

INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION IN NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES



RELIGION 2004

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[HTTP://WWW.UGA.EDU/RELIGION/SYL/2004RK.PDF](http://www.uga.edu/religion/syl/2004rk.pdf)

Vēr MMDCCCLXII A.U.C.
(SUMMER 2009 C.E.)
M-F 2:15 - 4:30 PM

INSTRUCTOR'S WEBPAGE	HTTP://KIRKLAND.MYWEB.UGA.EDU
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"Were one asked to characterize the life of religion in the broadest and most general terms possible, one might say that it consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto."

— **WILLIAM JAMES** (1842-1910), *THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE* (1902)



COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To illumine the hermeneutical issues inherent in understanding religion across cultures.
2. To introduce certain common aspects of traditional Native American life by examining elements of a variety of Native societies.
3. To demonstrate the diverse factors that affect human life by observing the influence of disparate historic, geographic, and economic factors on Native beliefs and practices.
4. To challenge simplistic modern notions that religion is merely a matter of "personal belief," by exploring the Native emphases upon the ritual and social dimensions of religion that moderns generally discount.
5. To understand the tremendous impact of the arrival of Europeans and Americans upon the evolution of religion in Native American cultures.
6. To combat common stereotypes about Native Americans, and the widespread exploitation of Native beliefs and practices.

The academic study of religion is a systematic exploration of the visions, values, and activities by which people of past and present have understood and shaped their life-experiences. Such courses are designed to promote a mature sensitivity to the world's religious traditions, within their proper social and historical contexts. Such courses are not intended to steer you toward, or away from, any particular tradition. Nor are they intended to facilitate any spiritual search in which you might be personally engaged. Rather, the goals of this course are for you (1) to achieve an accurate understanding of certain societies' religions on those societies' own terms, and for you (2) to learn to assess those societies' religions in a manner that is both properly critical and properly sympathetic.

This course will explore the practice of religion in selected regions of North America, past and present. That is, we will seek insight into the ways in which specific native societies have understood the world, and how members of those societies have taken part in the world so as to experience life's true meaning most fully.

Naturally, we cannot study all native American cultures in one course. Our explorations will encompass some cultures that flourish today (such as the Navajo, the Hopi, and Lakota "Sioux"); some that were decimated long ago, yet endure (such as the Ohlone of California, and certain Southeastern peoples); and some that survived largely intact, but seldom noticed by outsiders (such as the Athabascan "Koyukon" of Alaska). We will examine both (1) the ways in which religion was practiced in those societies before the transformations wrought by the political, economic, and cultural impact of Euro-American society; and (2) the religious consequences of that impact. Though some of the material that we study will derive from the work of anthropologists, our primary approach will be historical.

In addition, be aware that this course is **not** "**about you**": you are in this course to study the visions and values of people who are socially, historically, linguistically, and culturally other than you and I are. If your primary motivation for enrolling in this course should be a personal ambition to "find yourself," to "deepen your spirituality," or to "become closer to the earth", you are in the wrong place. In America (and even Europe!) today, native traditions have often been profitably marketed to "**wannabes**"—members of the dominant (i.e., non-native) society, who feel rootless, and are hoping to "find" a feeling of rootedness in religions other than those of their own society. In recent centuries, members of the dominant society have been taught to reject their own ancestral traditions as "**oppressive**," rather than as the most sensible place for seeking "rootedness." The tendentious insistence that Christianity and Judaism are "oppressive" is based in part on the fact that those traditions teach (1) that life's actual meaning and value inherently derive from somewhere other than "**myself**" (e.g., in God and his plan for human life); and (2) that we have responsibilities to others—both in the community into which we were actually born, and to beings of orders of reality other than our own. According to those religion's traditional teachings, such principles outweigh the individual's own feelings and desires—especially the self-aggrandizing desire to deny the validity of what those before us, in our own cultural traditions, have believed and practiced. Such **wannabes** are not only qualitatively "other" than Native Americans: they are the exact opposite!

