

SYLLABUS FOR REL2388/ANT3930

INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF THE AMERICAS

REL2388 / ANT3930: Spring, 2018

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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, Central 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 in the Americas; and (3) focus on religious ethnographies of contemporary native peoples in all four macro-regions.

Thus, the course is a mix of what we understand about the religions of the historic great 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. **This course is required for those who intend to minor in American Indian and Indigenous Studies or are in the Interdisciplinary Studies Major.**

Reading List:

- Lee Irwin, *The Dream Seekers*. 1994, University of Oklahoma.
- Carrasco, David. *Religions of Mesoamerica*. 2014, Second Edition, Waveland.
- Wright, Robin, *Cosmos, Self and History. For Those Unborn*. 2010, UT Press.
- Jose Barreiro, *Dreaming Mother Earth*. 2018, Campana.
- All other Readings are provided in pdf format, in the Modules section.

Course Requirements:

1.) Students are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to each class meeting. Class participation does count (20%) in final grade evaluation. Discussions or in-class presentations 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.) Four short papers (3-5 pp. apiece, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt) on indigenous religious traditions from each of the geographical areas studied in the course. Topics emerging from the Readings/ Videos/ Discussions will be distributed beforehand.

Each paper should be uploaded to the **Assignments** tab on the website during the week following the final day of each of the four major sections. Each paper is worth 20% of the final grade; 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. A Writing Rubric can be downloaded from the Assignments tab;

A powerpoint presentation on the Readings is required as part of the 20% in-class participation.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

20% for each short paper (T = 80%); 20% in-class discussion and powerpoint presentation.

A: ≥ 94 of X; A-: ≥ 90 of X; B+: ≥ 87 of X; B: ≥ 83 of X; B-: ≥ 80 of X; C+: ≥ 77 of X; C: ≥ 73 of X; C-: ≥ 70 of X; D+: ≥ 67 of X; D: ≥ 63 of X; D-: ≥ 60 of X; E: below 60.

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 regeneration) of the native societies studied. The methodologies this course adopts are comparative, historical, and interpretive.

The Introductory section (Part I) discusses key features of indigenous religious traditions in general: duality in the creation narratives; an inter-subjective and multi-tiered cosmos, with multiple dimensions of time and space; an holistic cosmos, featuring inter-relationality among spirits, deities, and humans; the central importance of religious specialists, ceremonial leaders, spiritual 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 diversity and 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, land loss and heritage destruction, the shattering of religious institutions during the conquest, the imposition of Christianity. Despite these, indigenous spiritualities have demonstrated their remarkable capacities to adapt which can be seen in processes of healing, the resurgence of religious traditions, and the spiritualization of political change.

The 4 main sections of the course will cover the following: (1) Native North American Religious traditions, including the creation narratives, sacred landscapes, religious renewals, contemporary ceremonialism, and the spiritual foundations of political activism; (2) Native Central American Religions, the most highly-developed indigenous theogonies in the Americas, past and present; (3) Native South American Religions, including the Andean Highlands but more especially, Lowland Amazonia (where the Instructor has realized most of his forty years of fieldwork and research); (4) Native Religions of the Caribbean, especially Island 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 indigenous peoples, and the challenges they face today. Films will illustrate

how native peoples have creatively forged solutions to contemporary problems posed by political and economic changes.

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. Some **Films** can be accessed through UFL Library Proxy. Readings are also placed on Reserve in Smathers Library.

PROGRAM OF LECTURES, READINGS, FILMS, AND DISCUSSIONS:

01/07: Course presentation and introduction to the readings;

OVERVIEW OF INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF THE AMERICAS

01/09: Mapping the Continent

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

01/11: The Importance of Ceremonial Life

Readings: “Religion”, George Tinker, *Encyclopedia of Native American Religion* [pdf in Modules tab];

01/14: Mythology and Nature

Readings: "The Sacred in Nature: Mythology can change our minds", in *Thinking in Indian*, John Mohawk [pdf in Modules tab]

01/16: Native american spirituality

Readings: "Native american spirituality - History, Theory and Reformulation," in *A Companion to American Indian History*, Phil DeLoria and Neil Salisbury (Blackwell, 2004);

PART I. NATIVE NORTH AMERICA

01/18: Great Religions of the Past

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

01/21: NO CLASS – Martin Luther King Day

01/23: Historical Overview of Native North America since the beginning of US Expansionism

Reading: Young, *Quest for Harmony*, Ch. 1;

