerpoint or poster) on an indigenous religious tradition of the Americas of the student's choosing, focusing on any of the aspects discussed in the first part of the course (cosmogony, cosmology; religious specialists & ceremonial life; prophecies and salvation).

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

25% for each short paper (T = 75%); 15% for in-class presentation; and 10% discussion participation.

CONTENT OF THE COURSE

This course seeks to present an in-depth understanding of the cosmogonies (views on creation), cosmologies (the spatiotemporal structures of the universe), anthropologies (relations among all living beings, what constitutes a 'person', and what constitute 'religious specialists'), and eschatologies (views on death and the afterlife) of the native societies studied. The methodologies this course adopts are comparative, historical, and interpretive. Following a general Introduction to Indigenous Religious Traditions of the Americas, the course is organized into three main sections:

1. Native North American Religious Traditions;
2. Native South American Religious Traditions;
3. Native Caribbean Religious Traditions.

The Introductory section (Part I) discusses key features of indigenous religions in general; among these are: the duality in creation narratives; the notions of an inter-subjective and multi-tiered cosmos, with multiple dimensions of time and space; a holistic cosmos, featuring inter-relationality among spirits, deities, and humans; the central importance of religious specialists, ceremonial leaders, and prophets; reciprocity as a founding principle of religious & social life; the adaptability of religious beliefs to change; and spirituality in politics. While the course highlights the resilience of indigenous religions, it also discusses the principle threats to continuity, among which are: the appropriations by non-indigenous peoples of indigenous beliefs and practice, the shattering of religious institutions during the conquest, the imposition of Christianity, environmental destruction. Despite these, indigenous spirituality has demonstrated its remarkable capacity to adapt which can be seen in processes of healing, the resurgence of religious traditions, and the spiritualization of political change.

Following the Introduction, the course is divided into 3 main sections: (1) Native North American Religious traditions, especially the creation narratives, sacred landscapes, religious renewals, contemporary ceremonialism, and the spiritual foundations of political activism; (2) Native South American Religions, including the Andean Highlands but more especially, Lowland Amazonia (where the Instructor has realized most of his fieldwork and research). Here, we will concentrate on the writing of religious ethnographies; cycles of creation and crafting of the cosmos, sacred landscapes; the critical importance of ancestor 'cults', shamanism and prophet movements in history; and 'conversion' to evangelicalism. (3) Native Religions of the Caribbean, especially narratives of creation, sacred landscapes, ritual specialists, religious renewals and ethnic resurgence. The films and readings are designed to provide both scholarly and accessible views on the religious cultures of the past, and the challenges their historical descendants face today. Films will illustrate how native peoples have creatively forged solutions to contemporary problems posed by political and economic changes.

The student will learn about native religious traditions of the Americas, which is not offered in any other course, to our knowledge, at this University (**this course is required for those who intend to minor in Native American Studies or are in the Interdisciplinary Studies Major**). The students will learn more about the histories of the Americas from the perspectives of the peoples whom European societies and their descendants colonized for centuries and who have written their own religious histories from their own perspectives, revitalizing the sacred in new and creative ways.

This course can thus be considered under the rubric of the Humanities in that its focus is the religious traditions of native peoples of the Americas, and how those traditions have been studied or presented through scholarly production, cinema, and indigenous perspectives.

The instructor's fieldwork conducted over four decades among peoples of the Northwest Amazon will provide a constant baseline for comparisons. A major concern is to construct a critical reflection on the possibilities and limitations of doing religious ethnographies among indigenous peoples whose understanding and worldview are distinct in fundamental ways from the so-called "Western traditions". How can research tools be modified such that this study becomes a meaningful enterprise - one in which the native peoples have an active role in constructing their religious histories and writing their own ethnographies ?

The materials for the course consist of the readings (articles scanned and included in the **Modules** section and books to purchase in bookstore or by Amazon.com), powerpoint lectures, and films. **Films** can often be accessed through UFL Library Proxy. Readings are placed on Reserve in Smathers Library.

As indicated in the **Requirements** section, the instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to organization and content of ideas, clarity and coherence in the presentation of ideas, grammar and punctuation in any written assignments.

PROGRAM OF LECTURES, READINGS, FILMS, AND DISCUSSIONS:

01/08: Course presentation and introduction to the readings;

01/10: PART I: OVERVIEW OF INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF THE AMERICAS

01/12: Mapping the Continent

(powerpoint of “Maps of Native Peoples of the Americas”)

01/15: NO CLASS – Martin Luther King Day

01/17: Cosmogony, or Creation, in Indigenous Worldviews

“Indigenous Religious Traditions”, Prof. Wright

01/19: Cosmology, Time and Space in a Holistic Cosmos

Viveiros de Castro, “Cosmologies: perspectivism”

01/24: The Importance of Ceremonial Life

“Religion”, George Tinker, *Encyclopedia of Native American Religion*

Talamantez, “In the Space between Earth and Sky” (together with Griffin-Pierce, under
NAVAJO AND APACHE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS)

01/26: Prophecies and Salvation

“Cosmologies, Shamanism, prophet movements, and conversion to Christianity” unpublished ms., Prof.

Wright

01/29: **PART II. NATIVE NORTH AMERICA**

Reading: Pauketat, *Cahokia. Ancient America's Great City on the Mississippi*, Chs. 1- 3.

