SYLLABUS

R.250 Native American Religions
Spring, 2007

Dr. St. John
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Ofc. Hrs:
MWF 1:30-2:30 p.m
T-Th 1:00-2:00 p.m.
3:30-4:00 p.m.

Course Description. A study of the religious life of selected indigenous peoples of North America, representing the Eastern Woodlands, The Far North, the Southwest and the Plains cultural-geographical regions. In addition, certain religious phenomena will be explored, such as: the shaman figure, the dream-vision experience, mythology, healing ceremonies, calendrical, life-cycle and kinship celebrations, and sacred ecology. Contemporary issues such as the environment, gender relations, and alternative healing methods will also be examined.

Course Format. Lecture/Discussion.

Learning Objectives. Through the readings and discussions, students will develop an understanding of the way religious symbols and cultural traditions shape peoples' view of and relationships with other people, the natural world and sacred beings. Through written exploration and discussions, students will demonstrate a capacity to reflect on their own cultural and personal beliefs, attitudes, and values pertaining to nature, gender, health and healing, and sacred beings.

Snow or Illness Policy. Even when blizzard conditions prevail, if the college has not declared itself officially closed (call the Moravian weather hotline), students should assume that classes will be held (off-campus residents should exercise prudence, however). When the instructor is ill, snowed in or otherwise unable to make class, he will contact the Registrar who will notify the HUB and place a notice on the classroom door prior to class time. In such a case a student is not responsible for showing up for or remaining in the classroom for the usual twenty minute courtesy period. If class is cancelled, please read the assignment for the next class.

Evaluation Methods.
1) Writing-to-Learn Assignments. These one-page exercises are written either prior to class at home or at the beginning of class in the room and are intended to improve classroom participation, indicate to the teacher if a student is having
problems with the work and help the student to keep up with the reading assignments. They will be marked with a “S” or a “U.” If you are absent you receive a “U” if a writing assignment was given in class. There will be no make-up writing assignments with rare exceptions. At the end of the semester the records will be tallied: if you receive an “S” on 80% or more of your graded (S or U) papers, your final grade for the course will be raised one notch (ex. B to B+). Between 51 and 79%, your final grade does not change. If 50% or fewer are marked with an “S,” your final average grade for the three essay exams drops one notch (ex. B- to C+).

2) Essay Exams. There will be three essay exams, weighed equally. Non-cumulative except for the final where the instructor reserves the right to ask one question on overall course content, theme or method.

Attendance and Participation. Students are expected to come to each class. Roll will be taken. They are expected to have read the material for that class and to be prepared to raise and answer questions or to otherwise participate in discussions. Poor attendance also means little participation and hence will affect the final grade negatively depending on the degree of non-participation.

Required Texts (In Order of Use)


OUTLINE / READING SCHEDULE

Jan 15  Introduction to the Course
Jan 17  Religious Experience and Interpretation
        Read: Grim, "Introduction" pp.3-14; 25-32

I. Ojibway Shamanism: Individuals and Societies

Jan 19  The Shaman and Siberian Shamanism
        Read: Grim, Ch. 2
Jan. 22  The Formation of a Shaman
        Read: Grim, Ch. 8
        Video. "Ecology of the Mind"
Jan. 24  Ojibway Cosmology and the Shaman
        Read: Grim, Ch. 4
Jan. 26  Tribal Sanctioning of Shamanic Performance
        Read: Grim, Ch. 5
Jan. 29  Reenactment of Dreams in Ritual
Read: Grim, Ch. 6

Jan. 31  The Trance Experience
Read: Grim, Ch. 7

II. Northeast Woodlands: The Iroquois

Feb. 02  Introduction to Northeast Woodland Peoples
Video: “The Northeastern Indians”
Read: Grim and St. John, “The Northeast Woodlands”

Feb. 05  The Iroquois: An Introduction
Read: St. John, “The Iroquois”

Feb. 07  A Seneca Cosmological Myth
Read: Tooker, pp. 31-55

Feb. 09  Dreams, Visions, and the Forest Tradition
Read: Tooker, 83-94 and
St. John, “The Iroquois Dream-Vision Experience”

