Course Description: In this upper-level survey course on religions and spiritualities of the Native Americans, we will practice the central disciplines in the field of Religious Studies, including the interrelated practices of: listening, reading, analyzing, reflecting and discussing a diverse range of interrelated topics placed in dialogue with varied perspectives from both practitioners and scholars (and scholars-practitioners) of Native American religions and spiritualities. The course begins with an introduction to current approaches and issues related to the study of Native American religions and spiritualities, followed by an historical outline and concludes with reflections on theoretical and methodological issues including the question of representation. Rather than arguing for a normative, central or dominant account of the religions and spiritualities of the Native Americans, we will seek to develop a balanced approach that seeks a deeper appreciation of the interconnectedness and diversity across the religions and spiritualities of the Native Americans. Committed to an integrative assessment of the intersections between the religions of Native Americans in dialogue with historical and contemporary challenges, we will employ approaches and interpretive frameworks from within the fields of historical studies, law and jurisprudence, ecology, sciences, archeology, gender studies, post-colonial studies, theoretical perspectives and religious studies.

“Our religion is the traditions of our ancestors – the dreams of our old men, given to them in solemn hours of night by the Great Spirit; and the visions of our sachems (medicine people); and it is written in the hearts of the people.”

- Chief Seattle (Dwamish), 1786–1866

Two (2) Required Textbooks: These two (2) textbooks should be purchased:


Additional Required Readings (see Canvas): Other than the two (2) course textbooks, all of the other course readings will be made available as PDF documents in the Files Folder located within our Canvas Homepage. The readings should be completed by the date assigned within the calendar provided below.

Learning Objectives: Upon successfully completing this course, the following objectives will have been met:

1. Students will gain an understanding of methods and issues in the study of religious and spiritual traditions of the Native American traditions.
2. Students engage in an interdisciplinary approach to the study Native American religions and spiritualities.
3. Students will identify, summarize, compare and contrast the beliefs, rituals and practices across the spiritual and religious practices of Native Americans.
4. Students will have improved upon their analytical reading of historical, religious and other texts related to the Native American traditions and people.
5. Students will have improved upon their critical and empathetic interpretation of a range of beliefs and practices across the Native American traditions.
6. Students will practice being self-reflexive and reflective as part of developing critical self-awareness as the evaluator (and possible practitioner) of Native American religious traditions and spiritualities.

Course Structure: The structure of this course will be blended between lectures and group discussions.

Attendance (100 points): Generally, OSU would like to encourage students to attend class in person, it surely is a better educational experience, however, I will make an attempt made to record lectures for those students who miss class. You will be asked to locate our class on I-clicker and mark yourself as present at the start of each class once we begin our time together. https://www.iclicker.com/ If you have not signed up, follow the instructions to do so, and then search for our course: The Religions of Native Americans, and/or search for my last name: Pereira. Make certain to enroll for the correct class number and time as well: REL 3573.292212. Note: if you have issues marking yourself present, please let me know within 48 hours of the class where the issue occurred, and we will rectify the issue. After 48 hours from the given class, the one point will be considered lost.

Grade Breakdown for Attendance will be as follows: each unexcused absence (generally excused absences are provided for university related events) will lead to a 2 point reduction from the 100 possible points available, so if a student missed 3 classes, the student would be rewarded 94 points for attendance.

Four (4) Reflection Essays (50 points each; 200 points total): Four (4) two page, double-spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman, reflection essays on topics to be provided in relation to the course readings and lectures. These will be more open ended types of essays that allow the students to summarize what they have learned and offer some of their own reflections on the material covered in class. Guidelines will be provided.

Due Dates: 2/14; 2/28; 3/19; 4/12.
**Six (6) Quizzes (50 points each; 300 points total):** Quizzes may be in the form of multiple choice and/or true of false questions. The quizzes will focus exclusively on the course readings including the two (2) course textbooks and other book chapters provided in the Files folder on our Canvas homepage. These quizzes will serve exclusively as reading checks, which means the questions will be as straight forward as possible rather than interpretive. All of the quizzes will be open book, open notes, and there will be a two hour time limit. Each quiz will be posted one week before it is due.

