Objectives of the Course: This course introduces the student to the historical and contemporary religious beliefs and practices of Native peoples of North, Central and South America. With such a vast and diverse universe to study, our approach will (1) highlight key features of indigenous religious traditions throughout the Americas; (2) discuss central features of religious traditions in several of the major civilizations (Maya, Inca, Aztec); and (3) focus on religious ethnographies of contemporary native peoples in all three macro – regions of the Americas. Thus, the course is a mix of what we understand about the religions of the historic great civilizations of the Americas, and what we understand about contemporary indigenous religiosities. The main emphasis in all three objectives is on historical change and continuity in indigenous religious traditions.

Reading List (Required Books):

1) Title: *CONVERSATIONS WITH THE HIGH PRIEST OF COOSA*
Author: CHARLES HUDSON
Edition: 2003
Publisher: UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
This text is required

2) Title: RELIGIONS OF Mesoamerica
Author: DAVID CARRASCO
Edition: 2014
Publisher: WAVEランド PRESS
This text is required

3) Title: Native American Religious Traditions
Author: SUZANNE CRAWFORD
Edition: 2007
Publisher: LAURENCE KING
This text is required

4) Title: Thunder Shaman
Author: ANA MARIELA BACIGALUPO
Editor: 2016
Publisher: UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
Required
Course Requirements:

1.) Students are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to each class meeting. Class participation does count in final grade evaluation (10%). Discussion will be scheduled on Fridays of every week. Continued absences will not be tolerated; following the third absence, 3 grade points will be taken off the final grade for each day of absence. More than 6 absences will lead to administrative withdrawal from the course;

2) Three papers on topics that emerge from the films, each paper being 3-4 pages in length (750 words), to be sent to the Assignments tab on this website on the week following the final day of each of the three principal parts. Papers should be formatted in Times New Roman 12 double - spaced. Feedback will be provided on all written assignments;

3) A Take-Home Mid-Term and a Take-Home Final

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

15% for each short paper (T = 45%); 10% discussion participation; and 20% for the Mid-Term and 20% for the Final Exams; 5% for participation in the activities of Native Recognition Day (October 10) and Native Heritage Month (mid-November).

CONTENT OF THE COURSE

Following a general Introduction to Indigenous Religious Traditions of the Americas, the course is organized into three main sections:

Native North American Religious Traditions;
Native South American Religious Traditions;  
Native Central American Religious Traditions.

The Introductory section presents key components of native religions: the notions of an inter-subjective cosmos, a multi-tiered cosmos, and multiple notions of time and space; a holistic cosmos, with inter-relationality among spirits, deities, and humans; the central importance of, and interrelations among religious specialists: shamans, priests, sorcerers, ceremonial leaders, and prophets; reciprocity as both a founding principle of ongoing religious & social life and yet, paradoxically, potentially its negation through sorcery; the importance of “traditional ecological knowledge” to the understanding of cosmology; and the adaptability of religious beliefs to change. While the course highlights the resilience of indigenous religions, it also analyzes the principle threats to continuity, focusing on the “appropriations” by non-indigenous peoples of indigenous beliefs and practice, the shattering of religious institutions during the conquest, the imposition of Christianity and its indigenization, and processes of healing and the resurgence of religious traditions.

Following the Introduction, the course is divided into 3 main sections: (1) Native North American Religious traditions, especially the knowledge and powers of religious specialists, sacred rites and religious renewals, contemporary ceremonialism, and the importance of ‘sacred ecology’ to native peoples’ worldviews. (2) Native South American Religions, including the Andean Highlands and most especially, Lowland Amazonia (where the Instructor has realized most of his fieldwork and research). Here, we will concentrate on the writing of religious ethnographies, discussing cycles of sacred narratives, the critical importance of eschatology, ancestor ‘cults’, sorcery or ‘dark shamans’, prophet movements in history, and ‘conversion’ to evangelicalism. (3) Native Central American Religions. The films and readings are designed to provide both scholarly views on the great civilizations of the past, the visions of the "vanquished-but-not-defeated", and the challenges their historical descendants face today. Films will illustrate how native peoples have creatively forged solutions to contemporary problems posed by political and economic changes.

The student will learn about native religious traditions of the Americas, which is not offered in any other course, to our knowledge, at this University (this course is required for those who intend to minor in Native American Studies or are in the Inter-disciplinary Studies Major). The students will learn more about the histories of the Americas from the perspectives of the peoples whom European societies and their descendants colonized for centuries and who have written their own religious histories from their own perspectives, revitalizing the sacred in new and creative ways.
This course can thus be considered under the rubric of the Humanities in that its focus is the religious traditions of native peoples of the Americas, and how they have been studied or presented through scholarly production, cinema, and indigenous perspectives. It seeks to present an in-depth understanding of the cosmogonies (views on creation), cosmologies (the spatiotemporal structures of the universe), anthropologies (relations among all living beings, what constitutes a ‘person’, and what constitute ‘specialists’), and eschatology (views on death and the afterlife) of the native societies studied. The methodologies this course adopts are comparative, historical, and ‘thickly descriptive’ ethnographies.

