

# Native Americans and Christianity

## 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

28 students in 1997

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## Course Description

Native people are the original inhabitants of these lands, while Christianity has played a prominent role in the recent history of the Americas. Christian ideas and practices influenced Europeans and others as they interacted with native people, and native people have selectively appropriated many of these same traditions in their struggle to survive the European invasion. Religious attitudes and motivations have affected every area of life, on both sides of this struggle, from family life and education to politics and economic relations. Understanding the relationship between native people and Christianity is thus an important aspect of understanding the experience of native peoples. The many dimensions of this relationship are also among the most divisive issues within native communities today, a situation that calls for critical and engaged scholarship.

This upper-division undergraduate course is an interdisciplinary survey of the relationship between native people and Christianity. We begin with some broad questions about religion and religious studies, considering both native and Christian communities and traditions. We then explore several case studies of historic relations, focusing our attention on the Pequots, the Kickapoos, and the Lakotas during the nineteenth century. We draw on these theoretical and historical foundations in studying contemporary realities among native Christians in other parts of the United States and Canada as well as here in the Southwest. Throughout the semester, we read a wide range of literature by and about native people and discuss a variety of ways in which they have interacted with Christian individuals and communities, appropriated Christian ideas and practices, and expressed and maintained Christian identities. Class meetings will include discussions and exercises along with selected videos and guest presentations.

Students in this course are expected to complete the assigned readings, attend class regularly, and participate in class discussions; engage in an original, substantive research project focusing on a native Christian community or individual; and submit several short writing assignments. Students who pass the course will possess a basic understanding of native and Christian religious traditions and an informed perspective on the intersections of religion and ethnicity. They will also have gained practical experience in reading critically, making oral presentations, conducting academic research, collaborating with other students, and writing

critical essays. Annotated bibliographies prepared by students will be bound together and placed in the Reserve Collection at Zimmerman Library; if possible, we will also post this material on a World Wide Web site.

## Course Readings

These books are available at the UNM Bookstore and are also on two-hour closed reserve at the Reserve Desk in Zimmerman Library:

Sandra S. Frankiel, Christianity: A Way of Salvation (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1985).

Larry J. Zimmerman, Native North America (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1996).

Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks (eds.), Sioux Indian Religion: Tradition and Innovation (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1987).

Barry O'Connell (ed.), On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, A Pequot (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1992).

Joseph B. Herring, Kenekuk, The Kickapoo Prophet (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

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

Vine Deloria, Jr., For This Land: Writings on Religion in America (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999).

These articles are on two-hour closed reserve at the Reserve Desk in Zimmerman Library:

Christopher Vecsey, "The Campaign to Regularize Pueblo Catholicism: Santo Domingo," European Review of Native American Studies 9, no. 2 (1995): 15-19.

Diego Mazon, The Story and Faith Journey of Seventeen Native Catechists (Great Falls, MT: Tekakwitha Conference National Center, [1983?]): 61-65.

Gustav Niebuhr, "Zunis Mix Traditions with Icons of Church," New York Times, January 29, 1995: 14.

"Two Indian Deacons Ordained to Serve in Their Own Pueblos," Albuquerque Tribune, June 17, 1996.

Greg Toppo, "Traditions Blend in Tewa Mass," Santa Fe New Mexican, December 24, 1995: A1-A2.

Gladys A. Reichard, "The Navaho and Christianity," American Anthropologist 51 (1949): 66-71.

Steve Pavlik, "Navajo Christianity: Historical Origins and Modern Trends," Wicazo Sa Review 12, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 43-58.

## Course Requirements

Class participation and course assignments will be graded on a point system. Assignments submitted after the due date will be downgraded the equivalent of one letter grade per day.

Class Participation (preparation, attendance, discussion) 25 points

Religious Family Tree (due September 4) 5 points

Research Proposal (due September 23) 5 points

Midterm Essay (due October 14) 10 points

Presentation Outline (due November 18) 5 points

Annotated Bibliography (due December 2) 20 points

Class Presentation (in-class December 2, 4, 9) 20 points

Final Essay (due December 16) 10 points

Final grades will be determined according to the following scale:

A range 90-100 points

B range 80-89 points

C range 70-79 points

D range 60-69 points

## **Course Outline**

### I. Religion and Religions

August 26  
Introductions

August 28  
Religion and Religion  
Frankiel -56

September 2  
Christians and Christian Religions  
Frankiel -89

September 4  
Christians and Christian Religions  
Frankiel -126

### **Religious Family Tree due**

September 9  
Native Americans and Native American Religions  
Zimmerman -73

September 11  
Native Americans and Native American Religions  
Zimmerman -137

September 16  
Lakotas and Lakota Religions  
DeMallie and Parks -65

September 18  
Lakotas and Lakota Religions  
DeMallie and Parks 66-89, 158-187, 210-216

## II. Historic Relations

September 23  
Pequots and William Apess  
O'Connell 117-61

### **Research Proposal due**

September 25  
Pequots and William Apess  
O'Connell xiii-lxxxii

September 30  
Pequots and William Apess  
O'Connell 99-115, 275-310

October 2  
Kickapoos and Kenekuk  
Herring -75

### **Midterm Essay assigned**

October 7  
Kickapoos and Kenekuk  
Herring -131

October 9  
**NO CLASS (Conference)**

October 14  
Lakotas and Christians  
DeMallie and Parks 91-147

### **Midterm Essay due**

October 16

**NO CLASS (Fall Break)**

October 21

Lakotas and Christians  
DeMallie and Parks 149-55, 189-209

### **Research Groups organized**

### III. Contemporary Realities

October 23  
Native Christians  
Treat -55

October 28  
Native Christians  
Treat -104

October 30  
Native Christians  
Treat -162

November 4  
Native Christians  
Treat 163-90, 207-40

### **Presentation Outline assigned**

November 6  
Southwest Native Christians  
articles

November 11  
Southwest Native Christians  
articles

November 13  
Natives and Christians  
Deloria -68

November 18  
Natives and Christians  
Deloria -161

### **Presentation Outline due Presentation Schedule organized**

November 20  
Natives and Christians  
Deloria -228

### **Annotated Bibliography (or Term Paper) assigned**

November 25  
Natives and Christians  
Deloria -296

November 27

**NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)**

#### IV. Conclusions

December 2

Class Presentations

**Annotated Bibliography (or Term Paper) due**

December 4

Class Presentations

**Final Essay assigned**

December 9

Class Presentations

December 11

Class Presentations and Conclusions

December 16

**NO CLASS (Final Exams)**

**Final Essay due**

#### **Academic Integrity**

The American Studies faculty has adopted a formal policy on academic integrity, which is based on the "Policy on Academic Dishonesty" adopted by the University President:

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.

I will be happy to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about academic and professional ethics, either during class or in an office appointment.

#### **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 crises, family 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

Mental Health Service

Student Health Center, 277-4537

Disabled Student Services

Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506

Agora Crisis Center

Student Union Building basement, 277-3013