Native Americans and Christianity

Instructor

James Treat, Assistant Professor
Department of American Studies
University of New Mexico
Ortega Hall 311
Albuquerque, NM 87131
E-mail: treaty@unm.edu

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

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:


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


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


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
II. Historic Relations

Research Proposal due

Midterm Essay assigned

Midterm Essay due

NO CLASS (Conference)

NO CLASS (Fall Break)
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
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