

# Native American Worldviews

## Instructor

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## Course level and type

undergraduate seminar

## Hours of Instruction

2.5 hours/week; 16 week term

## Enrollment and year last taught

26 students in 1996

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## Course Description

This course engages in a close examination of the role of worldview in academic scholarship, especially as worldview defines and determines the process of inquiry and interpretation. We particularly focus on the ways in which contemporary native scholars are bringing indigenous intellectual and cultural traditions to bear on a wide range of dominant academic disciplines and theories. Course readings present native critical approaches to themes in representation, orality and literacy, material culture, historiography, ethnography, literary theory, feminist theory, religious studies, and natural science. Selected critical films by native filmmakers are also screened and discussed. Each student initiates and completes an independent research project on a major native intellectual figure. Class attendance and participation is required.

## Course Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the Maxwell Museum store in the Anthropology building. Most of these books are also on closed reserve at Zimmerman Library and at the Native American Studies Center library.

Meili, Dianne. Those Who Know: Profiles of Alberta's Native Elders. Edmonton, AB: NeWest, 1991.

Bates, Sara (ed.). Indian Humor. San Francisco, CA: American Indian Contemporary Arts, 1995.

Lippard, Lucy R. (ed.). Partial Recall: Photographs of Native North Americans. New York, NY: New Press, 1992.

Brant, Beth. Writing as Witness: Essay and Talk. Toronto, ON: Women's Press, 1994.

Momaday, N. Scott. The Way to Rainy Mountain. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 1969.

Sarris, Greg. Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1993.

Allen, Paula Gunn. The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions. Boston, MA: Beacon, 1992.

Treat, James (ed.). Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada. New York, NY: Routledge, 1996.

Deloria, Vine, Jr. Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact. New York, NY: Scribners, 1995.

## **Course Requirements**

Each student in this course is required to:

- (1) complete the assigned readings and maintain a reading journal;
- (2) attend class regularly and participate in class and small group discussions and other activities;
- (3) write and submit a mid-term essay on the topic of intellectual autobiography;
- (4) initiate and complete an original, substantive research project on a major Native American intellectual, and submit all research project assignments in a timely fashion;
- (5) collaborate with several other students in developing a group presentation based on their research projects; and
- (6) write and submit a final essay integrating the assigned readings with the research project.

## **Research Project**

This course is a research seminar; the primary course assignment is the research project. Each student will engage in a detailed study of a major Native American intellectual. Research topics will be determined by the fifth week of the semester, and students will then be organized into research groups. Project assignments are due in my box in the American Studies office (Ortega 305) at 4:00 p.m. on the dates specified in the following schedule:

February 2 Intellectual Autobiography

February 16 Topic Statement

February 23 Preliminary Bibliography

March 8 Intellectual Biography

April 5 Presentation Outline

May 3 Annotated Bibliography

May 6 Final Essay

## **Grading Criteria**

Class participation and course assignments will be graded on a point system, according to the following breakdown:

Attendance 30 points

Intellectual Autobiography 10 points

Intellectual Biography 10 points

Annotated Bibliography 15 points

Class Presentation 10 points

Final Essay 25 points

Assignments that are submitted late will have one-half point deducted per day (not counting weekends). Final grades will be determined according to the following scale:

A 90-100 points

B 80-89 points

C 70-79 points

D 60-69 points

## **Reading Schedule**

January 16, 18

Course Introduction

January 23, 25, 30, February 1

Meili, Those Who Know

February 6, 8

Bates, Indian Humor

February 13, 15

Lippard, Partial Recall

February 20, 22

Brant, Writing as Witness

February 27, 29

Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain

March 5, 7, 19, 21

Sarris, Keeping Slug Woman Alive

March 26, 28, April 2, 4

Allen, The Sacred Hoop

April 9, 11, 16, 18

Treat, Native and Christian

April 23, 25, 30, May 2

Deloria, Red Earth, White Lies

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## **Course Objectives and Key Questions**

### **Course Objectives**

To learn through cross-cultural educational experiences.

To use a better understanding of others in order to engage in a reevaluation of self.

To broaden the experience of university education.

To compare university education with the oral traditions of native elders.

To learn how stories in the oral tradition can provide guidance and leadership.

To develop a better understanding of the role of folklore and mythology in society.

To understand the differences between linear and cyclical concepts of time.

To analyze the relationships between nature, identity and power.

To explore the complexities of religious identity amidst traditional/Christian diversity.

To improve basic skills such as reading, writing, speaking, doing research, and thinking critically.

To get acquainted with a new faculty member.

To make new friends.

To earn three credits by passing the course.

To receive a good grade.

### **Key Questions**

What is a worldview?

How should we study and/or represent a worldview?

What kinds of ethical problems are involved in studying worldviews?

What kinds of practical problems are involved in studying worldviews?

What kinds of epistemological problems are involved in studying worldviews?

Are there shared and distinctive features of indigenous worldviews?

How are native intellectuals engaging dominant academic disciplines and theories with indigenous worldviews?

What is the role of worldview in analytical scholarship?

What is the role of worldview in creative expression?

What is a text?

How should we read/interpret a text?

What is the relationship between worldview and imagination in texts?

What is the relationship between worldview and imagination in reading/interpreting texts?

## **Special Accommodations**

Please notify me as soon as possible if you experience any personal circumstances that might affect your participation in this course: medical conditions, physical limitations, learning disabilities, academic problems, emotional difficulties, or religious obligations. I will be happy to make reasonable accommodations when appropriate, provided that you notify me in a timely fashion. All personal information will be kept in strict confidentiality. Several important campus offices that you may find helpful are listed below:

Center for Academic Program Support

Zimmerman Library third floor, 277-4560

Learning Support Services

Zimmerman Library 339, 277-8291

Disabled Student Services

Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506

Student Crisis Center

Mesa Vista Hall, 277-3013

Mental Health Service

## **Academic Integrity**

The American Studies faculty has adopted the following policy on matters of academic integrity:

Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or without the University; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records.

If you are found guilty of academic dishonesty, you will receive an F for the class and be reported to the Dean of Students. If you are given a written, take-home exam, it is dishonest to work with another student on that exam. If your work shows marked similarity to any other student's work, you both will be failed. Take responsibility for your own work and do not leave it anywhere (including in the storage unit of the various University computer pods) where it can be copied.