

FALL 2013 COURSE SYLLABUS

REL 3380

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGION

Contact and Course Information

Professor: Dr. Andrea Mantell Seidel

Course number: REL 3380 Sec. 01 89251

Credits: 3 credits

Semester: Fall 2013

Course Time: MWF 2:00-2:50

Location: Green Library, 100 B

Office Hours: **9:00-9:50 MW, Weds. 2:00-3:00** or by appointment

Office: DM 320 C

Phone: 305 -348-4293

Required Class Materials:

Text Books

[FIU e-mail account](#)

Email: seidela@fiu.edu

ACADEMIC CODE OF CONDUCT

"Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook."

Academic dishonesty policy

Cheating is defined as the attempt, successful or not, to give or obtain aid and/or information by illicit means in meeting any academic requirements, including examinations. Cheating includes falsifying reports and documents.

Plagiarism is defined as the use, without proper acknowledgements, of the ideas, phrases, sentences, or larger units of discourse from another writer or speaker. Plagiarism includes the unauthorized copying of software and the violation of copyright laws. Plagiarism may result in an F in the assignment, an F for the entire class, or expulsion from the university.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to Native American religion and spirituality, focusing on the sacred ecology, mythology, cosmology, ritual and dance complexes of a number of diverse tribes within North, Central, and South America. Native American religion is addressed within the larger historical and contemporary social, political, and cultural contexts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To gain understanding of the diversity of cultures and religious traditions of the indigenous Americas;
- To gain insight into and understanding of the significance and meaning of spirituality within Native American cultures;
- To understand Native American religion within the larger social, cultural, and environmental context of selected tribal communities;
- To learn fundamental methodological concepts utilized in the study and analysis of Native American religion;
- To gain an understanding of the economic, political, environmental and legal restrictions that have been placed upon the practice of Native American religions and culture.

LEARNING OUTCOMES/COMPETENCIES

- Students will gain an understanding of several predominant theories and methodological concerns in the analysis and description of religious ritual in Native American society.
- Students will develop an understanding of the role of key participants in Native American sacred rituals, including tricksters/clowns, shamans, and priests.
- Students will gain an understanding of the relationship of Native American religion to the predominant social, political, and cultural structures of the society in which it is a part, both historical and contemporary.
- Students will be introduced to a variety of tribal religious and ritual complexes to include Pueblo, Maya, Quecha, Mescalero Apache, and Oglala Sioux among others and gain an understanding of cultural specificities among Native American tribes.
- Students will be able to comprehensively define key terms related to religion and ritual in American Indian society (myth, sacred symbols, rites of passage, ritual).

LEARNING STRATEGIES

- Verbal instruction through lectures and class discussion
- Video and DVD
- Student oral presentations and group projects
- Reading and written assignments
- In-class experiential exercises
- To gain an understanding of the economic, political, environmental and legal restrictions that have been placed upon the practice of Native American religions and culture.

Grading Scale:

98-100	A+	“As” are awarded for excellent to exceptional work, free of technical and stylistic errors, showing sustained thought and engagement with the material on an appropriate but impressive academic level.
93-97	A	
90-92	A-	
88-89	B+	“Bs” are awarded for good to very good work, with some occasional errors, which nonetheless clearly indicates a good grasp of the material and assigned task.
83-87	B	
80-82	B-	
78-79	C+	“Cs” are awarded for average to above average work, meeting minimal standards but marked with errors, and exposing gaps in student performance and/or fulfillment of the assignment.
73-77	C	
70-72	C-	
68-69	D+	“Ds” are awarded for barely passing to below average work, usually riddled with errors and seriously deficient in fulfilling the assignment.
63-67	D	
60-62	D-	
Below 60	F	“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY/SELECTED READING ASSIGNMENTS

Students are required to read the books listed below during the course of the semester. Readings and class lectures should provide source material for writing the mid-term and final take-home essay. Students are encouraged to read some of the optional listings as well.

Required texts:

Smith, Huston. *A Seat at the Table: Huston Smith in Conversation with Native Americans on Religious Freedom*, ed. Phil Cousineau, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2006 ISBN 0-520-24439-7 or ISBN 13: 978-0-520-24439-9

Reader in Native American Religion

Your custom course materials for **REL 3380** published by University Readers are now available online at <https://students.universityreaders.com/store/>. I have carefully selected the readings included in this course pack to provide you with a more relevant, custom learning experience. Please purchase this course pack to stay on top of your readings. Doing so will help you be successful in this class.

The course pack price includes materials that we will use in class daily, so you should purchase your own copy. Also, please keep in mind that our institution adheres to copyright law, so any copyrighted material should not be copied or duplicated in any manner.