In this course, you will learn nothing about the commercial products fraudulently labelled as "Native American Spirituality"—very recent creations that have been deceptively presented to credulous non-Natives as "ancient remnants" of "a world of timeless spirituality" into which anyone can step at any time, for any reason—and without any personal sacrifice or commitment (other, of course, than some money!). Some such presentations of "Native American Spirituality" are unauthorized reworkings of authentic sacred tribal traditions by self-appointed "spiritual leaders" who may have some "blood" or personal experience in a native community, but no legitimate qualifications or authority, to teach such things—and certainly no mandate to teach sacred traditions to outsiders. Responsible native spokespeople have often denounced such activities as "cultural theft." Meanwhile, other brands of the commercial product labelled "Native American Spirituality" are really whole-cloth creations of pseudo-Indians—i.e., whites who falsely claim to be natives (even inventing "native names" for themselves)—who seek fame and fortune by literally selling their own personal creations to gullible "seekers" for meaning within the "rootless" dominant society.

This course is designed to demonstrate the vast distance—and often, the inherent contradictions—between the **authentic traditions of native American peoples** (to the extent that we may truly be able to know them) and the products and services marketed to Wannabes by "the Culture Vultures."

Our goal in this course is for students to learn how to understand the lives of people of other ages and cultures, **not** to try to **become** those people—and certainly not to exploit surviving elements of those people's sacred traditions or to buy fraudulent merchandise like "Native American Spirituality" designed to satisfy the "needs" among non-native wannabes.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This syllabus is simply a general plan for the course. Changes and variations, as announced to the class by the instructor, may be necessary at times. You are responsible for **learning** the contents of this syllabus, and for **abiding by** its prescriptions and proscriptions. All academic work **must** meet the standards contained in the document titled *A Culture of Honesty*. All students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

There are only 19 days of class in this term, so your **ATTENDANCE each class day is essential!** It is expected that you will be present in class **each** day, for the **entire** class period, unless you have a legitimate, documentable justification for any absence. If you finish the course with three or fewer unexcused absences, your attendance may have a marginal effect on your course grade. The more your unexcused absences, the more **your course grade will be reduced**.

You are expected to **take thorough notes** in class. If, because of illness, etc., you are forced to **miss** class, it is **your responsibility** to check with **classmates** about what you missed—**not** to expect the instructor to give you a personal review. Do **not**, for instance, e-mail the instructor and ask “what are we supposed to be reading?”

You are expected to **complete ALL the assigned readings**, in a **prompt and thorough** fashion. There will be three objective tests during the term. Those **tests** will be based largely upon the **readings**, and anyone who fails to learn the material presented in the readings will almost certainly score poorly on the tests. The midterm withdrawal date will be Monday 22 June. A student who **submits assigned work** before that date, then withdraws from the course, will receive a W or a WF **based on that work**. A student who withdraws **before** submitting assigned work will receive a grade of W, provided his/her attendance has been regular.


You are welcome to chat with the instructor **after** class or at other **arranged times**. There are, however, **NO** circumstances that render the moments **before** class appropriate for **any** discussion of **any kind**. If you should need to communicate with the instructor, and cannot get together at an appropriate time, please send an e-mail message.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

It is your responsibility to show respect for others by **refraining** from **any activity that might distract others or interfere with the learning process**. Failure to do so will affect your course grade!

1. The classroom is **not** a lunchroom: **NO EATING OR DRINKING in Class is Allowed**, unless you present signed certification by a doctor proving that you are medically required to do so.
2. The classroom is **not** a **phonebooth** or message center. It is your responsibility to make sure that any **phone** you bring into the classroom is **turned off** before class begins, and that any computer that you bring to class is set to make **no noise** (e.g., signals that “you’ve got mail!”). If your electronic equipment should make noise during class, you will lose credit for attendance that day.

TEXTS

A. COURSE  READER [Available from Bel-Jean’s Printer, *downtown, opposite the UGA arch*]
Includes readings from Peggy Beck et al., *The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life*, and from *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (2nd ed.)

B. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS [Available at local bookstores]

1. Merwyn **Garbarino** and Robert **Sasso**, *Native American Heritage*
2. William **Young**, *Quest for Harmony: Native American Spiritual Traditions*

3. Malcolm **Margolin**, *The Ohlone Way: Indian Life in the San Francisco...Bay Area*
4. Richard K. **Nelson**, *Make Prayers to the Raven: A Koyokun View of the Northern Forest*
5. John G. **Neihardt**, *Black Elk Speaks*



REQUIREMENTS



Timely completion of **all** required readings



Three objective tests [each 20% of course grade]

Tentative Test Dates: Friday, June 12, 17, 26



A final exam [40% of course grade]

See the “Criteria for Evaluation of Papers” in your course reader. If your written work seems to indicate that you failed to do **all** the assigned readings, or if your attendance is irregular, such facts will **seriously affect your grade** on specific assignments, and in the course overall, as noted above.

The ⚙️ **READER** also includes:

⚙️ **READER** Kirkland, “THE WRITING PROCESS AS PARTNERSHIP”; and

⚙️ **READER** Kirkland, “A GUIDE TO WRITING ACADEMIC PAPERS.”

Cf. (1) the UGA Writing Center, “Writing Resources”:

<http://www.english.uga.edu/writingcenter/writing/index.html>; and (2) “Writing the Religion Paper”:
<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/humanities/religion.shtml>.



THE ACADEMIC VALUE OF THE INTERNET

Your instructor’s webpage ([HTTP://KIRKLAND.MYWEB.UGA.EDU](http://KIRKLAND.MYWEB.UGA.EDU)) includes a few pertinent STUDY GUIDES and LINKS. But, like many other good sites, this one has its limitations: (a) it is now **extremely out-dated**; (b) it has never provided all the material that even your instructor would like it to provide; and (c) it was not, in the first instance, designed to serve as a pedagogical tool.

Even such a website tries to fulfill different functions for different people: some are intended as professional connections for other scholars, others are designed to appeal to the general public. The latter may be more colorful or amusing, but are not necessarily more reliable or more informative.

Remember to *think critically about what you are seeing*: many sites have an unexpressed agenda, just like movies and TV shows, and some may be well-intentioned but insubstantial and/or unsound.

So beware attempting to use the internet as an educational tool — *particularly* in regard to Native American religions — **without expert guidance**. Remember that all a person has to do to create, for example, a website on “vision quests” is to set up the website: he or she does not really have to *know* anything sound or authentic about Native American religions! For psychological and/or economic reasons, some people set up such sites simply to get attention, or to get a reputation that they have not bothered to earn through hard work or proven expertise. Newcomers can easily mistake such a site for a reliable resource.

Before trusting what you find on ANY website, see the instructive guide to “Evaluating Websites” from a committee of the American Library Association at

<http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/EvaluatingWebsites1.htm>.

For evaluating websites about Native Americans, see most especially

<http://www.u.arizona.edu/%7Eecubbins/webcrit.html>.

There are now many good **tribal websites**, as well as many other reliable websites for Native American Studies, most of which can be found among the links at sites such as the following:

American Indian Tribal Directory <http://www.indians.org/Resource/FedTribes99/fedtribes99.html>

Index of Native American Resources on the Internet <http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources>

NativeWeb <http://www.nativeweb.org>

Native Americans - Internet Resources <http://falcon.jmu.edu/%7Eramseyil/native.htm>

Native American Indian Resources <http://www.kstrom.net/isk/mainmenu.html>

Native Languages of the Americas <http://www.native-languages.org/>

The New Georgia Encyclopedia <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org>

“The New Georgia Encyclopedia, edited by NAS faculty member John Insoe (and with the participation of other NAS faculty), provides an authoritative source of information about the people,

places, events, institutions, and many other topics related to the state.”
Your instructor may recommend other websites that may be useful and reliable. But unless instructed otherwise, plan to do **all** of your research in your university **Library**.



COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

THE ORDER OF COVERAGE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE
READINGS LISTED IN SQUARE BRACKETS ARE **RECOMMENDED** ONLY

INTRODUCTION: STUDYING “RELIGION”

“WHY STUDY RELIGION?”: <http://www.studyreligion.org/why/index.html>

READER: "ON THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION IN AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES"

READER: “A DEFINITION OF RELIGION”

LOOKING AND SEEING: UNDERSTANDING RELIGION ACROSS CULTURES

READER: Kirkland, "Native American Religions" (from *Encyc. of Women and World Religions*)

READER: Beck: 3-8

READER: Toelken, "Seeing with a Native Eye: How Many Sheep Will It Hold?"

