

*Native American Religions*  
RE 208, Section 001 - Fall 2015

**Meetings:** T/R 11:10-12:30 p.m., Filene 115

**Instructor:** Dr. David J. Howlett, Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion, dhowlett@skidmore.edu

**Office Hours:** Monday, 1:00-2:30 p.m.; Wednesday, 1:00-2:30 p.m., or by appointment  
205B Ladd Hall, (518) 580-8404 (office)

**Course Description:** This course explores Native American religious experience in diverse contexts, from the American Southwest to the Great Plains and from the far Pacific Northwest to the American Southeast. In the first half of class, we will explore specific religious rituals practiced by groups like the Lakota, the Navajo, and the Yupik. We will analyze how historical experiences, such as cultural genocide, dispossession of tribal lands, and the legacy of colonialism, have affected ritual practices over time. In the second half of class, we will switch to topics, such as Native American struggles for religious freedom, Native American access to sacred spaces, Native Americans and Christianity, and the commodification of Native American spirituality. We will consider both Native and non-Native perspectives on these topics.

**Course Goals:** Students will leave this class with

- a familiarity with the major ritual practices and religious concepts within selected Native groups.
- an appreciation for the diversity of religious experience within Native American nations.
- an ability to articulate how historical experiences, such as cultural genocide, dispossession of tribal lands, and the legacy of colonialism, have affected ritual practices over time.
- an understanding of the various approaches scholars have taken towards the study of Native American religions, from advocacy-based studies to detached observer-oriented studies.
- an ability to critically engage secondary sources through essays designed to apply critical concepts learned in class.
- an ability to write a critical book review of a scholarly work.

<b><u>Final Class Grade:</u></b>	Midterm Exam	(10/22)	25%
	Final Essays	(12/17)	20%
	Roundtable Paper 1	(10/1)	15%
	Roundtable Paper 2	(11/10)	15%
	Book Review	(11/17 or 12/3)	25%
	Attendance and Participation		10 %
	<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

**Midterm Exam:** This examination will consist of short identification terms and two essay questions, respectively. You will be given a review sheet one week before the examination, and we will conduct a brief review session in class.

**Roundtable Papers and Discussions:** In the first half of the semester, we will conduct two roundtable discussion sessions in class. The week before the roundtable, you will be given a question, and, then, in a two- to four-page paper, you will construct your argument. To be admitted to the discussion of the topic the following week, you turn in your paper. Together, your paper and your participation in the roundtable constitute your grade on each roundtable session.

**Final Essays:** These will be like your essay portion of your midterm, but they will be as long as your roundtable papers. You will be given three questions, and you will choose to write on two of them. Your two essays must be between two- to four-pages in total length. You will be given these questions on the last week of classes, and they will be due during finals week.

**Book Review:** Students will complete a book review of *one* of two scholarly texts assigned in class. A separate sheet detailing this assignment is attached.

**Attendance and Participation:** Students are expected to attend every class and participate in class discussions. Students are expected to attend every class and participate in class discussions. This means that students will come to class with notes from the readings and be ready to ask questions or lead the class in a discussion. In the course of the semester, each student will be randomly asked to lead the class in a discussion on one of the articles from the week. The student will be expected to lead the discussion for ten minutes without any intervention from the instructor. A student who is chosen to lead the discussion may pass on leading it one time in the semester. Students are expected to arrive on time. If a student is ten or more minutes late, he or she will be counted as absent, even if he or she attends the rest of class. If a student misses four classes, he or she will have his or her final grade dropped by one full letter grade. If a student misses eight classes, he or she may be expelled from the course. Each class will have a daily question or exercise that students are expected to complete in the first few minutes of class. Daily questions will be collected at the time of the midterm and at the last class of the semester.

**Assessment of Student Work:** Students will be subject to a standard grading scale as follows:

A+	97-100%
A	94-96%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-76%
C-	70-73%
D+	67-69%
D	60-66%
D-	56-59%
F	55 and below

There is no curve for this class. A student will receive the grade he or she earns.