To purchase the textbook, please follow the instructions below:

Step 1: Log on to <https://students.universityreaders.com/store/>.

Step 2: Create an account or log in if you have an existing account to purchase.

Step 3: Easy-to-follow instructions will guide you through the rest of the ordering process. Payment can be made by all major credit cards or with an electronic check.

Orders are typically processed within 24 hours and the shipping time will depend on the selected shipping method and day it is shipped (orders are not shipped on Sundays or holidays). If you experience any difficulties, please email orders@universityreaders.com or call 800.200.3908 ext. 503.

Excerpted articles are from the following texts:

Deloria, Vine *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America*, edited by James Treat, New York and London: Routledge, 1999. ISBN0-4

Sullivan, Lawrence E., Ed. *Native Religions and Cultures of Central and South America*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002.

Sullivan, Lawrence E., Ed. *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003.

Tedlock, Dennis and Barbara, Eds. *Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1975.

WEB-ASSISTED COURSE MATERIALS: BLACKBOARD LEARN

This is a web-assisted course. Important information is posted on Blackboard, so be sure to consult it regularly. Please note the following menu items:

Student Resources: Helpful books, websites, links, and other resources

Announcements: Instructor may communicate with students via announcements

Assignments

Course Content: Contains important course information

Email: Send email to selected individuals using the drop down list. Email instructor via messages or email.

Discussions/forums: Here you can send your comments to everyone in the class for discussion.

Compose your item within a specific topic or for a new item post it in "Main."

Messages: within Blackboard only

Turnitin (use for written assignments)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, GRADING SCALE, AND EVALUATION

Grades are based on attendance, written assignments, class participation, and individual progress.

15% Midterm objective exam

15% Final exam

30% Three short papers (10% each)

25% Attendance and active class participation (evaluation based on attendance record, punctuality- 15%) attitude/effort, and participation in class activities, in class writing assignments and projects-10%)

15% Oral presentation /group project and individual, written outlines

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION/TARDIES

After the first two classes, class will begin promptly. Attendance will be taken at that time, and **all who are not present will be marked absent**. Attendance at all classes is a requirement.

Students who know in advance that they will be late or absent must discuss their tardiness or absence with Professor Seidel.

Students are expected to attend every class session unless very ill or family emergency. Each absence, no matter what the reason, affects the continuity of learning, and therefore will affect the student's grade. Three late arrivals and three early departures will result in one absence. **FIVE POINTS DEDUCTED FOR EACH ABSENCE** of weighted grade).

- Two make-up absences possible with permission (attendance at Program for the Study of Spirituality lecture series) and extra credit (credit for missed class and three tardies) for approved events related to Native American religion.

Students who register late will not be penalized during the drop-add period, however your late registration must appear on the official University role received each week by the faculty.

Special arrangements can be made with the instructor in the event of illness, injury, or life commitments. An incomplete is only given if circumstances beyond your control prevent you from completing course requirements. An incomplete must be completed within two terms.

Students are expected to prepare for class discussions and read articles AHEAD of time. A portion of the attendance/participation grade as indicated above will be based on participation in and preparation for small group and class discussion.

2. EXAMS

A mid-term and final exam will be administered.

3. SHORT ESSAYS AND LEGAL "BRIEF" OR ARGUMENT

Essays are comprised of papers that demonstrate the student's skills in creative thinking, analysis and writing. Essays will focus on an aspect or issue related to understanding native religion. All essays should be typed (12 pt. font, Times Roman or Arial font, and double-spaced). Grades are based on self-reflection, clarity of writing, and comprehension of Native American perspective and relationship to living creatures. **Note: One-half the essay should reference the lectures and readings (i.e. Native American view) and the other should be your personal point of view/experience).**

The third essay consists of arguments to support in-class mock trial (see specific instructions on Blackboard).

Short Essay 1: (about 2-2 ½ pages)

Discuss the Native American view of the animal world and other living creatures. Contemplate your relationship with a beloved animal. Discuss how this relationship reflects some aspect of yourself (your personality or an attribute of yourself). Describe how your life is enhanced through your relationship with this animal. In what way might your relationship reflect the Native American reverence for the animal world? How can this relationship enhance your own humanity and respect for the environment?

Short Essay 2: Select one of the following topics to write on and be sure to include a discussion of the Native American worldview based on class readings and lectures:

Reflect on an experience where you felt intimate or a “sense of kinship” with the land or with a landscape. Describe this experience in relation to Native American worldview of nature.

OR

Describe an experience in which you encountered a “holy place” that told you something about the ultimate holiness of creation. Discuss this in relation to the Native American view of sacred places.