**One (1) Extended Essay (200 points):** Seven (7) page interpretive essay that draws from at least two (2) secondary sources. Guidelines will be provided. **Due: April 19th**

**One (1) Final Exam (200 points):** The Final is a comprehensive exam which will be given in class on the day and time during Final Exams week. The Final will consist of the following components: one essay with two options; five (5) identifications with ten options; and ten (10) multiple choice questions.

**Late Work Policy:** Late work will be accepted up to one week after the original due date. Late work could be penalized up to 20% prior to evaluating the work. After one week, the grade of zero (0) will be submitted for any missing work. If you have any issues or concerns regarding assignments, please do let me know.

**Electronic Devices:** Please place all of your electronic devices, including laptops, cell phones, away and out of sight once the class has started. If you need to make a phone call or send a text, please feel free to step out of class and return when ready to be present. Points could be deducted from the attendance grade if a student is disruptive or distracting due to the use of electronics in class (but I do not anticipate any issues). Thank you in advance.

**Extra Credit | Religious Studies Events and Written Reflections (up to 20 points per reflection):** The Religious Studies Program will host four public lectures this semester on a range of interesting topics that intersect with religion from various perspectives. To earn the total twenty points, the reflections should be 1-2 pages, singled-spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman and demonstrate engagement with the public lecture. The reflections should summarize the public lecture and reflect upon what the student learned, found interesting, significant, and/or what questions were generated by attending the public lecture.

**Distribution of the Graded Points (Comprehensive Evaluation):**

- **Attendance** 100 points
- **Four (4) Reflection Essays** 200 points (50 points each)
- **Six (6) Quizzes** 300 points (50 points each)
- **One (1) Extended Essay** 200 points
COVID-19 Rules and Guidelines: the following list of guidelines, which have been established by OSU (with a couple extra notes provided by myself), will be followed throughout this course:

**Optional Attendance:** Attendance will not be evaluated throughout this semester. If you prefer not to come to class, then please know that you do not need to send me an email.

**Attendance Taken Every Day and Seating Chart:** Instructors need to develop a seating chart and take attendance each class. This is for the purpose of contact tracing and may not be used as part of a student’s grade. Clickers may be used to take attendance. We will use I-Clicker for attendance, however, again, please note that this will have no bearing on your grade. Attendance is solely taken for the purpose of contact tracing. We will make a seating chart in the first week of the semester.

**Mandatory Mask Wearing in Classroom:** Students are expected to wear masks at all times while in the classroom. Likewise, the instructor is expected to wear a mask or face shields or both in classrooms, labs and studio spaces. Please do not attend class if you are unable or unwilling to wear a mask at all times. I greatly appreciate your cooperation.

**Social Distance Meetings between Students and Instructor:** Rather than meeting in person before or after class or during office hours, please reach out to me via zoom, email, facetime, or another medium, during office hours, or by appointment.

**Recording Lectures and Course Materials Online:** Lectures will be recorded and all the course materials will be provided on Canvas, so that, if you choose not to attend the class, you may access these sources.

**Academic Integrity:** OSU is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, helping another person cheat, unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and altering academic records) will result in an official academic sanction. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript, and being suspended from the University. You have the right to appeal any charge: 101 Whitehurst Phone (405) 744-5627 | Website: [http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu](http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu)

**Students with Physical or Learning Disabilities:** If you need special accommodations the University will try to make appropriate arrangements. These arrangements will need to be made ahead of time through the Student Disability Services Office 315 Student Union | (405) 744–7116| Website: [https://sds.okstate.edu/](https://sds.okstate.edu/)
CALENDAR (DUE DATES FOR COURSE READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS)

WEEK 1 | INTRODUCING NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIONS AND SPIRITUALITIES

1/20 Review of the Course Syllabus

1/22 Huston Smith, “Introduction: The Primal Religions,” *A Seat at the Table*, pp. 1 – 5


WEEK 2 | A HISTORY DISPOSSESSION (OF LAND) AND DISPLACEMENT (OF PEOPLE)


Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “This Land” and “Follow and the Corn,” *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, pp. 1 – 31 (see Canvas)

1/27 George E. “Tink” Tinker, “Historic Pain and the Political Present,” *American Indian Liberation*, pp. 1 – 16 (see Canvas)

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “The Doctrine of Discovery,” *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, pp. 197 – 217 (see Canvas)


Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “The Last of the Mohicans and Andrew Jackson’s White Republic,” *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, pp. 95 – 116 (see Canvas)

