

INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS: Lakota Spirituality
RE 190/ES 200 - Block 3 (November 2012)

...while I stood there,
I saw more than I can tell, and I understood more than I saw,
for I was seeing in a sacred manner...
Black Elk

Faculty: Bruce R. Coriell *Office Phone:* 389.6639
email: bcoriell@coloradocollege.edu *Home Phone:* 389.0119
Cell Phone: 232.5014 (for emergencies)

Times:	Weeks 1+3:	MTWThF 9:15am-12noon + 1:15-3 pm	Locations:
	Week 2:	Pine Ridge visit - full days (early to late)	Loomis Seminar Room
	Week 4:	MTW 9:15am-12noon + 1:15-3pm	Pine Ridge, South Dakota

Course Description

A thematic introduction to the study of religious beliefs and practices in indigenous communities that explores issues of land, ceremony and identity in contemporary native cultures. The course requires a week-long visit to a native community that combines critical academic analysis with experiential engagement and reflection. Class field trip fee. (Meets the Critical Perspectives: Diverse Cultures and Critiques requirement.) (Also listed as Race & Ethnic Studies ES 200). 1 unit – Coriell.

The class seeks to place theoretical understandings from the discipline of religious studies into conversation with reflections on the contemporary experience of native peoples. We will guide this conversation by focusing on the themes of land, ceremony and identity. The importance of place will guide the method as well as the content of course study. Our trip to Pine Ridge, South Dakota presents us with the opportunity to meet Lakota people, visit their sacred sites, participate in their ceremonies and listen to their stories.

Studying indigenous cultures runs the dual risks of *romanticism* as one idealizes the value of native traditions and *fatalism* as one despairs over the overwhelming social stresses on indigenous communities. Genuine understanding avoids these dangers by situating learning in the concrete experience of real people living in actual communities and avoids the temptation of reducing living, breathing and complex human beings to abstract intellectual ideas or academic theoretical constructs.

Safety is a high priority - but students should not enroll for this course if participating in native ceremonies, respecting a different cultural setting, dealing with extreme weather conditions, sleeping in close quarters, eating simple food as well as spending long hours in the classroom and the field seems overwhelming.

The design of the course is both experimental and experiential. This is not a survey of Native American history, ceremonies and life ways. We have neither enough time nor expertise for such an enterprise. The course does aspire to offer you the chance to explore academic understandings of native religious expression in the context of one particular set of tribal traditions.

I do not claim mastery of the literature surrounding this topic, but will offer you my past experience and best work. My hope is that we will learn together.

Course Purposes

1) *To critically examine academic and popular treatments of indigenous religious traditions.*

We will encounter a fascinating and suggestive literature, which seeks to understand native traditions in light of enduring questions about human religious experience. The question here is, "what can religious studies teach us about native cultures in the contemporary world?" While I am interested in reading for personal development, our first task is to understand a text on its own terms and to explore the distinctive worlds opened to us by the text. Only then, can appropriate analysis and critique occur.

2) *To consider ways in which indigenous experience poses incisive questions for global religious traditions and the discipline of religious studies.*

One temptation is to treat different tribal traditions alike or as a subset of universal human religious experience. Our visit to Pine Ridge, will allow us to concentrate on the particularity of one people and their culture. The question this raises for our course will be "in what ways does our focus on Lakota ways teach us about how we study religion?" Often, an examination of the exotic bears the most fruit when we allow it to challenge our notions of the familiar. By looking at beliefs and rituals outside of the mainstream of dominant culture, we challenge our unacknowledged historical and cultural provincialism that leads to an uncritical understanding of religion and spirituality.

3) *To create a learning community, in which the opportunity to expand personal horizons fosters both inquiry and growth.*

One of the most difficult and complex tasks in this course will be balancing critical reflection and genuine appreciation. I expect respect and sensitivity as we are invited to participate in ceremonies held sacred by individual hosts and their communities. Yet, I hope each of us will approach these activities with the inquiring mind of a scholar. This prospect suggests finding one's place on the continuum between the extremes of unexamined romanticism and disdainful dismissal. Each of us has gifts to help us face this challenge together.

Course Values

Equal Access: Colorado College is committed to being an exciting place of learning and discovery for all of its students and strives to provide equal educational opportunities to students with disabilities.

Personally, I want you to get most possible out of this course. If your learning style requires particular accommodation, please let me know. Or contact Jan Edwards, Director of Disability Services and ADA Coordinator at [Colorado College - Disability Services](#)

Honor Code: As you know, the Colorado College community commits itself to academic integrity through the Honor System, which fosters personal honesty and mutual trust. The Honor Code is promoted and enforced by students and for students through the Honor Council.

