

Native American Traditions

REL 191- Spring 2020

Meetings: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 1:20 - 2:35 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. David J. Howlett, Mellon Visiting Assistant Professor, The Religion Department
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Office Hours:

Course Description:

This course looks at the spiritual traditions of Native peoples within the lands that became the United States of America. We study how Euro-American colonization suppressed Native spiritual practices, how Native peoples resisted this suppression, and how Native peoples have used their spirituality as a resource for decolonization and well-being. Topics include sacred lands and sovereignty, Native feminisms and the revitalization of ceremony, religious freedom and traditional practices, foodways and contemporary traditions, Native ecologies and the climate crisis, and contemporary Native traditions in diaspora. We read works by Native and settler scholars and consider a range of contemporary decolonizing methodologies.

Course Goals: Students will leave this class with

- a respectful familiarity with foundational spiritual concepts within selected Native groups.
- an appreciation for the diversity of traditional practices within Native American nations.
- an ability to articulate how historical experiences, such as cultural genocide, dispossession of tribal lands, the legacy of colonialism, and Native revitalization movements have affected traditions over time.
- an understanding of the various academic approaches, in the present and the past, that Native and settler scholars have taken towards the study of Native American traditions.
- an ability to critically engage secondary sources through essays designed to apply critical concepts learned in class.
- an ability to write a critical book review of a scholarly work.

Final Class Grade:	Midterm Exam	250
	Roundtable Paper 1	150
	Roundtable Paper 2	150
	Book Review	150
	Final Exam	200
	Attendance and Participation	100
	Total	1000

Midterm and Final Exams: These examinations will consist of short identification terms and two essay questions, respectively. You will be given a review sheet one week before each examination, and we will conduct a brief review session in class.

Roundtable Papers and Discussions: We will conduct two roundtable discussion sessions in class. The week before the roundtable, you will be given a question, and, then, in a four- to six-page paper, you will construct your argument. To be admitted to the discussion of the topic the following week, you turn in your paper. Together, your paper and your participation in the roundtable constitute your grade on each roundtable session.

The Unessay Option: For your roundtable essays, you may opt to produce *one* “unessay” instead of a two- to four-page essay. In an “unessay,” you answer the prompt through an alternative medium, such as producing a work of art, composing a song, or writing a scene from a play. You may use a digital or analog medium. You may perform your unessay or submit a material artefact that you have created. Creativity is at a premium in the unessay, but so is how compellingly you answer the prompt. If you opt for an “unessay” instead of the conventional essay, you must consult me in advance. Additionally, your “unessay” must be accompanied by a typed paragraph explaining how it addresses the paper prompt.

Book Review: Students will complete a book review of a scholarly text assigned in class. A separate sheet detailing this assignment is attached.

Attendance and Participation: Your attendance and participation grade consists of three components: completing daily questions, leading a class discussion, and regular attendance. First, each class will have a daily question or exercise that students are expected to complete at the beginning of each class. Daily questions will be collected at the midpoint of the semester and at the last class of the semester. Second, students are expected to participate in class discussions. This means that students will come to class with notes from the readings and be ready to ask questions or lead the class in a discussion. In the course of the semester, each student will be randomly asked to lead the class in a discussion on one of the articles from the week. The student will be expected to lead the discussion for fifteen minutes without any intervention from the instructor. Third, students are expected to attend every class, arriving on time. Students who attend every class are recognized in our final class period with a coveted “perfect attendance” certificate. Aspire to win one!

Assessment of Student Work: Students will be subject to a standard grading scale as follows:

A+	970-1000
A	940-969
A-	900-939
B+	870-899
B	840-869
B-	800-839
C+	770-799
C	740-769
C-	700-739
D+	670-699
D	600-669
D-	560-599
F	559 and below

There is no curve for this class. A student will receive the grade they earn.

Classroom Procedures and Policies:

Academic Dishonesty: The Student Handbook notes the following:

Students and faculty at Smith are part of an academic community defined by its commitment to scholarship, which depends on scrupulous and attentive acknowledgement of all sources of information and honest and respectful use of college resources.

Smith College expects all students to be honest and committed to the principles of academic and intellectual integrity in their preparation and submission of course work and examinations. All submitted work of any kind must be the original work of the student who must cite all the sources used in its preparation.

If you have questions about what might constitute inadvertent plagiarism, please consult me before you hand in your work.

Late Assignment Policy: Any paper not turned in on the due date is late and will have its grade automatically dropped by five percent per day late. If you foresee needing an extension due to extenuating circumstances, you must see me in person during my office hours or contact me by email before the scheduled deadline.