01/25: The Dream Seekers

Reading: Irwin, Chs. 1 & 2;

01/28: The Dream Seekers

Reading: Irwin, Chs. 3 & 4;

01/30: The Dream Seekers

Reading: Irwin, Chs. 5 & 6;

02/01: The Dream Seekers

Reading: Irwin, Chs. 7 & 8;

02/04: The Dream Seekers

Reading: Irwin, Chs. 9 & 10;

PART II: NATIVE CENTRAL AMERICA: OLMEC, AZTEC, MAYA

02/06: Introduction

Readings: Introduction & Chapter 1 in Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*

02/08: The Olmec, Teotihuacan, Classic Maya

Readings: Carrasco, Ch. 2;

02/11: Religion of the Aztecs

PLEASE NOTE: PAPERS FOR PART I DUE TODAY

Readings: Carrasco, Ch. 3;

02/13: The Five Suns

Readings: The Four suns; the Fifth Sun", in *Tales of the Plumed Serpent*;

Video: "The Fifth Sun"

02/15: Maya Religion

Readings: Carrasco, Ch. 4;

02/18: "The Popol Vuh"

Video: "Popol Vuh"

[reading selection from the Popol Vuh to be posted]

02/20: Contemporary Religions

Readings: Carrasco, Ch. 5;

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

02/22: 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>

02/25: Tiwanako Ceremonial Life

BBC documentaries on Tiwanako:

“The Stone at the Centre”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmT0lBSc54o>

02/27: Ancient Civilizations – 2

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

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

PLEASE NOTE: PAPERS ON PART II DUE TODAY

03/01: Amazonian Indigenous Religious Traditions

Readings: Schaan, Denise. "Marks on the Earth" Ch. 5 in *Sacred Geographies in Ancient Amazonia*; [pdf in Modules]

03/02-10: SPRING BREAK

03/11: Northwest Amazon Indigenous Religious Traditions

Readings: Wright, "South American Indian Religions - Indians of the Northwest Amazon" *Encyclopedia...* [pdf in Modules]

03/13: The Baniwa and Other Arawak-speaking peoples

Readings: Wright, "The Baniwa", in Sullivan, 1997, pp. 221-235 [pdf in Modules]; ISA *Encyclopedia* [pdf in Modules];

03/15: Cosmogony & Cosmology

Readings: Wright, *CSH*, Part I: Ch. 1;

03/18: Shamanism

Readings: Wright, *CSH*, Part I: Ch. 2;

03/20: Music of the Ancestors

Readings: Wright, *CSH*, Part II: Chs. 3 & 4; "The *Kuwai* Religions of the Northern Arawak-speaking peoples" [pdfs in Modules]; "Musical Body of the Universe";

03/22: Baniwa Prophets

Reading: Wright, "Wise People of Great Power"; "The Wicked and the Wise Men" [pdfs in Modules];

03/25: Baniwa Christians

Reading: Wright, "When the Missions Came", *CSH*, Part 4, Chs. 7 & 8 [pdf in Modules];

PART IV. TAINO AND THE NATIVE PEOPLES OF THE CARIBBEAN

03/27: Long-range History of the Island Cultures

Watch at home:

"The People Who Greeted Columbus"

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

03/29: What do the sources tell us about Taino Society and Religion at the Time of the Invasion?

Readings:

04/01: The Modern-Day Resurgence of "Taino" Ethnicity

Readings: Barreiro, *Dreaming*, Introduction, pp. 17-37;

PLEASE NOTE: PAPERS ON PART III DUE TODAY

04/03: Biographical history

Readings: Barreiro, *Dreaming*, pp. 37-74;

04/05: Life and Teachings

Readings: Barreiro, *Dreaming*, pp. 75 - 95;

04/08: Teachings

Readings: Barreiro, *Dreaming*, pp. 96 - 107;

04/10: Teachings

Readings: Barreiro, *Dreaming*, pp. 108 - 116;

04/12: Life and Teachings

Readings: Barreiro, *Dreaming*, pp. 116 - 126;

04/15: Life and Teachings

Readings: Barreiro, *Dreaming*, pp. 129 - 63; and 164-83

04/17: Historical Error

Readings: Jose Barreiro, "Beyond the Myth of Extinction"

04/19: Garifuna and their resurgence

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

04/22: Ethnogenesis in Indigenous Religious History of the Americas;

04/24: REVIEW & CONCLUSIONS OF THE COURSE

PLEASE NOTE: PAPERS ON PART IV DUE TODAY

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.