APPROACHES TO RELIGION IN NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES

READER: Sullivan, *Native American Religions*, Introduction (xii-xvi)

YOUNG, *QUEST FOR HARMONY*: 9-10 [10-13]

READER: Peggy Beck: 8-32, 67-72b (top), 89a-93

GARBARINO/SASSO: 4-5, 374-85

THE CLASH OF CULTURES: ENCOUNTER AND CONQUEST

YOUNG, *Quest for Harmony*. 16-25 [25-29 ¶5] 29¶6-31 [31-48]

GARBARINO/SASSO: 423-452¶2

VIDEOS: "500 Nations": (1) "Ancestors" (clip); (2) "Clash of Cultures: The People Who Met Columbus"
"The Native Americans: The Tribes of the Southeast"

OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL COLONIALISM: THE PSEUDO-RELIGION OF "THE WANNABE TRIBE"

YOUNG, *Quest for Harmony*. 352 ¶3-353 top, 382-84, 218-220

READER: Wendy Rose, "The Great Pretenders: Cults of the Culture Cultures"

⚙️ **READER:** Amanda Porterfield, "American Indian Spirituality as a Countercultural Movement"
📖 [Diane Bell, "Some Readings on Cultural Appropriations, Native America, and the New Age:
www.hanksville.org/sand/intellect/NAbibBell.html]

📖 Daniel Crowfeather, "Who are the Elders?"
<http://www.firstpeople.us/articles/Mikmaq-Spirit/Who-are-the-Elders.html>

🎥 **VIDEO:** "White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men"

LINKS FROM [HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/PLASTIC_SHAMAN](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plastic_Shaman) (ALL OPTIONAL)

NATIVE SITES DENOUNCING PLASTIC SHAMANS

- [Plastic Medicine Men](#)
- [New Age Frauds and Plastic Shamans](#)

ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS

- [Declaration of War Against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality](#)
- [Spiritual Hucksterism: The Rise of the Plastic Medicine Men](#)
- [Native American Elders' Reactions to Castaneda and 'don Juan'](#)
- [Exposing The Fake Medicine Men and Women](#)
- [False Shamans](#)

ARTICLES ON SELLING NATIVE SPIRITUALITY

- [Selling Native Spirituality](#)
- [Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality](#)
- [Native Religions and "Plastic Medicine Men"](#)
- [The Selling of Indian Culture](#)
- [Ownership of Indigenous Cultures](#)

LIFE AMONG A "NON-PEOPLE": THE OHLONE OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

📖 **MARGOLIN**, *The Ohlone Way*. all

LIFE IN A NORTHERN FOREST: THE "KOYUKON" OF ALASKA

📖 **NELSON**, *Make Prayers to the Raven*: xiii-xvi [249-43; 1-13] 238-242, 14-46, 225-37, 248

🎥 **VIDEOS:** "Make Prayers to the Raven"

ENACTING LIFE:

PATTERNS AMONG PEOPLES OF THE GREAT LAKES AND THE GREAT PLAINS

📖 **GARBARINO/SASSO**: 134-37, 261 ¶3-266 ¶5 [266 ¶6-272 ¶1] 272 ¶2-278 ¶3

⚙️ **READER:** Gill, "The Vision Quest" (among the Ojibwa / Chippewa / Anishinabe)

⚙️ **READER:** Powers, "The Plains"
Harrod, "The Blackfeet"


📖 **GARBARINO/SASSO**: 278-283

⚙️ **READER:** Powers, "Lakota"

📖 **YOUNG**, *Quest for Harmony*: 156-58 [164-84] 184-193¶4, 195-96, 197-206 (The Sun Dance)

⚙️ **READER:** Powers, "Drama"

Brown, "Sundance"

 **YOUNG**, *Quest for Harmony*. 209-13 ("Black Elk and his Interpreters")

History, Perceptions, and the Manipulation of Images:

 **NEIHARDT**, *Black Elk Speaks* (NB: Online Text lacks pagination)
[HTTP://WWW.FIRSTPEOPLE.US/ARTICLES/BLACK-ELK-SPEAKS/BLACK-ELK-SPEAKS-INDEX.HTML](http://www.firstpeople.us/articles/black-elk-speaks/black-elk-speaks-index.html)

