

INDIGENOUS COSMOLOGIES SPRING 2011 PROF. ROBIN M. WRIGHT

1135	REL 5937	8	T 7-9	AND 19
7169	ANG 6930	12	T 7-9	AND 19

OFFICE HOURS: AND 107C CLASS-DAYS (T periods 5-7)

Objectives of the course: This course seeks to examine systematically and comparatively the cosmologies of traditional peoples from selected areas of the globe: the Americas, Melanesia, and Africa. The central objectives of our studies of different cosmologies are to study the following:

- Systems of inter-related temporal and spatial structures among cosmic planes; Vertical and horizontal structures and their relations to various modes of social and religious organization; how are these translated into ritual action ?
- Notions of Transformations: what do different peoples mean by this notion in relation to cosmology ? Existence of Properties of the cosmos that permit expansion and contraction (centrifugal and centripetal movements) ?
- Notions of Sameness and Difference in the cosmos, especially with regard to deities and their powers; How do the different peoples understand their “place” in the cosmos and the places of other beings ? How do they understand the nature of their relations with other beings (spirits, deities, demons, ‘other peoples’)?
- Permanence and Change: how do traditional peoples envision the emergence of change in the midst of static conditions ? When and how does change alter what is permanent ? When is change merely a transitory condition and when is it a structural change ?
- Cosmos and Self/Person: what comparisons can be drawn between the structures and processes found in both ? Can each level of the cosmos be seen to correspond to an aspect of the Person ? How are gender distinctions manifest in the cosmos ?
- How is the relation **between body and soul** understood in each case, and how is this relation projected onto spatial and temporal structures of the cosmos ? How is the relation between Subject and Object understood in each case ? When can ‘objects’ become ‘subjects’ endowed with intentionality and agentivity ?
- Cosmogony, or, the beginning of the cosmos: how is it envisioned ? What ideas exist of an end-time for the cosmos ?

- Finally, how can “sustainable development” projects be more sensitive to traditional peoples’ living cosmologies, shamanisms, and other religious traditions ?

During the course, efforts will also be made to visualize cosmological structures and processes through computer-generated plans or drawings.

The following readings reflect only a portion of the thematic content, as indicated by the questions outlined above. Nevertheless, both they and the thematic questions can serve as a basis for developing your paper topics. The required readings for the course are:

1. Borut Telban, *Dancing through Time. A Sepik Cosmology*. Clarendon, 1998.
2. Eduardo Viveiros e Castro, “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism”, in Michael Lambek (ed.) *Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*.
3. Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*. University of New Mexico Press. 1996.
4. Aparecida Vilaca, *Strange Enemies*. Duke University Press. 2010;
5. F. Santos-Granero (ed.) *The Occult Life of Things*. 2009. University of Arizona Tucson;
6. J.P. Chaumeil & Jonathan Hill, *Burst of Breath*. 2011. University of Nebraska Press. (in press; may or may not be ready this semester)
7. R.M. Wright, *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans of the Northwest Amazon*. Ms. 2011 (on reserve and online);
8. Vine DeLoria, *The World we Used to Live In*. Fulcrum, 2006.

Highly recommended readings for the course are:

1. Graham Harvey (ed.), *Readings in Indigenous Religions*. Continuum, 2002;
2. Graham Harvey (ed.), *Indigenous Religions. A Companion*. Cassell, 2000;
3. Graham Harvey, *Animism. Respecting the Living World*. Columbia, 2006.
4. Philippe Descola & Gisli Palsson (eds.), *Nature and Society*. Routledge, 1996.
5. David Friedel, Linda Schele, Joy Parker, *Maya Cosmos. Three Thousand Years on the Shaman’s Path*. Perennial, 1993.
6. Irving Goldman, *Cubeo Hehenewa Religious Thought*. Columbia, 2004.
9. Marcel Griaule, *Conversations with Ogotemeli*. Oxford, 1965.
10. B. & D. Tedlock, *Teachings from the American Earth. Indian Religion and Philosophy*.

Other articles or books will be recommended during the course of the semester.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance. You are expected to attend and participate in all seminars. Absences are allowed only if they are justified with a note from a doctor, therapist, or athletics director, or other reasonable excuse. You are still responsible for reading the material for the seminar in which you will be absent.

2. Class Participation. Class Readings will be distributed at the beginning of each month of the semester. Please do the assigned readings BEFORE coming to class and come prepared to participate actively in overall class discussions. Your active participation in the class is important. Students who do not complete the readings for each class and who do not participate will receive a failing grade on this item. In Addition, you will be tested at the end of each unit on the content of that unit, through an in-class written exam covering the principal ideas, concepts, and ethnographic material studied.

3. Research Paper. One major research paper, 20 pages in length is expected from each student, to be presented in written form at the end of the semester. **Abstracts of 150 words maximum** must be presented to the Professor by the fourth week of the semester. Paper topics should be discussed with the Professor during his office hours, on class-days, two hours before class..

COURSE RULES

1. Plagiarism or cheating: Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. 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 reading assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final paper requirement due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete **before** the end of the semester.

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

4. 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.

GRADING:

- Attendance: 5%
- Participation: 15%
- Abstract: 5%
- Final Paper: 45%
- Monthly in-class written tests.

READINGS:

1. Month of January, 2011:
 - *Animism*, Graham Harvey;
 - “Cosmology, Objectification And Animism In Indigenous Amazonia”, **Terrence Turner (on course website)**;
 - Eduardo Viveiros e Castro, “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism”, in Michael Lambek (ed.) *Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. (on course website);
 - V. DeLoria, *The World We Used to Live in*.