Accommodations for Students: If you have a disability or a personal circumstance that you think will affect your learning in this course, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can discuss the best ways to meet your needs. Students who need accessibility accommodations are also encouraged to contact Disability Services (www.smith.edu/about-smith/disability-services) and obtain an official letter of accommodation. Furthermore, if anyone in the class has ideas about how the structure of the course and general classroom interactions could be altered to encourage greater

inclusion and participation, please let me know. You all deserve a safe and comfortable learning environment.

Title IX Rights and Responsibilities: The Smith College Title IX website notes the following:

Gender-based and sexual misconduct is any unwanted and unwelcome sexual behavior that significantly interferes with a student's success or access to educational opportunities at the college. A student with a complaint alleging gender-based and sexual misconduct should report it to the Title IX Coordinator (Amy Hunter, ahunter65@smith.edu). Complaints regarding sexual violence (sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, and stalking) may also be reported to the Campus Police Department or the Dean of Students Office (Marge Litchford, mlitchfo@smith.edu). Complaints of gender-based or sexual misconduct between Smith College students or where the individual allegedly committing the misconduct is a Smith College student are governed by the Smith College Student Code and applicable state and federal laws.

Beyond this policy, you should know that I am a mandatory reporter at the college. In the event that you experience a Title IX violation, you may talk to me, and I will keep your information private to the greatest extent possible. However, as a professor, I have a responsibility to report any information regarding sexual misconduct and crimes that I learn about to make our campus a safe place for all. For further information about Title IX rights and related all-college policies, as well as support services, please consult the following webpage: <https://www.smith.edu/about-smith/title-ix>

Work Expectations: Students should expect nine to ten hours of outside preparation work for class each week. On written assignments, successful students distribute their workloads over the course of a week rather than cram their writing into the night before the due date. Be a successful student.

Land Acknowledgements: Smith College is on the land of the Nonotuck people. To our East are the Nipmuc and Wapanoag. To the South are the Mohegan and the Pequot. To the West are the Mohican. And to the North are the Abenaki. On whose lands have you lived? This will be part of your first homework assignment.

Textbook (available for purchase at the Greccourt Café College Bookstore)

- Lawrence Sullivan, ed., *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*, ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan (New York: Continuum, 2003).
ISBN-13: 978-0826414861

Book to Review (available for purchase at the Greccourt Café College Bookstore)

- Cutcha Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Coming-of-age Ceremonies* (University of Washington Press, 2018)
ISBN-13: 978-0295743448

- Other articles and chapters will be posted on Moodle.

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY TOPICS & STUDENT READING ASSIGNMENTS

Native American Traditions

RLST 191

All assignments are to be read before class. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the reading schedule. Should changes be made, students will be informed in advance.

WEEK 1 How Do We Decolonize the Study of Native Traditions? Who Decides What is Traditional?

Topics: Decolonizing methodologies; religious studies, Native Americans, and hegemonic power; ways of constructing identity; tradition as a category

Readings: 1) Natalie Avalos (Apache), "Decolonial Approaches to the Study of Religion: Teaching Native American and Indigenous Religious Traditions," *Religious Studies News*, 5 November 2018, accessed at <http://rsn.aarweb.org/spotlight-on/teaching/anti-racism/decolonial-approaches>

2) Eva Marie Garrouette (Cherokee), "What if My Grandma Eats Big Macs?" in *Real Indians: Identity and Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 61-81. [Moodle]

WEEK 2 Imperialism, Religious Suppression, and the Revitalization of Lakota Traditions

Topics: Foundational Lakota stories and ontological relationships; US government bans on ceremonies; Lakota renewal movements; political activism and Lakota traditions

Readings: 1) David C. Postumus, "All My Relatives: Exploring Nineteenth-Century Lakota Ontology and Belief," *Ethnohistory* 64.3 (2017): 379-400. [Moodle]

2) Lisa Petrillo, Melda Trejo (Cheyenne/Lakota), and Lupe Trejo, *Being Lakota: Identity and Tradition on the Pine Ridge Reservation* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 57-72. [Moodle]

3) Nick Estes (Lakota), "Traditional Leadership and the Oceti Sakowin: An Interview with Lewis Grassrope (Lakota)," in *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), chapter 4. [Moodle]

WEEK 3 **Dinè Traditions, Sovereignty, and Sacred Lands**

Topics: Foundational Dinè stories; hozho; Dinè sacred lands and the boarding school experience

Readings: 1) Trudy Griffin-Pierce, "The Continuous renewal of Sacred Relations: Navajo Religion," in *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*, 121-141.

2) Farina King (Dinè), "Introduction" in *The Earth Memory Compass: Dinè Landscapes and Education in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2018), 1-40. [Moodle]

WEEK 4 **Mescalero Apache Sacred Lands and Rites of Passage**

Topics: Comparing Southwest Native American sacrosapces; Mescalero Isanaklesh Gotal ceremony; gender and rites of passage

Readings: 1) Martin Ball, "Sacred Mountains, Religious Paradigms, and Identity among the Mescalero Apache," *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 4, no. 3 (2000): 264-82. [Moodle]

2) Ines Talamantez (Mescalero Apache), "In the Space between Earth and Sky: Contemporary Mescalero Apache Ceremonialism," in *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*, 142-59.

