

Native American Religions
RE 208, Section 001 - Fall 2016

Meetings: M/W 2:30 – 3:50 p.m., Ladd 107

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

Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:30-3:00 p.m.; Thursday, 1:30-3:00 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.

<u>Final Class Grade:</u>	Midterm Exam	(10/19)	25%
	Final Exam	(12/21)	25%
	Roundtable Paper 1	(9/28)	15%
	Roundtable Paper 2	(11/7)	15%
	Book Review	(11/16 or 12/7)	20%
	Attendance and Participation		10 %
	Total		100%

Midterm and Final Exams: These examinations will consist of short identification terms and two essay questions, respectively. You will be given a review sheet one week before each 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.

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. 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. 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. Students will receive the grades they earn.

Classroom Procedures and Policies:

Academic Dishonesty: Skidmore College's *Academic Integrity Handbook, 2016-2017* defines plagiarism and its consequences as follows:

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 JUDICIAL BOARDS OF THE COLLEGE 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.¹

Further information on the college-wide policy on plagiarism and proper citation methods may be found on pages 16-27 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.

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 Skidmore Shop)

- 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-

- Angela Tarango, *Choosing the Jesus Way: Native American Pentecostals and the Fight for the Indigenous Principle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).
ISBN-13: 978-1469612928

- Other articles and chapters will be posted on Blackboard

¹ *Academic Integrity Handbook, 2016-2017* (Saratoga Springs, New York: Office of Academic Advising--Skidmore College, 2016), 8.

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY TOPICS & STUDENT READING ASSIGNMENTS

Native American Religions
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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.

WEEK 1 Course Introduction

(9/7)

Topics: Course outline

WEEK 2 Who Decides what is Traditional?; Lakota Cosmology

(9/12 – 9/14)

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]

WEEK 3 Lakota Ritual and American Imperialism

(9/19 – 9/21)

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]

WEEK 4 Religious Suppression and Lakota Revitalization **Paper 1 Due (9/28)**
(9/26 – 9/28)

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.

WEEK 5 Navajo Blessingway and Navajo Sacrosapes
(10/3 – 10/5)

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]

WEEK 6 The Mescalero Apache and Sacred Space
(10/10 – 10/12)

No Class—10/12 (Yom Kippur)

Topics: Mescalero sacrosapes

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]

WEEK 7 Mescalero and Rites of Passage
(10/17 – 10/19)

Midterm (10/19)

Topics: Mescalero kinalda ceremony; midterm review

Readings: 1) Ines Talamantez, "In the Space between Earth and Sky: Contemporary Mescalero Apache Ceremonialism," in *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*, 142-59.

WEEK 8 Purity, Power, and Reciprocity: Yurok and Yupik Examples
(10/24 – 10/26)

Topics: Yurok religion; men and women's purification ceremonies; difference versus equality; introduction to the Yupik

Readings: 1) Mary Virginia Rojas, "She Bathes in a Sacred Place," *Wicazo Sa Review* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 129-55. [Blackboard]

2) Ann Fienup-Riordan, "Eye of the Dance: Spiritual Life of the Central Yup'ik Eskimos," in *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*, 181-207.

WEEK 9 Traditional Powwows, Contest Powwows: Intertribal or Panindian?
(10/31 – 11/2)

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]

WEEK 10 Reclaiming Ancestors, Accessing Sacred Spaces **Paper 2 Due (11/7)**
(11/7 – 11/9)

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]

WEEK 14 Native Christianity, cont'd; Commodification, and Appropriation
(12/12 – 12/14)

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

Readings: 1) Angela Tarango, "The Lived Indigenous Principle: New Understandings of Pentecostal Healing, Native Culture, and Pentecostal Indian Identity," in *Choosing the Jesus Way: Native Pentecostals and the Fight for the Indigenous Principle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014): 79-114. [Blackboard]

 2) 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]

FINAL Exam – 12/21, 6:00 p.m., Ladd 107

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 800 to 1200 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 the author's arguments? Does academic jargon obscure the author's argument? When you make such critiques, 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 to the field, 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 under "Reading Schedule"