

REL2938: 2954; ANT3930: 1A50 - FALL 2012

INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF THE WORLD

PROFESSOR ROBIN M. WRIGHT

Classroom AND013; T08-09 - R09 for all sections

OFFICE HRS: ANDERSON 107C, M, T, W 12-2 P.M.

(1) PRELIMINARIES:

TO WHAT DOES THE TERM “NATIVE RELIGIONS”, OR “INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS” REFER ?

NATIVE PEOPLES DO NOT REFER TO THEIR SACRED TRADITIONS AS ‘RELIGIONS’ IN THE SAME SENSES AS NON-NATIVE RELIGIONS; COLONIAL SENSE OF ‘RELIGION’ (CHRISTIANITY)

NATIVE PEOPLES MORE OFTEN REFER TO THEIR RELIGIOSITY AS ‘TRADITIONS’, ‘WISDOM OF OUR ANCESTORS’, ‘TEACHINGS OF THE ELDERS’.

TRADITIONS IN GENERAL HAVE BEEN (UP UNTIL A COUPLE OF CENTURIES AGO) UNWRITTEN, ORAL NARRATIVES, PERFORMED AND EXPRESSED IN CEREMONIES;

NO HARD & FAST SEPARATION EXISTS BETWEEN THESE ‘TRADITIONS’ AND HOW PEOPLE LIVE (TRADITIONS ARE EXPECTED TO BE PUT INTO PRACTICE ALL THE TIME)

NO ONE SINGLE INSTITUTION CHARACTERIZES ‘NATIVE RELIGIONS’, UNLIKE A CHURCH, OR SYNAGOGUE, MOSQUE, OR TEMPLE. FOR NATIVE PEOPLES, THE GREAT OUTDOORS IS THEIR ‘CHURCH’;

HAVING SAID WHAT IT IS NOT, THESE TRADITIONS DO CONSIST OF: NOTIONS OF AN ULTIMATE REALITY. THE ‘REAL WORLD’, TRUE WORLD THAT IS BEHIND THE MANIFEST EXISTENCE AND IS NORMALLY UNSEEN (THIS WORLD/OTHER WORLD), = THE COSMOS

TRADITIONS ARE EXPRESSED IN SACRED STORIES, CEREMONIES, CHANTS, RITES OF THE LIFE CYCLE, ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS, ROCK ART AND PETROGLYPHS. TRADITIONS ARE ‘LIVED’ ‘IN PRACTICE’ RATHER THAN BEING SUBJECT TO SYSTEMATIZATION; THE NOTION OF ‘WORLD-MAKING’

IS AN ART DOMINATED BY THE RELIGIOUS SPECIALISTS.

TRADITIONS ARE 'KEPT' BY SPECIALISTS (SHAMANS, PRIESTS, SORCERERS, PROPHETS); AND ARE IN CONSTANT ELABORATION . TRADITIONS CAN & DO CHANGE, ARE FLEXIBLE, AND ARE CAPABLE OF INCORPORATING BELIEFS AND PRACTICES FROM OTHER PEOPLES. TRADITIONS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY HETERODOXY, NOT ORTHODOXY: EACH SPECIALIST CAN ELABORATE ON / EMBELLISH THE SACRED STORIES ACCORDING TO CULTURALLY DETERMINED CRITERIA OF APPROPRIATENESS, AESTHETICS, AND COMPLETENESS.

GREAT IMPORTANCE IS ATTRIBUTED TO CYCLES OF TIME AND SPACE; THE SACRED CIRCLE IS ONE OF THE PREDOMINANT FORMS IN ALL INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS (EXAMPLES: MEDICINE WHEEL; ANNUAL CYCLE OF DEATH AND REGENERATION OF PLANTS; LIFE 'CYCLES', THE UNIVERSE AS HAVING BEEN 'BORN', GROWN UP, AND TRANSFORMED. DEATH IS NEVER AN END-POINT, BECAUSE THE MOMENT IS FOLLOWED BY REGENERATION AND THUS IMMORTAITY.

SOME PEOPLES DEVELOP NOTION OF 'ENTROPY' - THAT UNIVERSE IS CONSTANTLY IN NEED OF REPLENISHING, THAT LIFE CYCLES ARE FINITE, THERE IS CONSTANT LOSS OF ENERGY IN THE UNIVERSE, AND HUMANS HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RENEWING "RESOURCES".

NOTION OF STEWARDSHIP: THAT HUMANS HAVE RESPONSIBILITY OF TAKING CARE OF LIFE; NOT ABUSE, BUT MAINTAIN A DESIRABLE CONDITION OF BALANCE. THIS IS AN IDEAL CONDITION; HOWEVER, SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME, CREATION OF IDEALLY HARMONIOUS EXISTENCE IS PUT IN CHECK BY THE DESTRUCTION OF LIFE, AS IN SORCERY. A NO-WIN GAME;

HUMANS ARE NOT THE PRIVILEGED CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE, BUT ARE ONE KIND OF 'PEOPLE' AND THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF 'PEOPLE' IN THE UNIVERSE. SOME LIVE IN OTHER WORLDS THAT ONLY THE SPECIALISTS CAN SEE, COMMUNICATE WITH, AND EXCHANGE WITH. ALL OTHER-THAN-HUMAN BEINGS HAVE LIFE, SHARE IN THE LIFE-PRINCIPLE OF THE UNIVERSE, SAME SPIRIT (= ANIMISM). RECIPROCITY AND EXCHANGE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT DYNAMIC OF LIFE: FORMS OF RECIPROCITY INCLUDE: GIFT, EXCHANGE, DEBT, CELEBRATION, OFFERINGS, POTLATCH, SACRIFICE, SELF-SACRIFICE, AND VENGEANCE OR RETRIBUTION.