It is hard to imagine studying a topic like Indigenous Religious Traditions, without also embracing integrity in our own intellectual and educational practices. While this course is highly collaborative and encourages group work, it remains essential to cite the work of others in your research. I like the way Prof. Dennis McEnnerney says it,

[D]iscussing your ideas and your writing with others is *not* a violation of the Honor Code. In fact, it is a good idea to compare your ideas and writings with those of others and to ask others for criticisms of your work. Using other people's ideas can also be a good idea - *if* their ideas are good *and* you credit the authors for developing the ideas.

I will ask you to sign all of your written work along with the pledge; *honor code upheld*. Posting to our web page calls for even more attention to accuracy and fairness. Please consult the Honor Council website at [Colorado College - Honor Council](#) or ask me if you have any questions.

Citation: All work that is written or posted to the web will use the parenthetical citation form found in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. You'll find lots of help with citation forms and issues at [Tutt Library - Writing Guides](#)

The issue of fairness in relation to the ceremonies and stories we encounter at Pine Ridge will demand a high level of sensitivity. As I've said on our website,

Stories belong to people. This is especially important in the case of native communities that experience the loss of control of their own narratives as a kind of final indignity. "They took our lands, our homes and our traditions. And now they want our stories."

Too often, the academy has appropriated and disseminated materials that did not belong to them in the first place. We will talk more about these important issues in class. In general, I would like to do whatever I can to discourage you from harming yourself through dishonesty and to nurture your own cultivation of integrity.

Course Assignments

Class participation: This will be an intense course. Trust me—I'm not kidding. **While on campus, we will meet both mornings (9:15am- noon) and afternoons (1:15-3 pm), unless otherwise noted.** I suspect that our experiences at Pine Ridge will be almost around the clock. If the time commitment freaks out some of you, think of the out of classroom sessions as labs in which our own experience provides an opportunity for intentional reflection.

The class is structured to include a wide range of learning opportunities. Challenging academic texts, group conversation, experiential discovery, individual expression, team projects and real world creative applications should give everyone a chance to learn in ways they find meaningful, as well as to push each of us outside our comfort zone. Much of the learning depends on speaking and listening to your colleagues both in and out of class. The quality of class discussion will be proportionate to class attendance and participation by each of us. This means many of you will have to rearrange work and co-curricular activity. Bite the bullet and do it. I want you to be present – especially for the experiential components.

A word about religious experience: An integral part of this course includes participation in traditional teaching and ceremony. The intent is not to suggest conversion or to compromise personal values, but rather to open new worlds that stimulate critical thought and generate conversation. I encourage you to stretch your own limits through these practices. The more deeply you open yourself to new possibilities, the more meaningful the experiences can become. Please talk to me if any of the course experiences trigger personal concerns. Let me know right away if your beliefs prevent your participation, so alternatives can be arranged.

Assignments: In general, I am less interested in the specific form of your project than I am in the quality of your work, your demonstration of what you have learned (and are learning), and your own sense of pride in doing your best possible work. Don't panic about the number, size and complexity of the projects. Remember that, at times, you will be working in groups and dividing responsibility for various tasks.

Late Assignments: (Written assignments will be considered late after 24 hours and marked down 1/2 grade.) Please don't ask for exceptions. I do this for your own good; so that you have clearly articulated expectations and so that you receive timely feedback from me on your work. I'm a procrastinator myself, so I understand your pain. I hope this will help you.

Course Evaluations

Evaluating students: Whether you choose to take this course on the Pass (P) track or the Grade (G) track, it is my hope and expectation that you will take responsibility for your own education. Learning has it's own

value. Grading and grades tend to emphasize extrinsic rewards and overshadow the intrinsic values of learning. In many ways, my hope is that you will forget about grades.

I do not enjoy evaluating the academic performance of students. Too often, assessment gets in the way of genuine learning. This task is made even more difficult, given the significant role that experiential learning plays within this course. Please remember that evaluating your academic performance is not the same thing as judging you or your personal experiences. Who you are and what you learn in this class carry value that far surpasses a mere grade.

Nevertheless, grading is inescapable in the present context. I will try to make assessment as constructive as possible – another opportunity to learn. I will grade your academic performance based on your engagement, reflection and research within the course.