The instructor’s fieldwork conducted over three decades among peoples of the Northwest Amazon will provide a constant baseline for comparisons. A major concern is to construct a critical reflection on the possibilities and limitations of doing religious ethnography among an indigenous people whose understanding and worldview are distinct in fundamental ways from the so-called “Western traditions”. How can research tools be modified such that this study becomes a meaningful enterprise - one in which the native peoples have an active role in constructing their religious histories and writing their own ethnographies?

The materials for the course consist of the readings (articles scanned and included in the Resources section and books to purchase in bookstore or by Amazon.com); powerpoint lectures and films supplement the readings. Films can sometimes, not always, be accessed through UFL Library Proxy.

As indicated in the Requirements section, the instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student’s written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. All written assignments have word counts and submission deadlines.

**PROGRAM OF LECTURES, READINGS, FILMS, AND DISCUSSIONS:**

Monday, 8/22: Introduction to the Syllabus and Readings; elements of Religions in general

Wednesday, 08/24: Introduction to Indigenous Religious Traditions & Spiritualities:
Reading: Wright, “Indigenous Religious Traditions of the Americas” – pdf. on course website

Dr. Jan Tucker will be teaching classes from 08/24 until 09/23

Friday, 08/26: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Class by Dr. Kenneth Sassaman, “North American Archaeology”;

Monday, 08/29: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Readings: John Mohawk, “Tribal Religious Traditions are constantly devalued in Western discourse”, pdf on course website;

Film: “The Doctrine of Discovery” (first half)

Wednesday, 08/31: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Readings: Suzanne Crawford, Native American Religious Traditions, Ch. 1

Film: “Doctrine of Discovery” (second half)

Friday, 09/02: Native North American Religious Traditions:
Readings: Crawford, Ch. 2

Film: “Sun Dance” (first half)

**Monday, 09/05: LABOR DAY. NO CLASS**

Wednesday, 09/07: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Readings: Crawford, Ch. 3

Film: “Sun Dance” (second half)

Friday, 09/09: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Readings: Crawford, Ch. 4

Film: [On Religious Activism in Red Power Era]

Monday, 09/12: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Readings: Crawford, Ch. 5

Film: “In the Light of Reverence”
Wednesday, 09/14: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Reading: Ines Talamantez, “In the Space between Earth and Sky”

Film: “Sunrise Ceremony” on Apache girls’ coming-of-age (28 min.)

Friday, 09/16: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Readings: L. Sullivan, Parts 1 & 2 on Dine’

Film: "The Healing Properties of Navaho Ceremonies"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93LiFvjZsg

Monday, 09/19: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Readings: [On Incarceration and spirituality]

Film: “Spirit in the Hole” (approx., 30 minutes)
http://www.mnvideovault.org/search_results.php?q=Native+American+religion&search-go.x=14&search-go.y=11

Discussion

Wednesday, 09/21: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Film: "Older than America"

Discussion

Friday, 09/23: Native North American Religious Traditions:

Guest Lecture by Jason Purvis

Readings: Vine DeLoria, God is Red

Monday, 09/26: North American Religious Lifeways: the Southeast

Guest Lecture by Marcus Briggs-Cloud

Readings: Hudson, Conversations with the High Priest of Coosa

Wednesday, 09/28: North American Religious Lifeways: the Southeast

Guest Lecture by Marcus Briggs-Cloud

Readings: Hudson, Conversations with the High Priest of Coosa
Friday, 09/30: North American Religions and Christianity: the work of the NAIITS

Guest Lecture by Jason Purvis

Readings:

Monday, 10/03: Indigenous Religious Traditions of South America: Introduction


Recommended: BBC documentaries on Caral & Nazca

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMacuGusmeg&list=PL2laziMcPXMcdMlhWttgqqwXYSX9GZedC
(BBC Documentary in 5 parts)

Also:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaUAwXBhQH0
History Channel Documentary

Wednesday, 10/05: Ancient Civilizations in Highland & Lowland South America & Their Religious Traditions
Readings: L. Sullivan; “The World and Its End: Cosmologies and Eschatologies of South American Indians” In Native Religions and Cultures of Central and South America, pp. 179-199;

Recommended: BBC documentaries on Tiwanako, Chan Chan & Wari

BBC Documentary “The Stone at the Centre” on Tiwanako:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmT0lBSc54o

BBC documentary on Chan Chan:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6WAx70MZrA

Also: History Channel documentary on Chavin de Huantar:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfWJk00nuhY

BBC documentary on the Wari:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJRV8XGP284

Friday, 10/07: Ancient Civilizations in Highland & Lowland South America & Their Religious Traditions


Recommended: BBC documentaries on Chachapoyas
Monday, 10/10: Yanomami shamanic Traditions


Film: “Xapiri”, by Bruce Albert

https://archive.org/details/xapiri

NATIVE PEOPLES RECOGNITION DAY. FILM SCREENING, “THE SEVENTH FIRE” WITH PANEL DISCUSSION.

