

INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS (REL 244; NAT 244; ANT 273)

Fall 2009 (31093; 31737; 31064, sec M001)

WF (8:00-9:20), 202 HL

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Introduction:

This course explores a long neglected aspect of the world's religions--Indigenous religions--that is religions that are primarily defined as culturally oriented toward particular landscapes. Because the category of "Indigenous" encompasses a tremendous cultural variety, our first task must be to interrogate the category itself. What does "Indigenous Religions" mean? On one hand Indigenous religions are in contact with, yet distinct from, the 'great' world religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, etc. On the other hand there are indigenous elements in all of religious life. Indeed we will consider how being indigenous is directly connected with religious creativity. Our second task will be to investigate this complicated topic by looking at particular cases and issues confronting indigenous people. These will be largely taken in our reading from the Americas. Then we will assess the disjunction between the modern world that determines our cultural understandings, and indigenous life by examining the consequences of the railroad. For our third task we will read what Indigenous People are telling the world in their work through the United Nations. At each of these three turns in the course we will self-consciously appraise the cultural distances between the world views which constitute modernity (and the university) and the world views which constitute Indigenous peoples.

Required Texts:

Philip Arnold, Indigenous Religions: an Introduction (pdf on Blackboard)

Joseph Bastien, Mountain of the Condor

Jerry Mander, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, eds. Paradigm Wars: Indigenous People's Resistance to Globalization

Melissa Nelson, Original Instructions

Basic Call to Consciousness

Goals taken from the Religion Department website (<http://religion.syr.edu/>) :

Knowledge of religion is critical in today's world. The academic study of religion at Syracuse University offers students the opportunity to explore religion in a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary context. Students who take courses in religion learn to interpret the dynamics of religious convictions, actions and expressions. Religious traditions and practices engage such questions as; What kind of life is most worth living? How do we understand the nature of the world? How do we relate to ourselves and to others? Students study religious life and thought from the perspectives of arts, ethics, gender, history, literature, mythology, philosophy, political theory, psychology, scriptural studies, social sciences, and theology. The academic study of religion is a critical undertaking and an often transforming experience introducing students to unfamiliar aspects of their own world, and to the religious realities of our global situation.

The Department of Religion has articulated three goals that shape its teaching and its expectations of what students in its courses and programs may expect to gain from this study:

1. to understand better the nature and diversity of religious expressions in the contemporary world and in history, and their power in peoples' personal and collective lives;
2. to think more deeply and critically about religious experience and its modes of expression and forms of interpretation;
3. to recognize and appreciate the difficulties and possibilities in a disciplined study of religion; and to become aware of a diversity of approaches and methods within that study.

Statement Regarding Disability-Related Accommodations

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services, see <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>

Academic Integrity Statement

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/>

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
<u>September</u>		
2	Introductions and definitions	
4	Urgencies and collaborations	Arnold, Preface (Blackboard)
9	What are Indigenous Religions?	Arnold, Chapter 1, pt. 1 (Blackboard)
11	What's in a name?	Arnold, Chapter 1, pt. 2 (Blackboard)
16	Paying attention	Arnold, Chapter 2 (Blackboard)
	Paper #1 due Posted on Blackboard	
18	Religion as Habitation	Arnold, Chapter 3 (Blackboard)
23	Introduction to the Mountain	Bastien chapters 1-2
25	Earth metaphor	Bastien chapters 3-4
30	Birth	Bastien chapters 5-6
<u>October</u>		
2	Death	Bastien chapters 10-11
	Paper #2 due Posted on Blackboard	
7	Significance of Indigenous Survival	Mander/Tauli-Corpuz, Part 1
9	Basic call to consciousness	<u>Basic Call</u> , Intro, Preamble, pp. 80-102
14	Religion as Exchange	Arnold, Chapter 4
16	Indigenous values	Nelson, Intro. & Part One
	Project Outline due	
21	The true source of Democracy	Nelson, Part Two
23	Kinship	Nelson, Part Three
28	Feminine power	Nelson, Part Four
30	Traditional agriculture	Nelson, Part Five
	Paper #3 due, Posted on Blackboard	

Date	Topics	Assignments
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November