Engagement (30%)

- Individual attendance, contributions to class discussion, participation in experiential learning – 15%
 - Group performance, team projects, collegial editing, shared work load – 15%
- Class participation and discussion are difficult to evaluate. Good course dynamics are obviously a group effort, and yet, individual commitment is key. So I will evaluate the quality of class conversation both corporately and individually. I will judge the class based on your collective ability to advance the subject, to go deep into the issues and to involve everyone in the conversation. This means that if a classmate is missing classes or hesitant to speak out in class, you might want to think about what you can do to offer encouragement. If you tend to be quiet in class or dominate conversation, let me know how I can help you engage constructively. I am hoping that sharing responsibility to what happens in class will improve the overall quality of our time together.

Reflection (30%)

- Ceremony analysis – 20%
- Course Blog musings (scheduled/spontaneous) – 10%
- Letter of Gratitude

Research (40%)

- Sacred Lands Project – 20%
- Independent Group and Individual Projects: presentation and web report – 20%

Instructor and course: Your informal comments as well as your formal written evaluation of the course and instructor will be taken seriously. A constructive evaluation will improve the course for future students.

Course Texts (other course books and articles available in electronic form on PROWL) [CC PROWL](#)

Brown, Dee. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*, New York, New York: Henry Holt & Co.- Owl Books. 2007. ISBN 0-8050-8684-6.

This book will be optional reading during the course, but provides essential historical background for our field trip.

Deloria, Vine Jr. *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*. "30th Anniversary Edition." Golden Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing. 2003. ISBN: 978-1-55591-498-5

Neihardt, Joseph. *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*. Albany: SUNY Press. 2008. ISBN 978-1-4384-2540-5.

I would encourage you to buy a copy of this classic for the field, although an electronic version is available.

Course Schedule

Our schedule and assignments will change with the needs of the class. I may be adding (and subtracting) readings and modifying assignments. Keep an eye on the course [PROWL](#) site for the latest adjustments.

week # reading assignment field trip

Week 1 : October 29 - November 2 LAND : grounding the sacred

Monday (9:15am) Course Purposes + Logistics @ Loomis Seminar Room – Loomis Residence Hall

Monday (1:15pm) WordPress + PROWL Orientation @ Barnes PC lab - *time pending*

Monday (2pm) The Importance of Language @ Loomis Seminar Room

Yellow Bird: What We Want to be Called (pp. 1-18 by 1:15pm)

Course Reflections Blog Entries - rolling due dates

Tuesday (9:15am+1:15pm) Considerations of the Sacred

Eliade: The Sacred and the Profane (pp. 8-47, 116-159)

Lane: Giving Voice to Place (pp. 53-74)

Optional - Brown: Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (pp. xv-xvii, chapters 1-3)

Wednesday (9:15am) American Indian Religious Freedom Act

Michaelsen: American Indian Religious Freedom Act (pp. 93-109)

Forbes-Boyte: Fools Crow vs. Gullett (pp. 304-321)

Optional - Brown: Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (chapters 4-6)

Wednesday (11:00am) Research Orientation with Steve Lawson @ Tutt Library – *time pending*

begin Sacred Lands Project

Thursday (9:15am) Listening in a Tribal Context

Hautzinger: From Direct to Deferred Reciprocity (pp. 192-202)

Innes: Wait a Second. Who are you anyways? (pp. 440-457)

Illich: To Hell with Good Intentions (pp. 1-6)

Optional - Brown: Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (chapters 7-9)

Thursday (1:15-7:30pm) at Shove Chapel

Pipe Ceremony-Teacher Celinda Kaelin

Friday (9:15am) Preparation for Pine Ridge

Kaelin: Yuwipi Ceremony (pp. 1-11)

Kaelin: Sundance (pp. 1-29)

Optional - Brown: Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (chapters 10-12)

Sacred Lands Project essay - due 1st Friday 5 pm

Week 2: November 5 - November 9 CEREMONY: meaning through ritual

Monday (7am) Depart for Pine Ridge (from Loomis Circle parking lot)

Neihardt: Black Elk Speaks (introduction, preface, chapters I-XVI)

Optional - Brown: Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (chapters 13-15)

Monday possibilities: meet with Mike Little Boy, Jr., visit Wounded Knee Memorial Site, sweat lodge

Tuesday possibilities: tour Oglala Lakota College, erect tipi, traditional teachings, sweat lodge

Neihardt: Black Elk Speaks (chapters XVI-XXV, postscript, appendices)

Optional - Brown: Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (chapters 16-18)

Wednesday possibilities: prepare feast, meet children and community members, sweat lodge