## **Classroom Procedures and Policies:**

**Academic Dishonesty:** Skidmore College's *Academic Integrity Handbook, 2012-2013* defines plagiarism and its consequences as follows:

PLAGIARISM: Presenting as one's own the work of another person (for example, the words, ideas, information, data, evidence, organizing principles, or style of presentation of someone else). Plagiarism includes paraphrasing or summarizing without acknowledgment, submission of another student's work as one's own, the purchase of prepared research or completed papers or projects, and the unacknowledged use of research sources gathered by someone else. Failure to indicate accurately the extent and precise nature of one's reliance on other sources is also a form of plagiarism. The student is responsible for understanding the legitimate use of sources, the appropriate ways of acknowledging his or her academic, scholarly, or creative indebtedness, and the consequences for violating the Skidmore Honor Code. The Academic Integrity Board and the Board of Review will not regard claims of ignorance, of unintentional error, and of academic or personal pressures as an adequate defense for violations of the Honor Code.<sup>1</sup>

Further information on the college-wide policy on plagiarism and proper citation methods may be found on pages 14-26 of *The Academic Integrity Handbook*.

**Late Assignment Policy:** Any paper not given to the instructor in person by the student on the due date is late and will have its grade automatically dropped by one full letter grade. A student will have forty-eight hours to e-mail the instructor a copy of the late paper. (The student must still submit a hard copy.) Any paper that is not given to the instructor within forty-eight hours of the due date will not be accepted, and the offending student will receive a zero for that assignment.

**Accommodations for Disabilities:** If you are a student with a documented disability and need an approved accommodation for this course, please see me in private or e-mail me about the agreement that has been worked out with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities.

**Work Expectations:** Students should expect nine to ten hours of outside preparation work for class each week. On written assignments, successful students distribute their workloads over the course of a week rather than cram their writing into the night before the due date. Be a successful student.

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<sup>1</sup> *Academic Integrity Handbook, 2012-2013* (Saratoga Springs, New York: Office of Academic Advising--Skidmore College, 2012), 17.

**Textbook** (available for purchase at the Skidmore Shop)

■ Lawrence Sullivan, ed., *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*, ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan (New York: Continuum, 2000).

ISBN-13: 978-0826414861

**Book to Review** (available for purchase at the Kenyon Bookstore)

■ Tisa Wenger, *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

ISBN-13: 978-0807859353

**-OR-**

■ Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth Century Northeast* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008).

ISBN-13: 978-0801446313

■ Other articles and chapters will be posted on Blackboard

## SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY TOPICS & STUDENT READING ASSIGNMENTS

*Native American Religions*  
RE 208 - Fall Semester 2015

All assignments are to be read before class. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the reading schedule. Should changes be made, students will be informed in advance.

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**WEEK 1**      Course Introduction

(9/10)

Topics:      Course outline

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**WEEK 2**      Who Decides what is Traditional?; Lakota Cosmology

(9/15 – 9/17)

Topics:      Cultural constructions of identity; religious studies, Native Americans, and hegemonic power; traditional Lakota social organization, foundational stories

Readings:      1) Eva Marie Garroutte, "What if My Grandma Eats Big Macs?" in *Real Indians: Identity and Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 61-81. [Blackboard]

2) Raymond DeMallie, "Lakota Belief and Ritual in the Nineteenth Century," in *Sioux Indian-Religion: Tradition and Innovation* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 25-43. [Blackboard]

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**WEEK 3**      Lakota Ritual and American Imperialism

(9/22 – 9/24)

Topics:      The *hanbleceya* (the "vision quest"); the Sun Dance; US government bans on rituals

Readings:      1) David Martinez, "Lakota Philosophy and the Vision Quest," *Wicazo Sa Review* 19, no. 2 (2004): 79-104. [Blackboard]

2) Clyde Holler, "The Sun Dance under the Ban, 1883-1934/1952," in *Black Elk's Religion: The Sun Dance and Lakota Catholicism* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 110-138. [Blackboard]

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**WEEK 4**      Religious Suppression and Lakota Revitalization      **Paper 1 Due (10/1)**  
(9/29 – 10/1)

Topics:      The Spirit Dance; the Wounded Knee Massacre; Wiping Away the Tears ceremony; revitalization movements

Readings:      1) Michelene E. Pesantubbee, "From Vision to Violence: The Wounded Knee Massacre," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. by Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 62-81. [Blackboard]

2) William K. Powers, "Wiping the Tears: Lakota Religion in the Twenty-first Century," in *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*, 104-120.