WEEK 5 **Hupa Peoples, Ceremony, and Native Feminisms**
Guest Speaker: Prof. Cutcha Risling Baldy, Humboldt State University

Topics: Hupa experiences with colonialization; revitalization processes; applying decolonizing frameworks; contemporary Native feminisms

Readings: 1) Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa), *We Are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Coming-of-age Ceremonies* (University of Washington Press, 2018), preface – chapter 3.

2) Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You*, chapter 4 -conclusion.

WEEK 6 Contest Powwows and the Borders of Religious Authenticity

Book Review Due

Topics: Origins of the powwow; contemporary practice; participation/non-participation and religious authenticity

Readings: 1) Robert Desjarlait (Red Lake Anishinaabe), "The Contest Powwow versus the Traditional Powwow and the Role of the Native American Community," *Wicazo Sa Review* 12, no. 1 (1997): 115-27.

2) Dennis Kelley, "Ancient Traditions, Modern Constructions: Innovation, Continuity, and Spirituality on the Powwow Trail," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 11 (2012): 107-136. [Moodle]

WEEK 7 Native Ecologies in a Time of Climate Crisis

Guest Speaker: Nikki Cooley, Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals

Topics: Native ecologies and contemporary environmentalism; Native spirituality and the hierarchies of secular science;

Readings 1) Jace Weaver (Cherokee), "Misfit Messengers: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Climate Change," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 83.2 (2015): 320-335.

2) Robin Wall Kimmerer (Citizen Potawatomi), "Searching for Synergy: Integrating Traditional and Scientific Ecological Knowledge in Environmental Science Education," *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* 2 (2012): 317-323.

WEEK 8 Reclaiming Ancestors, Accessing Sacred Objects

Topics: NAGPRA and repatriation movements; sacred objects in museum spaces; the politics of display; healing and repatriation; indigenous storywork

Readings: 1) [Sonya Atalay \(Anishinaabe-Ojibwe\), et. al. Journeys to Complete the Work: Stories about Repatriations and Changing the Ways We Bring Native American Ancestors Home \(Creative Commons License, 2017\).](#)

2) Chip Colwell, "Can Repatriation Heal the Wounds of History?" *The Public Historian* 41.1 (2019): 90-110.

WEEK 8 3) Sonya Atalay (Anishinaabe-Ojibwe), "Braiding Strands of Wellness How Repatriation Contributes to Healing through Embodied Practice and Storywork," *The Public Historian* 41.1 (2019): 78-89.

WEEK 9 Native Americans and Religious Freedom

Topics: Native American religions in the courts; the Native American Church; consequences of legally defining practices as "religious"

Readings: 1) Thomas C. Maroukis, "The Struggle for Constitutional Protection" in *The Peyote Road: Religious Freedom and the Native American Church* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 183-209, 220-229. [Moodle]

2) Tisa Wenger, "'We Are Guaranteed Freedom': Pueblo Indians and the Category of Religion in the 1920's," *History of Religions* 45.2 (2005): 89-113. [Moodle]

WEEK 10 Foodways, Spirituality, and Sovereignty

Topics: Foodways, land, and sovereignty; diet, health, and healing; cultural revitalization through eating and food production

Readings: 1) Suzanne Crawford O'Brien, "Salmon as Sacrament: First Salmon Ceremonies in the Pacific Northwest" in *Religion, Food, and Eating in North America*, ed. by Benjamin E. Zeller, et. al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 114-133. [Moodle]

2) Stephen Bond-Hikkatubi (Chickasaw), et. al. "Voices from the Indigenous Food Movement," in *Indigenous Food Sovereignty in the United States: Restoring Cultural Knowledge, Protecting Environments, and Regaining Health*, ed. by Devon A Mihesuah (Choctaw) and Elizabeth Hoover (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 26-56. [Moodle]

WEEK 11 Decolonization, Spirituality, Gender, and Sexuality

Topics: Reconstructing Native gender roles and spirituality in contemporary communities; Two-Spirit identities in colonial and post-colonial contexts.

Readings: 1) Kim Anderson (Cree/Métis), "Relating to Creation," in *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, 2nd edition (Toronto: Women's Press, 2016), 158-170. [Moodle]

WEEK 11 2) Kai Pyle (Métis/Baawiting Anishinaabe), "Naming and Claiming: Recovering Ojibwe and Plains Cree Two-Spirit Language," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5.4 (2018): 574–588 [Moodle]

WEEK 12 **Contemporary Native American Christianity**

Paper 3 Due

Topics: The "ruptures" of conversion; exclusive versus multiple religious belonging; emplacing Native Christianity in sacred lands; revisiting "tradition" as a category

Readings: 1) Tweedy Sombrero (Diné), "Two Paths," in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religion in the United States and Canada*, ed. by James C. Treat (New York: Routledge, 1995), 232-235.