“Cahokia. America's Lost City”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_ddTW7CADO

01/31: Historical Overview

Young, *Quest for Harmony*, Ch. 1

02/02: The Lenape

Young, *Quest for Harmony*, Part II, Ch. 2

02/05: The *Ani'-Yun'-Wiya*

Young, *Quest for Harmony*, Part II, Ch. 3

02/07: The Haudenosaunee: Introduction

“We Are the Haudenosaunee”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DofTnRhm5o>

Also read: “The Huron-Iroquois Nations” (pdf on website)

02/09: Iroquois Creation Story.

Mohawk, *Myth of the Earth Grasper*

02/12: Iroquois Creation Story.

Mohawk, *Myth of the Earth Grasper*

02/12: Iroquois Creation Story.

Mohawk, *Myth of the Earth Grasper*

02/14: The Four Great Ceremonies

“Field Notes on the Rites and Ceremonies of the Ganio'Dai'io Religion” <http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/iro/parker/cohl142.htm> [up to and including “Special Annual Ceremonies”]

02/16: The Great Law of Peace

Oren Lyons tells the story of the Peacemaker: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iVziGHPVw>

[text of The Great Law: <http://www.ganienkeh.net/thelaw.html>]

02/19: Handsome Lake Religion

Arthur C. Parker, “The Code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet”

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/iro/parker/index.htm> [Introduction, The Gaiwiio Code, The Great Message]

Handsome Lake Religion and the Medicine Societies: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/iro/parker/cohl150.htm>

02/21: Haudenosaunee at the UN

Reading: *Basic Call to Consciousness* (pdf on website)

Watch:

2008 Mother Earth Call To Consciousness On Climate Change 04 - Keynote, Chief Oren Lyons (Onondaga)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRz2mih5-JU>

&

Highly recommended:

Watch: John Mohawk on "Discovering" the US: Haudenosaunee Influences on U.S. Culture and Democracy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VM9Xu-Gv_Lg&t=1073s

02/23: PART III: NATIVE PEOPLES OF HIGHLAND & LOWLAND SOUTH AMERICA & THEIR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

02/26: Ancient Civilizations - 1

Watch at home:

BBC documentaries on Caral

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_At3mo7XXg

& Nazca

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AABzgQukhAg>

BBC documentaries on Tiwanako:

“The Stone at the Centre”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmT0IBSc54o>

02/28: Ancient Civilizations – 2

Watch at home:

Also: History Channel documentary on Chavin de Huantar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfWJkO0nuhY>

BBC documentaries on Chachapoyas (“People of the Clouds”): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvGf0Jlat0s>

03/02: Yekuana

Guss, Chs. 1 “The Syntax of Culture” & 2 “The People”

Watch in class: “Watunna. An Orinoco Creation Cycle:

<https://staceysteers.com/film/watunna/#-film>

03/03-10: SPRING BREAK

03/12: Yekuana

Guss, Chs. 3 “Culture and Ethos” & 4 “All Things Made”

03/14: Yekuana

Guss, Chs. 4 “All Things Made” & 5 “Origin and Design”

03/16: Yekuana

Guss, Chs. 5 “Origin and Design” & 6 “The Form of Content”

03/19: Yekuana

Reading: Guss, Chs. 6 “The Form of Content” & 7 “To Weave the World”

03/21: Baniwa Jaguar Shamans

Reading: Wright, “The Making of a Jaguar Shaman” (on website)

Video clip: “Searching for Parika souls”

03/23: Baniwa Prophets and Christians

Reading: Wright, “Wise People of Great Power” (on website)

03/26: **PART IV. TAINO AND THE NATIVE PEOPLES OF THE CARIBBEAN**

03/28: “The People Who Greeted Columbus”

Watch at home: BBC documentary on Taino

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2Zc9NhcO8I>

03/30: Taino Cosmogony

Ramón Pané, “An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians”

04/02: Taino Cosmogony

Ramón Pané, “An Account...”

04/04: Taino Cosmogony

Ramón Pané, “An Account...”

04/06: Witness to Genocide

Bartolome de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*

04/09: *Taíno. A Novel*

Barreiro, Folio IV. A Visit to the Rebel Camps

04/11: *Taíno. A Novel*

Barreiro, Folio IV. A Visit to the Rebel Camps

04/13: *Taíno. A Novel*

Barreiro, Folio V. Cohoba Dreams

04/16: *Taíno. A Novel*

Barreiro, Folio V. Cohoba Dreams

04/18: Taíno Resurgence

Jose Barreiro, “Beyond the Myth of Extinction” & “Taíno Survivals: Cacique Panchito, Caridad de los Indios, Cuba.” (on course website)

04/20: Garifuna and their resurgence

Film: “*Yurumein. Homeland*” (on Library EZ Proxy) a film by Andrea E. Leland

04/23: Discussion

04/25: REVIEW & CONCLUSION OF THE COURSE

RULES OF THE COURSE

1.

Plagiarism or cheating: Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. **Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course.** In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. **It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance).** Other forms of cheating (particularly **downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours**) will also be subject to the same action. See

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm><http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm> for more information on UF policies.

2.

Incompletes are strongly discouraged and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete before the end of the semester.

3.

Students engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom. **Please turn phones and pagers off during class. Texting is not permitted during class, and any internauting during class-time that is not related to the material being discussed will be penalized.**

4.

Students with Disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students

Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation or special consideration.