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**WEEK 5**      Navajo Blessingway and Navajo Sacrosapes  
(10/6 – 10/8)

Topics:      Foundational Navajo stories; *Hozho*; the Blessingway ceremony; Navajo conceptions of sacred land

Readings:      1) Trudy Griffin-Pierce, "The Continuous renewal of Sacred Relations: Navajo Religion," in *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*, 121-141.

2) Klara Bonsack Kelley and Harris Francis, *Navajo Sacred Places* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 28-50, 81-90. [Blackboard]

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**WEEK 6**      Gender, Rites of Passage, and the Mescalero Apache  
(10/13 – 10/15)

Topics:      Mescalero sacrosapes; *kinalda* ceremony

Readings:      1) Martin Ball, "Sacred Mountains, Religious Paradigms, and Identity Among the Mescalero Apache," *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 4, no. 3(2000): 264-82. [Blackboard]

2) Ines Talamantez, "In the Space between Earth and Sky: Contemporary Mescalero Apache Ceremonialism," in *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*, 142-59.

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**WEEK 7**      Mescalero Religion      **Midterm (10/22)**  
(10/20 – 10/22)

Topics:      Mescalero religion, continued; midterm review

Readings:      **No assigned readings; study for your midterm test!**

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**WEEK 8**     Reclaiming Ancestors, Accessing Sacred Spaces  
(10/27 – 10/29)

Topics:     NAGPRA and repatriation movements; ritual objects in museum spaces; the politics of display; pilgrimage; contested sacrosapes

Readings:     1) Ronald L. Grimes, "Sacred Objects in Museum Spaces," in *Reading, Writing, and Ritualizing: Ritual in Fictive, Liturgical, and Public Places* (Pastoral Press, 1995), 87-100. [Blackboard]

2) Peter Nabokov, "A Tale of Three Lakes," in *Where the Lightning Strikes: The Lives of American Indian Sacred Places* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 73-90. [Blackboard]

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**WEEK 9**     Traditional Powwows, Contest Powwows: Intertribal or Panindian?  
(11/3 – 11/5)

Topics:     Origins of the powwow; contemporary practice; tribal powwows versus competition powwows

Readings:     1) Robert Desjarlait, "The Contest Powwow Versus the Traditional Powwow and the Role of Native American Community," *Wicazo Sa Review* 12, no. 1 (1997): 115-127. [Blackboard]

2) Daniel J. Gelo, "Powwow Patter: Indian Emcee Discourse on Power and Identity," in *Powwow*, ed. by Clyde Ellis, Eric Luke Lassiter, and Gary H. Dunham (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 130-151. [Blackboard]

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**WEEK 10**     Native Americans and Religious Freedom  
(11/10 – 11/12)

**Paper 2 Due (11/10)**

Topics:     Native American religions in the courts; the Native American Church; consequences of legally defining practices as "religious"

Readings:     1) James Botsford and Walter B. Echo-Hawk, "The Legal Tango: The Native American Church v. The United States of America," in *One Nation Under God: The Triumph of the Native American Church*, ed. by Huston Smith and Reuben Snake (Clear Light Books, 1996), 125-42. [Blackboard]

2) Tisa Wenger, *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1-16. [Blackboard]

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**WEEK 11**     Colonialism and Native American Women  
(11/17 – 11/19)                         **Book Review Due Group 1: Wenger, *We Have a Religion* (11/17)**

Topics:           Cultural constructions of gender; Choctaw pre-and post-contact gender norms; contemporary problems with gender equality; reconstructing Native gender roles in contemporary communities.

