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RELS 301.01: American Indian Religion and Philosophy

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NAS 301 Syllabus

Fall Semester, 2000
University of Montana
3 Semester Credits
Also RELS 301

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Hours: M, Tu 3-4, W 2-3
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**American Indian Religion and Philosophy
NAS 301, Section 1 Syllabus**

Course description: "Same as RELS 301E. A study of selected ethical systems; origins, world views; religious ceremonies and the way they have been affected by western civilization." Native philosophy and world view differs markedly from Euro-American or western philosophy and world view, providing a spiritual grounding for Native societies, in contrast to the secular basis of contemporary American culture. This grounding forms the basis of many of the key differences in core cultural values between Native society and non-Indian society. This course is intended to provide the student with a foundation of knowledge to understand ways in which world view and spirituality shape the contemporary Indian world, and ways in which that differs from the contemporary American culture in general.

Course Objectives: The course will provide the student with an understanding of the historical and contemporary basis of Native philosophy and world view, how that is expressed in various societal contexts, including everyday life, social institutions and ritual, and how that has both changed and remained consistent from pre-Columbian through modern times. Both continuity and change, and the forces guiding each, will be the focus of study.

Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Ability to analytically discuss philosophy and world view from an intercultural context
- 2) Understanding of roles of spirituality and religion in Native American Life
- 3) Understanding of Western Impacts on Native American World View
- 4) Understanding of Modern Issues related to spirituality and world view

Required Readings

Anderson, Karen, *Chain Her By One Foot*. New York, Routledge, 1991

Deloria, Vine, Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*. New York, Scribner, 1995.

Gordon-McCutchan, R.C and Frank Waters, *Taos Indians and the Battle for Blue Lake*. Santa Fe: Red Crane Books, 1995.

Harrod, Howard L., *Mission Among the Blackfeet* University of Oklahoma Press, 1971

NAS 301 Syllabus

Johnston, Basil H., *Ojibwe Heritage*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

Tedlock, Dennis, translator, *Popul Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life* Touchstone Books, 1996

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1, September 6: Introduction

Week 2, September 11, 13: Overview

Week 3, September 18, 20: Latin American World View systems

Tedlock

September 20: In-Class Essay #1

Week 4, September 25, 27: North American World View systems

Week 5, October 2, 4: Invasion I: Jesuit Missionaries

Anderson, *In-class essay #2 October 4*

Week 6, October 9, 11: Invasion II: 19th Century missionaries

Week 7, October 16, 18: Invasion III: Boarding Schools

Harrod

Review Essay # 1 due October 18

Week 8, October 23, 25: Invasion IV: U.S. Government

October 25: Midterm

Week 9, October 30, November 1: Native Religion and Christianity

Week 10, November 6, 8: Native American Church

In Class Essay #3 November 8

Week 11, November 13, 15: Traditional Expression of Native Religion

Johnston

Week 12, November 20, 22: Spirituality, religion and culture

Deloria

Week 13, November 27, 29: Modern Issues I: American Indian Religious Freedom

Review Essay #2 due November 29

NAS 301 Syllabus

Week 14, December 4, 6: Modern Issues II: NAGPRA

Week 15, December 11, 13: Modern Issues III: Taos Case Study

Gordon-McCutchan

December 11: In-Class Essay #4 December 11

Week 16, Week of December 18: *Final Examination*

Written Assignments:

In-Class Essays: 20 minute essays based on readings and class presentations. Worth 5 points each. May not be rewritten or made up.

Review Essay Assignments: Write a 4-5 page review essay of the Anderson and Harrod books, and a 4-5 page review essay of the Johnston and Deloria books. Each paper should be typewritten or computer generated, double spaced, approximately 1000-1250 words. May be rewritten with approval of instructor.

Midterm and Final Exams consist of both essay questions and short answer questions

Points		Grading	
In-Class Essays	20	90-100:	A
Midterm	20	80-89:	B
Review Essay 1	15	70-79:	C
Review Essay 2	15	60-69:	D
Final Exam	20	↓ 60:	F
Class Attendance	10		