Third Paper: Legal Argument 3:

Prepare a short “brief” (talking points pro or con) to be presented by either your designated defense lawyer or prosecutor in a mock trial pitting a hypothetical Native American tribe against a water company. The hypothetical case involves a suit filed by the Native American tribe against a water company seeking to build a water desalination/purification plant at the site of their most sacred spring (site of tribe’s mythological origins). The land is being leased from the county government. The plant will serve the local community which is experiencing water shortages due to a low water table or depleted aquifer.

4. ORAL PRESENTATIONS/GROUP PROJECTS

Oral presentations (a “fugue of five senses”) will be conducted in assigned groups. The presentation should focus on a specific tribe and relevant issue approved by the graduate mentor and professor. Each student must identify a research topic that he/she will contribute to the whole, as well as participate in and contribute to the other components related to the religious ritual. Other components may be comprised of art work (shields, emblems, power objects, costumes), video/DVD, songs, poems, myths, music, dance, an altar or other delineation of sacred space, or other artifacts based on research into that particular tribe. Each student must turn in an outline and summary of his/her work that comprised a percentage of the whole.

Tips for a successful project (non-academic/research components):

- Identify your group as a mini tribal society where the interrelatedness of the group is paramount;
- Include humor, play, inversion if relevant (clown, trickster element);
- Incorporate key symbols, colors, objects;
- Braid significant mythology into your presentation in a dramatic way;
- Try to let your language reflect the culture.

Individual assignments within the group should be divided according to the following areas below. Depending on the number of people in each group, some students may have dual assignments from the topics below if there is insufficient resources to report on the topic or the topic is not central to the tribe’s ceremony.

1. Historical/sociological development and context of the tribe –up to 1930s
2. Mid 20th to 21st century (contemporary) expressions (influence of Christianity, modern expressions of religious traditions on the reservation, syncretism, etc.)
3. Mythology (myths of creation, time, space, meaning and analysis of sacred narratives, songs and oral traditions)
4. Symbolic systems and expressive culture (e.g. movement, colors, numbers, ceremonial objects) –include detailed description of ceremony, meaning of costumes, articles used in ceremony

5. Ritual specialists (clowns, shamans, priests roles and function)
6. Sacrificial rites, violence, rebellion, wars among the tribe (e.g. ball game among the Maya, human sacrifice; piercing among the Sioux)
7. Ethical relationships and precepts, moral values and codes; clan systems of organization, notion of kinship
8. Relationship to land

Note: Numbers 1 and 2 will be comprehensive and should not be combined with other topics

Peer Assessment: Prior to the oral presentation, each member of the team, as well as the lead graduate student, will submit an **anonymous** assessment of the other team members. The evaluation will consist of two parts: a grading rubric and a written evaluation of each teammate, highlighting each members strengths and weaknesses. Your final grade will be an average of the scores you receive from your teammates, plus a grade given by the professor for the final presentation made to the whole class. The final grade will be converted by the professor to a numerical percentage (e.g. 85%).

IMPORTANT GENERAL CLASS INFORMATION AND TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Late Work

All late work, without prior approval by the professor, will lose 10 points for each day that it is late until the grade of 0 is reached.

Tips for Success

- Keep up with readings and assignments.
- Talk to me if you have problems or questions! Together we can work out the problems. If you are having difficulties come talk to me **BEFORE** an assignment is due or if you have excessive absences. I cannot help you after you have turned in an assignment or have been chronically absent or tardy, but I can and will help you before the problems develop.
- Participation, focus, effort, concentration, and attendance are the keys to success!

E-mail

I check e-mail often. It is reasonable to expect a return message within 72 hours. Generally I return e-mail in a much shorter amount of time; however, sometimes life does not allow that. However, please review the syllabus, course outline and web site often, as most of the answers can be found there.

Questions and comments should be sent to seidela@fiu.edu

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1 and 2: INTRODUCTION TO NATIVE AMERICAN RITUAL AND RELIGION AND METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS IN STUDYING NATIVE AMERICAN RITUAL AND RELIGION

- Course Overview
- Introduction to Native American spirituality
- Theories and definitions of myth, ritual, key symbols as applied to Native American culture
- Methodological strategies for understanding Native American sacred ritual

Reading:

Deloria, Vine. "Native American Spirituality." *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* . New York: Routledge, 1999. pp. 130-134.

Deloria, Vine. "Religion and the Modern American Indian." *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* . New York: Routledge, 1999. pp. 122-129.