Readings:       1) Kim Anderson, "Looking Back: The Colonization of Native Womanhood," in *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Sumach Press, 2001), 55-78. [Blackboard]

                      2) Michelene Pesantubbee, "Nancy Ward: American Patriot or Cherokee Nationalist?" *American Indian Quarterly* 38.2 (2014): 177-206.

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**WEEK 12**     Professor Howlett at American Academy of Religion Meeting, Thanksgiving Break

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**WEEK 13**     Native Americans and Christianity  
(12/1 – 12/3)                         **Book Review Due Group 2: Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope* (12/3)**

Topics:           Cultural genocide, hybridization, or indigenization?; Christianity and colonialism

Readings:       1) George Tinker, "Missionary Intentions, Missionary Violence" in *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1993), 1-21. [Blackboard]

                      2) Rachel Wheeler, "Native and Christian," in *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-century Northeast* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), 1-16. [Blackboard]

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**WEEK 14**     Native American Religions, Commodification, and Appropriation  
(12/8 – 12/10)

Topics:           New Age appropriations of Native spirituality; commodification of religion; Native resistance; politics of appropriation; final reflections on the course

Readings:       1) Lisa Aldred, "Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality," *American Indian Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2000): 329-352. [Blackboard]

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**FINAL ESSAYS – Due on 12/17 by email attachment at noon.**

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## Writing a Book Review

A book review is not simply a book summary. Instead, a book review summarizes an author's main argument, highlights an author's contribution, and critiques an author's work (that is, a book review analyzes an author's strengths and weaknesses). A good book review is approximately 1,000 words in length. While you may use some creativity in how you organize and compose your book review, try to use the following guidelines.

Title your review as follows:

*Name of Book*. By Name of Book's Author. Place of Publication: Press of Publication, Year of Publication. Pp. xi [for forward, if applicable], 514 [total pages, including index and endnotes]. Reviewed by Your Name Here.

In your first paragraph, you should quickly tell your reader the subject matter of your book. You may also very briefly alert your reader to the background of the author. Is the author a new scholar, an independent scholar, a tenured professor? By the end of the first paragraph, you need to let your reader know the book's main thesis. You may also try to fit the author's work into a larger framework. In other words, relate how the reviewed text answers particular historiographical questions, concerns, or trends.

In your body paragraphs, you should briefly summarize the author's arguments. This summary should not be a blow-by-blow description of the work; instead, highlight the main points of the author's work and the insights that this work brings to the field.

Next, provide a summary of the reception of the author's work. You should consult and cite several book reviews by scholars in peer-reviewed journals. Use Chicago-Turabian-style footnotes for any citations. Actual published book reviews rarely (if ever) cite other reviews, but you will benefit from reading and summarizing the critiques of others. You may find book reviews for each work through the online databases ATLA and JSTOR or by simply typing in the book's title and "review" in the Skidmore Library's "Searchmore" tool (main library webpage).

Once you have documented the book's critical reception, you should offer your own critique. You might want to assess the author's work in the light of some of the following questions. Is the work well-documented? Has the author used questionable sources or made hasty interpretations? Do you find major logical faults with her/his arguments? Does academic jargon obscure the author's argument? When you make such arguments, do not clutter your text with "I think. . ." or "in my opinion." Do not be tentative. Be bold and make strong arguments. However, always try to be fair.

Finally, summarize the contribution the reviewed work makes to the broader field of Native studies or religious studies. What does this work help scholars understand in general? At this point, you may also make suggestions about the text's suitability for various reading audiences. Should this text be used in undergraduate survey courses, upper-level undergraduate classes, graduate courses, or simply by specialist historians? Conclude with a final recommendation on the book. Is this work definitive or is there much more to be studied? Does the work make a stunning contribution, or is the work so seriously flawed as to merit little notice?

**Stylistic format:** double-spaced, times-new roman font, one-inch margins, no page number on first page, all other pages numbered at the bottom (centered)

**Due date:** Varies by text chosen; consult the syllabus