CALENDAR FOR CLASSES AND FILM SCREENINGS

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO COURSE SYLLABUS AND REQUIREMENTS

WEEK 2: “Ordinary Reality” IN SOUTH AMERICA

Readings from by Dorothy Stang, *A Walk to the River in Amazonia. Ordinary Reality for the Mehinaku Indians.*

Readings of the entire book are to be done over three sessions (T, R & T)

WEEK3: “Non-Ordinary Reality” in South America

Readings from *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans*”, by R.M. Wright

Readings of Chs. 1, 2, 3, 4 copies will be sent to listservs to be read over three sessions (T, R, T)

WEEK 4: Meso-American Commonalities and Differences

Readings from David Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*

To be read in its entirety during 3 sessions (R, T, R)

WEEK 5: Towards an Indigenous Theology of Liberation

Readings from *Thinking in Indian. A John Mohawk Reader*, ed. By J. Barrero

To read Pts. 1 & 5 (on Kindle e-book) during 2 sessions (T, R)

WEEK 6: Sepik Religious Cosmology and Cosmogony (New Guinea)

Readings from *Dancing Through Time: A Sepik Cosmology*”, Borut Telban;

Readings to be completed in 3 sessions (T, R, T)

WEEK 7: Dogon Theology in Africa

Readings from *Conversations with Ogotemmel*, Griaule, ed.

Readings over three sessions (R, T, T);

WEEK 8: Life History of Shamans

Readings in *Life and Hard Times in Korea: A Woman Shaman Tells her Life*”, by Laura Kendall

Readings during three sessions (R, T, T)

MID-TERM TAKE-HOME EXAM ON WEEKEND DISTRIBUTED ON THURSDAY,
TO BE RETURNED MONDAY DURING CLASS

WEEK 9, 10, 11, 12: FILM SCREENINGS.

1. Banquet of the Spirits, (by Carelli & Valadao);
2. "Blood of the Gods" (da Silva & Wright);
3. "Popol Vuh", "The Aztec Fifth Sun";
4. "Brujos", on Mazatec shamans today;
5. Griaule among the Dogon; also, the making of the sacred masks;
6. Yanomami films: "Magical Death", "The Feast"

WEEKS 13, 14, 15, 16: In-class presentations, discussions of topics from
the course, writing of short, final papers.

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS, AND HOMECOMING WEEKEND

Course Requirements

The course requirements are:

- 1) Do Readings on time, according to course schedule; any changes in the readings will be announced in advance on the course Sakai e-learning website;
- 2) A mid-term take-home exam, worth 35% of the final grade;
- 3) A final paper, 5 pp., worth 35% of the final grade; topics to be announced shortly after the mid-terms have been returned;
- 4) Three SHORT (3) 'reflection papers' (500 words apiece) to audio-visual material (videos), worth 30% of final grade. Questions for reflection will be distributed prior to screening.

Course Regulations:

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. **Make-up exams and quizzes** will be given only under very special circumstances, such as a medical emergency. In that case, students must bring a doctor's note.

4. Students engaging in **disruptive behavior** will be asked to leave the classroom. Please turn phones and pagers off during class.

5. **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.

6. **Attendance** will be taken every class and discussion session; more than three unjustified absences will result in points taken off final grade. All absences should be justified with appropriate documentation. Consistent, late arrivals to class or consistent, early departures from class will also mean points deducted.

(2) BOOK LIST FOR THE COURSE: (FOLLOWING 2 PAGES)

TERM	COURSE	
Fall 2012	REL 3938	2954
Contact E-mail: rowrightrobin@yahoo.com		
Required or recommended texts:		
1. Title:	A WALK TO THE RIVER IN AMAZONIA. ORDINARY REALITY FOR THE MEHINAKU INDIANS	ISBN:
Author:	CARLA STANG	Edition:
New Retail Pri	\$29.95	Used Retail
This text is required		
2.		
Title:	THINKING IN INDIAN. A JOHN MOHAWK READER	ISBN:
Author:	JOSE BARREIRO, ED.	Edition:
This text is required		
3.		

Title:	CONVERSATIONS WITH OGOTOMMELI. AN INTRODUCTION TO DOGON RELIGIOUS IDEAS	ISBN:
Author:	M GRIAULE, ED.	Editio
This text is required		
4. Title:	RELIGIONS OF MESOAMERICA	ISBN:
Author:	DAVID CARRASCO	Editio
New Retail Pri	\$20.95	Used Retai
This text is required		
5. Title:	THE LIFE AND HARD TIMES OF A KOREAN SHAMAN	ISBN:
Author:	LAUREL KENDALL	Editio
New Retail Pri	\$20.00	Used Retai
This text is required		
6.		
Title:	DANCING THROUGH TIME: A SEPIK COSMOLOGY	ISBN:
Author:	BORUT TELBAN	Editio

New Retail:	\$140.00	Used Retai
This text is recommended		