

American Studies 123I, Winter 1995
T/Th 12:00-1:45, Oakes College 222
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Native Americans and Christianity

Christianity has played an important role in the history of the Americas during the last five centuries. Christian ideas and practices influenced Europeans and others as they interacted with Native Americans beginning in 1492, and Native Americans 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 Americans and Christianity is thus an important aspect of understanding the Native American experience. The relationship between Native Americans and Christianity is also one of the most divisive issues within Native American communities today, a situation that calls for critical and committed scholarship. We will be reading a wide range of literature by and about Native Americans and discussing a variety of ways in which Native Americans have interacted with Christian individuals and communities, appropriated Christian ideas and practices, and expressed and maintained Christian identities.

Course Objectives

Students in this course will:

- (1) develop a basic understanding of Native American worldviews, religious traditions, and critical discourse;
- (2) learn about various ways in which Native Americans have interacted with Christian individuals and communities, appropriated Christian ideas and practices, and expressed and maintained Christian identities;
- (3) consider theoretical perspectives on important topics in the study of religion, including religious leadership, processes of religious change, pluralism and interreligious dialogue, religion and social analysis, and religious identity; and
- (4) refine skills in multidisciplinary textual criticism while reading a wide range of literatures by and about Native American Christians.

Course Requirements

Each student in this course will be required to:

- (1) complete the assigned readings, attend class regularly, and participate in class and small group discussions;
- (2) submit seven short essays articulating a critical response to the assigned readings;
- (3) formulate and complete an original, substantive research project focusing on a Native American Christian community or individual.

Course Texts

- O'Hear, Anthony, and Judy Groves. Introducing Jesus. Cambridge, England: Icon Books, 1994.
- Tedlock, Dennis, and Barbara Tedlock (eds.). Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy. New York, NY: Liveright, 1975.
- O'Connell, Barry (ed.). On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, A Pequot. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1992.
- Herring, Joseph B. Kenekuk, The Kickapoo Prophet. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988.
- DeMallie, Raymond J., and Douglas R. Parks (eds.). Sioux Indian Religion: Tradition and Innovation. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1987.
- Dudley, Joseph Iron Eye. Choteau Creek: A Sioux Reminiscence. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1992.
- Deloria, Vine, Jr. God Is Red: A Native View of Religion, 2nd ed. Golden, CO: North American Press, 1992.

Course Readers

- Howard, James H. "The Kenakuk Religion: An Early 19th Century Revitalization Movement 140 Years Later." Museum News 26, no. 11-12 (November-December 1965), 1-48.
- Treat, James (ed.). Native and Christian? Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada. New York, NY: Routledge, forthcoming.

Course Schedule

Introductions

January 5

Christianity

January 10
O'Hear 1-174

Native American Religions

January 12
Tedlock ix-19, 42-74, 105-140

January 17
Tedlock 141-204, 219-271
Critical response essay due

William Apess

January 19
O'Connell lxxix-52, 99-161

January 24
O'Connell ix-lxxvii, 275-310
Critical response essay due

Kenekuk

January 26
Herring xi-90

January 31
Herring 91-131; Howard 1-48 (reader)
Critical response essay due

Sioux Religious Diversity

February 2
Tedlock 20-41, 205-218; DeMallie vii-65

February 7
Tedlock 75-95; DeMallie 67-147
Research prospectus due

February 9
Tedlock 96-104; DeMallie 149-216
Critical response essay due

February 14
Dudley vii-96

February 16
Dudley 97-179
Critical response essay due

February 21
NO CLASS (Exchange Day)

Vine Deloria, Jr.

February 23
Deloria 1-149

February 28
Deloria 150-292
Critical response essay due

Native Christian Narrative Discourse

March 2
Treat

March 7
Treat
Research presentation outline due

March 9
Treat
Critical response essay due

Research Presentations

March 14

March 16

March 24 (Friday, 12-3 p.m.)
Research report due