

University of New Mexico  
American Studies 350.001  
Religious Studies 347.001  
Fall 1997, T/Th 2:00-3:15  
Mitchell Hall 116

## **Native Americans and Christianity**

James Treat, Assistant Professor  
Office hours: T/Th 3:30-4:30  
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### **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 Texts

These texts are available at the UNM Bookstore and are also on two-hour closed reserve at the Reserve Desk in Zimmerman Library (except The Spirit World, which is shelved in the Reference Collection).

Sandra S. Frankiel, Christianity: A Way of Salvation (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1985).

The Spirit World (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1992).

Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks (eds.), Sioux Indian Religion: Tradition and Innovation (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1987).

Barry O'Connell (ed.), On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, A Pequot (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1992).

Joseph B. Herring, Kenekuk, The Kickapoo Prophet (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

James Treat (ed.), Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996).

Vine Deloria, Jr., God Is Red: A Native View of Religion, 2nd ed. (Golden, CO: North American Press, 1992).

### 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, 11)	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**

Course schedules for each unit, showing specific reading assignments and due dates, will be distributed during the semester.

### I. Religion and Religions

August 26 to September 18

Topics:  
Christians  
Native Americans  
Lakotas

Assignment:  
Religious Family Tree

### II. Historic Relations

September 23 to October 21

Topics:  
Pequots  
Kickapoos  
Lakotas

Assignments:  
Research Proposal  
Midterm Essay

### III. Contemporary Realities

October 23 to November 27

Topics:  
Native Christians  
The Southwest  
Vine Deloria, Jr.

Assignment:  
Presentation Outline

### IV. Conclusions

December 2 to December 16

Topic:

Class Presentations

Assignments:

Annotated Bibliography

Final Essay

## **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