Feb. 12  Handsome Lake, Seneca Prophet
Read: St. John, “Handsome Lake”

Feb. 14  Iroquois Ceremonies: The Calendrical Cycle
Read: Tooker, Ch. VIII and

Feb. 16  Iroquois False Face Societies, The Condolence Ceremony
Read: Fenton, “Iroquois False Faces”

Feb. 19  EXAM #1
II. The Far North
  The Koyukons: Sacred Ecology

Feb. 21  The Koyukons of Alaska
Read: Nelson, Ch. 1
  Video. MPTR #1

Feb. 23  Nature as the Watchful World
Read: Nelson, Ch. 2

Feb. 26  Powers of Earth, Air and Water
Read: Nelson, Chs. 3 & 6
  Video. MPTR #3

Feb. 28  The Predatory Mammals
Read: Nelson, Ch. 9
  Video. MPTR #4

Mar. 02  The Large Mammals
Read: Nelson, Ch. 10
  Video. MPTR #5

MARCH 05-09 SPRING BREAK

Mar. 12  Koyukon Worldview: Principles
Read: Nelson, Chs. 12 & 13

III. The Southwest:
  Navaho Healing and the Chantways
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Read Material</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 14</td>
<td>Navaho (Dine) Religion</td>
<td>Handout</td>
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<td>Mar. 16</td>
<td>Symbolic and Scientific Healing</td>
<td>Sandner, Ch. 1</td>
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<td>Mar. 19</td>
<td>Navaho Religion: The Parts</td>
<td>Sandner, Ch. 3</td>
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<td>Mar. 21</td>
<td>Navaho Religion: The Whole</td>
<td>Sandner, Ch. 4</td>
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<td>Video. &quot;Touching the Timeless” M.6</td>
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<td>Mar. 23</td>
<td>Healing &amp; the Return to Origins</td>
<td>Sandner, Ch. 6</td>
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<td>Video. &quot;At the Threshold&quot; M.10</td>
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<td>Mar. 26</td>
<td>The Death-Rebirth Experience</td>
<td>Sandner, Ch. 8</td>
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<td>Mar. 28</td>
<td>EXAM #2</td>
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<td>IV. The Plains:</td>
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<td>The Lakota: Gender and Kinship</td>
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<td>Mar. 30</td>
<td>The Plains Indians</td>
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<td>Video. People of the Plains. Part One.</td>
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<td>Read: Handouts</td>
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<td>Apr. 02</td>
<td>Lakota Religious Traditions</td>
<td>Sullivan, Ch. 4 Lakota Religion</td>
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<td>Apr. 04</td>
<td>The Infant: It takes a Village</td>
<td>Waterlily, Chs. 1-3</td>
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<td>Apr. 06-09</td>
<td>EASTER BREAK</td>
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<td>Apr. 11</td>
<td>Growing Up Amid Relatives</td>
<td>Waterlily, Chs. 4-7</td>
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<td>Apr. 13</td>
<td>Initiation into Womanhood</td>
<td>Waterlily, Ch. 8</td>
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<td>Video. “Mistaken Identity” (M.3)</td>
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<td>Apr. 16</td>
<td>Life Cycle: from Girl to Woman</td>
<td>&quot;In the Space Between Earth and Sky,” Talamantez</td>
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<td>Video. Apache “Sunrise Dance.”</td>
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<td>Apr. 18</td>
<td>Life Cycle: From Boy to Man</td>
<td>Waterlily, Chs. 9&amp;10</td>
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<td>Video. “Mistaken Identity” (M.3.)</td>
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<td>Apr. 20</td>
<td>The Sun Dance</td>
<td>Waterlily, Ch. 11</td>
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<td>Apr. 23</td>
<td>Responsibilities: Caring for the Dead</td>
<td>Waterlily, Ch. 12&amp;13</td>
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<td>Apr. 25</td>
<td>Destiny</td>
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<td>Apr. 27</td>
<td>The Future</td>
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Read: Waterlily, Chs. 16 & 17

FINAL EXAM.  T.B.A.