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NAS 303E.01: Ecological Perspectives of Native Americans

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Ecological Perspectives of Native Americans
NAS 303E, Section 1, Wilderness and Civilization
Fall 2009
R. Clow NAS Building, 206,
Office Hours, Monday, Wednesday 10:00-11:00

This is a one-semester course on tribal-landscape relationships that is designed to acquaint students with tribal views of their physical environment. The course will also focus on tribal environmental ethics. To assist us in understanding tribal environmental ethics, we will need to understand a metonym, which is a figure of speech where a word stands for an association of related ideas. Several of the associated ideas will be territoriality and tenure. Besides understanding ethical behavior, which is defined as a proper way of acting, we will also be emphasizing the social purpose of a culture, which is crucial to understand why a culture acts on the landscape in a specific way.

The format of this class will be a combination of long lectures, short lectures, and class discussion. As the class moves forward, I may be adding several essays either on tribal fire use or other land resource and practice topics for example. A word of advice, good note taking will help in solving essay puzzles.

The course objectives are straightforward. Students should understand and identify tribal environmental ethics, the relationship between cultural belief and behavior, and be able to articulate the social relationship between people culture and their landscape.

Most readings are found on electronic reserve operated through the Mansfield Library and I will put the readings on electronic reserve for and you can assess them through your computer and the Mansfield Library's web page. The password will be NAS303. Buffalo Bird Woman's Garden will be required and that reading can be found online via Google. Several readings may be found on JSTOR.

Class Topics

Part 1, September 15 to September 30

We will begin our journey into the relationship between people, culture, and their landscape by discussing the relationship between environmental variables. We will begin our study by understanding the concepts of territoriality and tenure, which will not be dictionary definitions, but are metonyms. We also will examine the idea that a people's relationship is a dialectical relationship, based on reason opposites. Since this class fulfills an ethics requirement, we will also begin our journey into several essays that are on electronic reserve through the library's network system and the password is NAS303. These articles will be stepping stone for the issues of morality. The articles on electronic reserve are Garret

Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," and Fikret Berkes, "Common-Property Resource Management and Cree Indian Fisheries in Subarctic Canada," White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." Garrett Hardin, "Extensions of "The Tragedy of the Commons," Bryan E. Burke, "Hardin Revisited: A Critical Look at Perception and the Logic of the Commons," and James Hagenruber, "A Montana Hunter in Bavaria."

Part 2, October 1 to October 21

We will continue our discussions of tenure and territoriality. We will add Buffalo Bird Women's Garden to our readings. This book is important for us because he discusses the relationship between people, culture, and landscape. Though the focus is on the Hidatsa, we will be interested in the dynamics of this social relationship between all persons, cultures, and landscapes. All individuals have relationships with their physical landscape. As a result, we will discuss environmental concepts that are applicable to all cultures. This premise will enable us to emphasize that different cultures have different, not wrong relationships with the landscape. This book will also reveal more about tenure and territorial behavior.

Understanding the functional dependency between different environmental variables will help us to understand starvation, as well as ideas of territoriality and tenure, which will be the focus of the end of the week. An important goal of these lectures will be establishing a cross-cultural framework to understand the relationship between people, culture, and landscape. Territorial behavior and tenure will be two important concepts that will emerge from our discussions. The book Buffalo Bird Woman's Garden is available as a digital book on Google.

Part 3, October 21 to October 31

We will continue to apply environmental concepts to tribal relationships with their landscapes. Though hunting will be a common discussion topic, the ideas we discuss will be applicable to other tribal cultures including those that farm or fish for a livelihood. During the course of these lectures, we will refer to tribal literature as our authority. That will require each of you to understand tribal literature and its role in environmental ethics.

Part 4, November 1 to November 15

Discussions this week will continue with the themes presented the previous week. Accordingly, it is important for you to do the readings and to attend class prepared to discuss the readings and lecture materials that have been presented in class. Be patient, as we will continue to work our way through student-selected readings. As you can tell, student discussions are important.

Part 5, November 15 to December 1

Disease and cultural disease theory are part of everyone's relationship to the landscape. Understanding how and why disease afflicts tribal communities must be understood by understanding tribal culture. We will be examining other concepts, the game masters and keepers and their tie to disease and successful hunting. You will have to have read Calvin Martin, "European Impact on the Culture of a Northeastern Algonquian Tribe: An Ecological Interpretation," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Jan., 1974), pp. 4-26 on JSTOR and James Mooney, "The Origin of Disease," also on e reserve.

Part 6, December 1 to December 10

All cultures alter their landscapes. Survival and Stability are the reasons that this occurs. To understand how and why tribal cultures altered their landscapes requires our attention. To do so, we must understand the use of fire and efficiency. Often the way that cultures alter their landscape creates conflict between tribal cultures and non-tribal cultures. When this occurs, it is due to a condition that we can call as cultural environmental conflict occurs. It is important to remember then, that environmental conflict is not just a resource conflict stimulated by scarcity, but philosophical conflicts. This is why we must read with care George Wenzel's two essays on reserve is an important text that will accompany our lectures and discussions. In addition, the section from the Jesuit Relations found on reserve will be helpful in writing your last essays.

Attendance

Attendance and class discussion will be important to understand the concepts that we are going to discuss. Despite the importance of attendance, I will not be making attendance mandatory, but you will be responsible for all materials covered in class.

Grading

Critical thinking and synthesis are the final goals of this class so there were will essays on the assigned readings and over our lectures. Some of the questions will force you to integrate materials from both the readings and the lectures materials. There will be two take home exams, that will be typed, doubled spaced and cover your topic completely. You will need to use lecture material, discussion themes, and readings, to construct responses to problems many questions will asked.

These two exams may have more than one part or essay. These two exams will be your entire grade. Proper citations will be required. I will sometimes give you the exams in parts.

Remember that the focus of this class is tribal relations with the landscape and that environmental ethics, a study of ethical behavior, provides the foundation of this relationship. Always keep in mind, that a relationship with the landscape includes (1) knowledge of the tribal landscape, (2) understanding of tribal environmental belief, (3) awareness of proper tribal ethical behavior, and (4) understanding of the tribal relationship between ethical behavior and successful acts of production. I will be looking for concepts in your papers and the cause and effect relations between ethics and production in your final paper. Citations will be required in these scholarly essays. An article that will be helpful in writing your research paper will be Beatrice A. Bigony, "Folk Literature as an Ethnohistorical Device: The Interrelationships between Winnebago Folk Tales and Wisconsin Habitat," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Summer, 1982), pp. 155-180. This article is available at JSTOR. This search engine is one search engine of the Mansfield Library's data bases and is free.

Each paper must begin with a statement of the subject and purpose of the paper. Then state its thesis or theses, conclusion or conclusions, immediately. These theses will convey your judgment on what the other readings and discussions add to the selected questions and you are to present your informed and evidenced conclusions on the relationship between tribal people, their culture, and their landscape. That this, each paper should have at least three sentences giving the exact organization and logic employed in crafting these papers.

Academic Honesty:

The University of Montana expects its students to be academically honest, particularly in regards to plagiarism. Plagiarism is taking someone else's ideas and thoughts and presenting them as one's own. Copyright laws are rigid as it concerns plagiarism, as is the University. Please refer to pages 22 of the current University catalog for more specific information regarding penalties for such action. Academic dishonesty in Native American Studies classes will result in a failing grade in the course and disciplinary action consistent with University policies.

Drop/Add: For three weeks after the beginning of school, you can drop and add classes via Cyber Bear. After that students must drop and add manually by obtaining signatures from the appropriate individuals.