4	Doctrine of Discovery	Arnold, Chapter 5
6	Decolonization	Nelson, Part Six
11	Spiritual Malaise in the US	Deloria; Papal Bulls (Blackboard)
13	Religious problems with Globalization	Mander/Tauli-Corpuz, Part 2
18	Extractive Industries	Mander/Tauli-Corpuz, Part 4
20	Survival	<u>Basic Call</u> , pp. 103-125

Paper # 4 due, Posted on Blackboard

25 & 27 Thanksgiving Break no classes

December

2	Project presentations and responses
4	Project presentations and responses
9	Project presentations and responses
11	Project presentations and responses

FINAL PROJECT DUE-Friday, 18 December, 12:30 to 2:30 PM

Grading

Final grades will be based on four discussion papers, the outline, presentation and submission of a final project, and class attendance and participation.

Papers and responses: At four times during the semester you are responsible for writing a short paper on the assigned topic and readings. The paper is to be 500 to 1000 words (2 to 4 pages, double spaced) and posted on the class Blackboard site (<http://blackboard.syr.edu/>). You will receive up to 10 points for your paper depending on its quality. You will also be asked to respond to at least 2 other papers of your peers for which you will receive an additional 5 points. Responses are due no later than a week after the discussion paper is due. You can get up to 15 points for each paper for a possible total of 60 points.

The criteria listed below are used when assessing your written work. Percentages are only to demonstrate the relative weight of each of the criteria in any given assignment.

- **Clarity**. The viewpoints you present in your writing must be clearly conceived and well argued. Your writing style should be straight-forward, easy to read and should be clearly related to the issues you wish to address. Topic sentences at the beginning of each paragraph are helpful in establishing the issue and argument for the reader at the outset. (40%)
- **Engagement with the material**. Entries are to be related to the reading material. They are *not reviews* of what has been stated in the book but are your *critical analysis* of the reading. Avoid direct quotes. Instead seriously take-up what you consider to be the 'key' issues for the study of religion in the reading. An analysis of the issues discussed in the course become clearer the closer your writing is to the texts used in class. (40%)
- **Creativity**. The 'work' of Religious Studies, and perhaps the Humanities in general, is essentially creative. Interpretation of religious phenomena requires that you come to some meaningful relationship with your object of study. This is one of the defining characteristics of creativity. You have a unique and important contribution to make to our collective understandings. There are no predetermined experts in the area of interpretation, only well refined and well argued positions. Your interpretations will be dealt with as importantly as you regard them yourself. (20%)

Outline, Presentation and submission of Final Project: You will be responsible for developing an outline, presenting and handing in a final project of your choosing. It can be on any aspect of the reading or your independent work. The date for posting an outline is marked on the syllabus. You will get up to 5 points for the outline. These are to be more than just a 'bare-bones' outline. They should be a explanation of what you will be doing for the final project, how you are doing it and why it is important. As with the papers you will be required to respond to at least 2 other outlines a week after the posting date for which you will get another 5 points.

The presentation of your project takes place during the last 2 weeks of the semester. You will have approximately 5 minutes to present your project to that class. One student will be selected from class to respond to your project and ask you a short question. You will receive up to 5 points for your presentation and the respondent will receive up to 5 points for their question.

The final project is due to be posted on Blackboard on the day of our final exam. It is to be 1000 to 1500 words (4-6 pages long), 12 point, double-spaced. In addition to the narrative you may want to include photos, videos or other media in the project. You will receive up to 10 points for your final project. All totaled the final project outline, presentation, responses, and project itself is worth 30 points. I encourage you to contact me or the TA via email with ideas for the final project as soon as possible. We can make suggestions on how to do an effective final project. Good luck!

Attendance and class participation: Attendance is mandatory for this class. Lectures and reading will be intimately related but quite different. It is therefore in your own best interest to do the reading AND attend class as both will reflect on your performance on discussion papers, responses and your final paper. You will have two unexcused absences. You will be given regular opportunities to participate in class either by asking questions, making comments, and interacting with other students in discussion in class or on Blackboard.

Grades will be calculated on the following basis:

4 discussion papers and responses	60 points
Outline and responses	10 points
Presentation and responses	10 points
Final project	10 points
Attendance and class participation	<u>10 points</u>
	100 points

A	90-100 points
A-	88-90 points
B+	84-87 points
B	81-83 points
B-	78-80 points
C+	74-77 points
C	71-73 points
C-	68-70 points
D+	64-67 points
D	61-63 points
D-	58-60 points
F	57 points and below