	[FOREWORD	VINE DELORIA, JR.	ALL]
	[PREFACE TO THE 1932 EDITION	JOHN G. NEIHARDT	ALL]
	[PREFACE TO THE 1972 EDITION	JOHN G. NEIHARDT	ALL]
CHAP. 1	OFFERING OF THE PIPE	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	ALL
CHAP. 2	EARLY BOYHOOD	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	pp. 6-9, 14-15
CHAP. 3	THE GREAT VISION	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	ALL
CHAP. 4	THE BISON HUNT	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	pp. 37-39
CHAP. 8	THE FIGHT WITH 3 STARS	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	pp. 72 bot.-75 middle
	(ON THE SUN DANCE)		
	[CHAP. 12 <i>GRANDMOTHER'S LAND</i>	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	ALL]
	[CHAP. 13 <i>THE COMPELLING FEAR</i>	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	ALL]
	[CHAP. 14 <i>THE HORSE DANCE</i>	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	ALL]
	(ON THE ENACTMENT OF BLACK ELK'S GREAT VISION)		
	[CHAP. 15 <i>THE DOG VISION</i>	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT]	
	(ON BLACK ELK'S NORMAL <i>HANBLECEYA</i> "VISION QUEST")		
	[CHAP. 21 <i>THE MESSIAH</i>	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	ALL
	(ON THE GHOST DANCE MOVEMENT)		
	[CHAP. 23-24 <i>BAD TROUBLE COMING / THE BUTCHERING AT WOUNDED KNEE</i>]		
	[CHAP. 25 <i>THE END OF THE DREAM</i>	BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	ALL]
AUTHOR'S POSTSCRIPT		BLACK ELK / NEIHARDT	ALL


Additional Recommended Readings on Black Elk and *Black Elk Speaks*

1. Readings on "The Traditional World of the Lakotas"
<http://blackelkspeaks.unl.edu/LakotaTraditional.html>
2. "Essential Facts about Black Elk" with extensive reading list
<http://www.heroesofhistory.com/page89.html>
3. Prof. Richard Busse, "*Black Elk Speaks* in the Introductory Course"
<http://www.aarweb.org/Publications/spotlight/previous/3-1/03-01-05blac.asp>
4. Prof. Dennis Hamm, S.J., "Black Elk, Catholic Catechist: The Rest of the Story":
<http://puffin.creighton.edu/human/csrs/news/F93-3.html>

ENACTING LIFE: PATTERNS AMONG PEOPLES OF THE SOUTHWEST

RELIGION AND LIFE AMONG THE PUEBLO PEOPLES

 **READER:** Whiteley, "The Southwest"

 **GARBARINO/SASSO:** 225 bottom – 228 ¶1, 233-242 ¶2

 **VIDEO:** "*Hopi: Songs of the Fourth World*"

RELIGION AND LIFE AMONG AMONG THE NAVAJO

 **GARBARINO/SASSO:** 245-255

 **READER:** Lamphere, "The Navajo"

 **YOUNG,** *Quest for Harmony.* 228-29, 246-265


BECOMING THE GODDESS

 **READER:** Lincoln, "*Kinaaldá: Becoming the Goddess*"

 **READER:** Gill, "Initiation at Puberty" (an Apache analogue)




OLD ROADS / NEW ROADS: CHRISTIANITY, PEYOTE, AND RESTORING TRADITIONS

 **READER:** Powers, "Native American Church"


Hultkrantz, "Ghost Dance"

Jorgensen, "Modern Religious Movements"

 **GARBARINO/SASSO:** 482 ¶4-5

 **YOUNG,** *Quest for Harmony.* 273-74 [274-86] 286-88 [292-99] 378-82, 214-17

 **READER:** Beck: 165-66, 225-43

 **VIDEOS:** "*Our Sacred Land*"

"*Return of the Sacred Pole*"

[Omaha Heritage Project: [HTTP://OMAHATRIBE.UNL.EDU/ETEXTS/INDEX.HTML](http://OMAHATRIBE.UNL.EDU/ETEXTS/INDEX.HTML)]