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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 2 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

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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, *Précis 1 due September 20*

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

Week 5, October 2, 4: Invasion I: Jesuit Missionaries
Anderson, *Précis 2 due October 4*

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

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

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

Week 11, November 13, 15: Traditional Expression of Native Religion
Johnston, *Précis 3 due November 15*

Week 12, November 20, 22: Spirituality, religion and culture
Deloria, *Précis 4 due November 22*

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

Week 14, December 4, 6: Modern Issues II: NAGPRA
Term Paper due December 6

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

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

Written Assignments:

Précis: 1-2 page (500 words maximum) analysis of reading assignment for Tedlock, Anderson, Johnston and Deloria books. 5 points each. Must be typed or computer generated, double spaced

Term Paper Assignment: Select a topic related to Native belief systems from one of the books. Approve the topic with the instructor. Learn more about the topic by conducting research on it, and write an 8-10 page paper that in some way addresses the question of how belief systems shape society. Please include a proper bibliography and citations.

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

Points		Grading
Précis	20	90-100: A
Midterm	20	80-89: B
Term Paper	20	70-79: C
Final Exam	30	60-69: D
Class Attendance	10	↓ 60: F