

Professor Ivan Strenski Winter 1998
University of California, Riverside Ethnic Studies/Religious Studies 12

Required Texts:

Achebe -- Arrow of God

Gill -- Native American Religions

Kellerman -- The Ritual Bath

Strenski -- Course Reader

Office hours: Tu Th 1030-1200 HMNSS 2621, X5986 or Chair's Office, HMNSS, RLST Dept Suite X5111

Course requirements

1. Total of three in-class 15 minute Scantron and short answer quizzes and two 3 page take-home essays = (2/3 course total)
2. Final examination = (1/3 course total)--Scantron and short essays
3. Attendance and participation in sections. Failure to attend and participate in section discussions will result in a significant reduction of the final grade.

Schedule of Class Meetings: all items are included in class reader or in required books

8 Jan Introduction

13 Jan What Is Religion? And How Should We Study It?

(Ninian Smart), "Introduction"

15 Jan Racism and the Burden of (Colonial) History

(Orwell), "Shooting an Elephant". (Horsman), 6. "The Other Americans", 7. "Superior and Inferior Races"

20 Jan Racism Is Everybody's Problem: The Ethical Dimension of Religion

Khalid Mohammad, Hitler, Mein Kampf. Robert Girardi, "Nose Job"; Afghan Hospitals; Slavery in Sudan; Henry Louis Gates, "The Charmer". Cor

22 Jan At Home and the World: What Is Ritual?

Kellerman, The Ritual Bath. Jacob Neusner, "Back to the Fold, Not to the Faith". Mud People

27 Jan Indigenous Peoples, Christopher Columbus and their Religions: Doctrinal Dimension

Gill, Native American Religions, ch 1-2, 4 (pp 83-97)

QUIZ TODAY IN CLASS covering material from 8 to 22 Jan

29 Jan Film: "Black Robe": Seeing All the Dimensions of Religion Together

Brian Moore, Black Robe, excerpts

Take-home review essay assignment on "Black Robe" (3 pages, double-spaced. due 5 Feb in class): Comment critically, with explicit reference

3 Feb Religion of "Natural Man": Irrational, Magical, and Just Like Us?

(Marcel Mauss), The Gift. (Claude Lévi-Strauss), ch IX, "The Sorcerer and His Magic". Gill, Native American Religions, ch 3, 4 (pp. 97-113) and

5 Feb Mexico as Mirror: So Near to God, So Far from the United States

Take-home review essay assignment on "Black Robe" is due today in class

(Octavio Paz), "Mexico and the United States", Labyrinth of Solitude. (Alan Riding), ch 1. "The Mexicans", ch 2 "The Roots of the Nation". (Osc

10 Feb Living the Day of the Dead: The Ritual Dimension

(Octavio Paz), ch 3. "The Day of the Dead", The Labyrinth of Solitude. Octavio Paz, ch 5. "The Conquest and Colonialism", The Labyrinth of Solit

"Amistad" Special Assignment Due (See Below)

12 Feb Mexico as the Indianation: The Old Myths Do Not Die

Jacques Soustelle, from The Daily Life of the Aztecs; Richard Rodriguez, "The New Native Americans". B. Traven, "When the Priest Is Not at Ho

17 Feb Religion and Politics: What Was, What Was Lost, and What Might Yet Be

Film: "The Mission"

Take home review essay assignment on "The Mission" (3 pages, double-spaced. due 24 Feb):

Theme: "Do the Guarani use Christianity and/or does it use them?" Tell me precisely how in terms of specific incidents in the film.

19 Feb La Virgen de Guadalupe's Religion: National Identity through Political Myth

(Victor Turner), ch 3. "Hidalgo: History as Social Drama". Richard Rodriguez, "Mexican Food...." Richard Rodriguez, "Credo", Hunger of Memory

QUIZ TODAY IN CLASS covering material from 27 Jan to 17 Feb

24 Feb Religion in West Africa

take home review essay assignment on The Mission is due today in class.

Achebe, Arrow of God, Tom Lawson, "Yoruba Worldview"

26 Feb Religious Experience in Africa: The ways of the gods are not our ways

Achebe, Arrow of God

African masks (slides) Jed Perl on Art. "Formal Africa"

3 Mar African Religion as Art and Intelligence

Achebe, Arrow of God. Victor Turner, "Muchona, the Hornet"

5 Mar Film: "The Long Search" -- "Zulu Zion"

10 Mar Religion in the New Africa

(Ninian Smart), ch 6. "Africa and Beyond". "Missa Luba" (audio).

12 Mar Religion in the New Africa continued

QUIZ TODAY IN CLASS covering material from 19 Feb to 10 Mar

17 Mar Review: The Future of Religion and Ethnicity

"Amistad" Special Assignment

Date due: 10 Feb

Students are offered a chance to do an EXTRA short paper on "Amistad"

based on the following question.

"Specify cases in 'Amistad' in which religion figures. As specified in these cases, evaluate the role religion plays in the action of the film."

By 'evaluate' I mean for you to spell out what significance these instances of religion have concerning the role and nature of religion as depicted or suggested by the film.

The grade given on this paper can then be used to replace the LOWER grade of the other two required papers. THIS IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE OTHER TWO PAPERS. Thus, if the "Amistad" option is chosen, three papers are done, and the lowest grade of the three dropped.

Select a location 