2) Kimberly Jenkins Marshall, "Háálá Ayóo Diyin: The Resonant Rupture of Language," in *Upward, Not Sunwise: Resonant Rupture in Navajo Neo-Pentecostalism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016): 81-100. [Moodle]

3) Laverne Jacobs (Ojibwe), "The Native American Church: A Search for an Authentic Spirituality," in *Native and Christian*, 236-240.

4) Seth Schermerhorn, "Walkers and their Staffs: O'odham Walking Sticks by Way of Calendar Sticks and Scraping Sticks," *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 12.4 (2016): 476-500. [Moodle]

5) John Burnett, "Border Wall Rising in Arizona, Raises Concerns among Conservationists, Native Tribes," 13 October 2019, *National Public Radio*, accessed at <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/13/769444262/border-wall-rising-in-arizona-raises-concerns-among-conservationists-native-trib>

WEEK 13 **Native Practices and Commodification; Decolonization and Native Diasporas**

Guest Speaker: Prof. Natalie Avalos, University of Colorado -Boulder

Topics: Appropriations of Native spirituality; commodification of religion; Native resistance; decolonization and global indigeneity; urban Native American communities; the future of tradition

Readings: 1) Claudia Roch, "Plastic Shamans and AIM Warriors: Native American Spirituality in the New Age Movement," *Interculturalism in North America: Canada, the United States, Mexico and Beyond* (Tempe, Arizona: The Bilingual Press, 2012), 75-90. [Moodle]

WEEK 13 2) Natalie Avalos (Apache), "Becoming Human: 'Urban Indian' Decolonisation and Regeneration in the Land of Enchantment," in *Handbook of Indigenous Religion(s)*, ed. by Greg Johnson and Siv Ellen Kraft (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 176-191.
[Moodle]

FINALS WEEK – Final exam

Writing a Book Review

A book review is not simply a book summary. Instead, a book review summarizes an author's main argument, highlights an author's contribution, and critiques an author's work (that is, a book review analyzes an author's strengths and weaknesses). A good book review is approximately 800 to 1200 words in length. While you may use some creativity in how you organize and compose your book review, try to use the following guidelines.

Title your review as follows:

Name of Book. By Name of Book's Author. Place of Publication: Press of Publication,
Year of Publication. Pp. xi [for forward, if applicable], 514 [total pages, including index and
endnotes]. Reviewed by Your Name Here.

In your first paragraph, you should quickly tell your reader the subject matter of your book. You may also very briefly alert your reader to the background of the author. Is the author a new scholar, an independent scholar, a tenured professor? By the end of the first paragraph, you need to let your reader know the book's main thesis. You may also try to fit the author's work into a larger framework. In other words, relate how the reviewed text answers particular historiographical questions, concerns, or trends.

In your body paragraphs, you should briefly summarize the author's arguments. This summary should not be a blow-by-blow description of the work; instead, highlight the main points of the author's work and the insights that this work brings to the field.

Next, provide a summary of the reception of the author's work. You should consult and cite several book reviews by scholars in peer-reviewed journals. Use Chicago-Turabian-style footnotes for any citations. Actual published book reviews rarely (if ever) cite other reviews, but you will benefit from reading and summarizing the critiques of others. You may find book reviews for each work by simply typing in the book's title and "review" in the Smith College Library's "Discover" tool (main library webpage).

Once you have documented the book's critical reception, you should offer your own critique. You might want to assess the author's work in the light of some of the following questions. Is the work well-documented? Has the author used questionable sources or made hasty interpretations? Do you find major logical faults with the author's arguments? Does academic jargon obscure the author's argument? When you make such critiques, do not clutter your text with "I think. . ." or "in my opinion." Do not be tentative. Be bold and make strong arguments. However, always try to be fair.

Finally, summarize the contribution the reviewed work makes to the broader field of Native studies or religious studies. What does this work help scholars understand in general? At this point, you may also make suggestions about the text's suitability for various reading audiences. Should this text be used in undergraduate survey courses, upper-level undergraduate classes, graduate courses, or simply by specialists in Native studies or religious studies? Conclude with a final recommendation on the book. Is this work definitive or is there much more to be studied? Does the work make a stunning contribution to the field, or is the work so seriously flawed as to merit little notice?

Stylistic format: double spaced, Times-New Roman font, one-inch margins, no page number on first page, all other pages numbered at the bottom (centered)

Due date: Week six.