Wednesday, 10/12: Yanomami shamanic Traditions


Friday, 10/14: Hohodene & The Jaguar Shaman Spirits

Readings: Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans of the Northwest Amazon, Ch. 1, 2, 4

Film: “Searching for Pariká”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbkQkvp_Fu8 (Links to an external site.)
Monday, 10/17: Hohodene & The Jaguar Shaman Spirits

Readings: Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans of the Northwest Amazon, Ch. 1, 2, 4

Wednesday, 10/19: Mapuche machi

Readings: Bacigalupo, Thunder Shaman, Ch. 1

Friday, 10/21: Mapuche machi

Readings: Bacigalupo, Thunder Shaman, Ch. 2

**TAKE-HOME MID-TERM EXAMS DUE ON MONDAY 10/24**

Monday, 10/24: Mapuche machi

Readings: Bacigalupo, Thunder Shaman, Ch. 3

Film: On Mapuche machi
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AG4V-bjHtmk
Wednesday, 10/26: Mapuche machi

Readings: Bacigalupo, Thunder Shaman, Ch. 4

Friday, 10/28: Mapuche machi

Readings: Bacigalupo, Thunder Shaman, Ch. 7

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Monday, 10/31 Indigenous Religious Traditions of Central America: Introduction

Readings: Introduction & Chapter 1 in Carrasco, Religions of Mesoamerica (Waveland Press, 2014);

Wednesday, 11/02: Indigenous Religious Traditions of Central America: The Olmec, Teotihuacan, Classic Maya

Readings: Carrasco, Ch. 2;

Film: BBC documentary on the Olmecs and Teotihuacan

http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04hkb5p
Friday, 11/04: Indigenous Religious Traditions of Central America: Religion of the Aztecs

Readings: Carrasco, Ch. 3

Film: "The Five Suns " on Reserve at Smathers

Monday, 11/07: Indigenous Religious Traditions of Central America: Religion of the Aztecs

Readings: Carrasco, “Sacred Cities, Sacred Actions”, in Sullivan, Native Religions and Cultures of Central and South America, pp. 9-33;

Wednesday, 11/09: Maya Religion

Readings: Carrasco, Ch. 4

Film: "Popol Vuh " on Reserve at Smathers

Friday, 11/11: VETERANS' DAY - NO CLASS

Monday, 11/14: Maya Religion
Readings: “Sacred Forces of the Mayan Universe”, Mercedes de La Garza, pp. 92-127

Wednesday, 11/16: Maya Religion

Readings: “Sacred Forces of the Mayan Universe”, Mercedes de La Garza, pp. 128-172

Friday, 11/18: Contemporary Religiosity

Readings: Carrasco, Ch. 5;

Monday, 11/21: Contemporary Religiosity

Readings: Alfredo Lopez Austin, “Indigenous Mythology from Present-day Mexico”, in Sullivan, pp. 35-65; (pdf in Modules)

Wednesday – Friday, 11/23 - 25: Thanksgiving Holidays. No Class

Recommended over holidays:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5DNvYMtkyk
(Graham Hancock, “Lost Civilization”)

Monday, 11/28: Huichol Religion
Readings: Peter Furst, "Huichol Cosmogony: How the World was Destroyed by a Flood and Dog Woman gave birth to the Human Race", in: Gossen, Gary H. ed., South and Meso-American Native Spirituality, pp. 303-23; (pdf in Modules)

Film on Huichol, Peyote Hunt
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Bb_YC8pmCI

Wednesday, 11/30: Chiriqui and Bribri of Costa Rica


Recommended: BBC documentary on the Chiriqui
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0274blv

Friday, 12/02: Taino and the Caribbean

Readings: Jose Barreiro, “Beyond the Myth of Extinction"

Film: BBC documentary on Taino; http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04j8st0

Discussion

Monday, 12/05: Garifuna

Film: “Yuremein" (on Reserve at Smathers)
Wednesday, 12/07: Wrap-up of the Course

Review for Final Exam.

**TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMS ARE DUE BY THE END OF EXAM WEEK.**

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**RULES OF THE COURSE**

1. Plagiarism or cheating: Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course. In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action. See http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm for more information on UF policies.

2. Incompletes are strongly discouraged and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete before the end of the semester.
3.

Students engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom. Please turn phones and pagers off during class. Texting is not permitted during class, and any internauting during class-time that is not related to the material being discussed will be penalized.

4.

Students with Disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation or special consideration.