WEEK 3 | THEORY AND METHOD: REPRESENTATION, IDENTITY AND INTERPRETATION

2/1 Joseph Epes Brown, “Introduction,” *Teaching Spirits*, pp. xvii – xxiii (see Canvas)

2/3 **Wellness Day | No Classes or Assignments Due**


**WEEK 4 | ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS**


C. Kidwell, H. Noley and G. Tinker, “Creation,” *A Native American Theology*, pp. 32 – 51 (see Canvas)

2/10 Larry J. Zimmermann and Brian Leigh Molyneaux, “The First American Peoples,” *Native North America*, pp. 6 – 19

Site One: Cahokia


2/12 Joseph Epes Brown, “Relationship and Reciprocity: A Metaphysics of Nature,” *Teaching Spirits*, pp. 61 – 82 (see Canvas)


**WEEK 5 | SACRED LAND, ECOJUSTICE AND THE #NODAPL MOVEMENT**


Site Two: Peterborough Petroglyphs


Site Three: Chaco Canyon


**WEEK 6 | ON THE NARRATION (AND INTERPRETATION) OF SACRED STORIES**


2/24 Joseph Epes Brown, “Silence, the Word, and the Sacred: Evoking the Sacred through Language and Song,” *Teaching Spirits*, pp. 41 – 60 (see Canvas)


**WEEK 7 | ON SHAMANS, MEDICINE, PLANTS AND CEREMONIES IN NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS**
Larry J. Zimmermann and Brian Leigh Molyneaux, “The Life of the Spirit,” *Native North America*, pp. 74 – 89

**Site Four: Haida Villages**


Larry J. Zimmermann and Brian Leigh Molyneaux, “The Life of the Spirit,” *Native North America*, pp. 90 – 113

**Site Five: The Great Serpent Mound**


Daniel C. Swan, “Early Osage Peyotism,” *Plains Anthropologist* 43.163 (February, 1998), pp. 51 – 71 (see Canvas)


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**Week 8 | The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978) to Mass Incarceration**


**WEEK 9 | VARIEGATIONS OF NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCHES**

3/15 Hudson Smith, “The Triumph of the Native American Church: Celebrating the Free Exercise of Religion: A Conversation Frank Dayish Jr. (Navajo),” *A Seat at the Table*, pp. 97 – 112


**WEEK 10 | PERSONHOOD, SCIENCE, LAW IN THE NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS**


**WEEK 11 | KINSHIP, CEREMONY, ART AND TIME IN THE NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIONS**


Joseph Epes Brown, “There is No Word for Art,” *Teaching Spirits*, pp. 61 – 82 (see Canvas)

**WEEK 12 | RITUALS, PURITY, DANCE AND SONGS IN THE NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS**


**WEEK 13 | NATIVE AMERICAN THEOLOGIES (IN DIALOGUE WITH CHRISTIANITY)**

4/12 George E. “Tink” Tinker, “Christology and Colonialism,” *American Indian Liberation*, pp. 84 – 111 (see Canvas)

C. Kidwell, H. Noley and G. Tinker, “Deity,” *A Native American Theology*, pp. 52 – 61 (see Canvas)


**WEEK 14 | RESISTANCE AND RENEWAL: TOWARDS NATIVE AMERICAN LIBERATION**


**Week 15 | Pre-Finals Week / Final Reflections**


Huston Smith “Afterword,” *A Seat at the Table*, pp. 201 – 204

**Week 16 | Finals Exam Week**

5/3 – 5/7

**Bibliography | Resources for the Study of Native American Spiritualities and Religions**

**Books**


Kidwell, Clara Sue and Noley, Homer and George E. “Tink” Tinker *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001)


Zimmerman, Larry J. and Brian Leigh Molyneaux, Native North America (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000)

Journal Articles


Links
Center for Sovereign Nations. Founded in 2015, the OSU Center for Sovereign Nations with “ a lead investment by the Chickasaw Nation and later investment by the Choctaw Nation:
https://sovnationcenter.okstate.edu/

Thirty-nine (39) tribal nations of Oklahoma, see the following link:
https://sovnationcenter.okstate.edu/csn-2020/tribal-nations-in-oklahoma.html
Documentaries

*How the West was Won*, Discovery Channel. For educational purposes, this documentary is available via YouTube.