Sullivan, Lawrence. *Introduction*. Native Religions and Cultures of North America, pp. 1-32

WEEK 3: TIME AND SPACE IN NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGION

Reading:

Whorf, B.L. "An American Indian Model of the Universe" in Tedlock, Dennis and Barbara, Eds. *Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy*. Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1992. pp. 121-129.

WEEK 4: NATIVE AMERICAN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE

Reading:

Lee, Dorothy. "Linguistic Reflection of Wintu Thought" in Tedlock, Dennis and Barbara Tedlock, Eds. *Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy* . Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1992. pp. 130-140.

Smith, Huston and George-Kanentiio, Douglas. *Native Language, Native Spirituality: From Crisis to Challenge*, pp. 75-96.

WEEK 5: LAKOTA RELIGION: THE VISION QUEST, GUARDIAN SPIRITS, SUN DANCE, AND SACRIFICE AND SHIPIBO VISIONS

Reading:

Deloria, Vine. "Introduction to Black Elk." *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* . New York: Routledge, 1999. pp. 232-234.

Deloria, Vine. "Introduction to the Vision Quest." *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* . New York: Routledge, 1999. pp. 269-272.

Powers, William. "Wiping the Tears: Lakota Religion in the 21st Century." Sullivan, Lawrence, Ed. *Native Religions and Cultures of North America: Anthropology of the Sacred* . Continuum International, 2003. pp. 104-120.

Charing, Howard. *Communion with the Infinite: The Visual Music of the Shipibo people of the Amazon*.

Short Essay 1: Native American Religion and Animal/Creative World (see syllabus for full assignment/question)

WEEK 6: RITUAL SPECIALISTS: TRICKSTERS, CLOWNS, AND SHAMANS

Reading:

Tedlock, Barbara. "Clown's Way." Tedlock, Dennis and Barbara Tedlock, Eds. *Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy* . Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1992. pp. 105-121.

Napewastewiñ Schützer, Marjorie Anne. *Winyanktehca: Two Souls Person*. Paper presented to the European Network of Professionals in Transsexualism. August 1994.

WEEK 7 and 8: ECOLOGY, SPIRITUALITY, AND SACRED LANDS

Smith, Huston and LaDuke, Winona. *Ecology and Spirituality*, pp. 39-57

Smith, Huston and Charlotte Black Elk. *Homelands of Religion*, pp. 58-74.

Deloria, Vine. "Sacred Lands and Religious Freedom." *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* . New York: Routledge, 1999. pp. 203-213.

Short Essay: Native American Relationship to Land and Place

WEEK 9 and 10: NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS LAW, JUSTICE, AND THE FUTURE

Reading:

Smith, Huston and Echo-Hawk, Walter. *Five Hundred Nations Within One*, pp. 24-38.

Deloria, Vine. "Secularism, Civil Religion, and Religious Freedom of the American Indian." *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* . New York: Routledge, 1999. pp. 218-228.

Smith, Huston. *Redeeming the Future: The Traditional Instructions of Spiritual Law*

Essay: Legal Argument for Mock Trial (see syllabus)

WEEK 11: RITES OF PASSAGE: MESCALERO APACHE PUBERTY CEREMONY

Reading:

Talamantez, Ines. "In the Space between Earth and Sky: Contemporary Mescalero Apache Ceremony." Sullivan, Lawrence, Ed. *Native Religions and Cultures of North America: Anthropology of the Sacred*. Continuum International, 2003. pp. 142-160.

WEEK 12: QUICHE MAYA OF GUATEMALA

Reading:

De la Garza, Mercedes. "Sacred Forces of the Mayan Universe." Sullivan, Lawrence, Ed. *Native Religions and Cultures of Central and South America: Anthropology of the Sacred* Continuum International, 2002. pp. 92-176.

WEEK 13: DANCE AND NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGION

Reading:

Buckley, *Renewal as Discourse and Discourse as Renewal in Native Northwestern California in Native Religions and Cultures of North America* in Lawrence Sullivan, Ed. pp. 33-52.

Discussion questions based on reading assignment:

1. What symbols /functions/social facts can you identify that compare/parallel with other ritual systems (e.g. opposition/duality, myths of creation)
2. Explain how opposition/duality are contextualized/play out in the jump dance and deerskin dance
3. How do law, health, and religion operate as one topic?
4. How does participation in the dance express one's Indianess i.e. help one become more Indian?

WEEK 14: Oral Presentations

Reading:

Research topics

Smith, Huston. *Stealing Our Spirit*, pp. 130-145.

WEEK 15: Oral Presentations

Reading:

Smith, Huston. *Healing of Indian Country*, pp. 184-201.

WEEK 16: FINALS WEEK