Holler: Black Elk (pp. 19-41)

Thursday possibilities: visit Bear Butte vision quest site, sweat lodge, Yuwipi ceremony

Friday possibilities: community cleaning of Sundance grounds, final celebration

Friday (11am) Depart for Colorado College (return by 8pm)

Week 3 : November 12 - November 16

IDENTITY: individuals in community

Monday (9:15am) Understanding Ritual and Ceremony

Read TWO articles by theorists (Geertz, Smith and Turner) plus Segal

Geertz: Religion as a cultural system (pp. 87-125)

J.Z.Smith: Imagining Religion (handout, pp.53-65)

Turner: Frame, Flow and Reflection (pp. 465-497)

Turner: Ritual, Tribal and Catholic (pp. 504-526)

Segal: Turner's Theory of Ritual (pp. 327-344) –very helpful secondary source

Post Pine Ridge Blog Reflection

Tuesday (9:15am) Reflecting on Spiritual Experience

Read all IRT Web Reflections

Ceremony Analysis + Reflections essay - due 3rd Tuesday 5 pm

Wednesday (9:15am) A Native View of Religion

Vine Deloria, Jr: God is Red (pp. 1-61, 218-253, 283-292)

Thursday (9:15am) Feminism and Native Spirituality

Barbara Gunn Allen: The Sacred Hoop (selected essays)

Thursday (1:15 pm) Native issues at Colorado College (a panel discussion)

Read TWO of the following articles before our discussion on Native American issues at CC:

Anonymous: Old School? (pp. 52-61)

Cook-Lynn: Who Stole Native American Studies? (pp. 9-28)

Fenelon: How and Why the Academy Discriminates (pp. 177-187)

Guillory/Wolverton: Native Americans Retention in Higher Education (pp. 58-85)

Kuokkanen: Hospitality in the Academy (pp. 267-287)

Lacourt: Tree Outside the Forest (pp. 296-306)

Miheusuah: Native Experiences in the Ivory Tower (pp. 46-49)

Friday – Flex Day: Either catch up if behind or no class-Research Day/Bruce-office hours

Week 4 : November 19 - November 21

CULTURE: contemporary expressions of native traditions

Final Project (presentation + web summary) - due 4th Monday 9:15 am

Monday (9:15am+1:15pm) Final Project presentations

Tuesday (9:15am+1:15pm) Final Project presentations

Tuesday (3-7 pm) - Wopila Gratitude Pipe Ceremony + Feast - Celinda Kaelin

Letter of Gratitude - due 4th Tuesday 9:15 am

Assignment Guidelines

(Written assignments will be considered late after 24 hours and marked down ½ grade.)

#1 • Course Reflections Blog Entries - rolling due dates

Write (at least) two personal reflections about some aspect of our course. You may write in response to course readings, class conversations, ceremonial experiences, community visits or any other dimension of time together. Your audience should be your colleagues from class and other readers of our course website.

- Post your reflections to [CC Web - Indigenous Religious Traditions](#)

We will assign one post date. The other date is your choice. Write at least once about Pine Ridge.

- There is no prescribed length or form. Express yourself!
- In addition, make at least two comments on a classmate's blog entry.

#2 • Sacred Lands Project essay - due 1st Friday 5 pm

Identify a situation in which indigenous people seek to reclaim traditional lands. The place can be anywhere in the world. The attempt can be contemporary or historic. Spend some time looking at previous "Sacred Lands Projects" entries on our course web page. Try to avoid locations chosen by previous IRT classes, unless you can improve on their work.

Start by describing the tribal setting, the site (or sites) under consideration and other significant factors.

Questions to address:

- Why this land? What factors led to this effort?
- How do the native people understand, interpret and appeal to the sacredness of the land?
- How do non-natives understand and respond to claims based on the land as sacred?
- What have been the outcomes, intended or unintended?

Please remember that this assignment is more than a description of a conflict, it is a critical analysis of indigenous and dominant cultural understandings of the notion of the sacred in relation to land.

- Length=approximately 4 pages - due 1st Friday 5 pm
- Since we will be posting these essays to the course web page, please include appropriate photos, graphics, links and other web friendly materials.
- Email your assignment to me at bcoriell@coloradocollege.edu in Word format.
(name the document using the format - "SmithMary.SacredLands.doc" or docx)
- After editing, we will post the essays to our course website on the Sacred Lands Project page:
[CC Web - Indigenous Religious Traditions](#)

#3 • Ceremony Analysis + Reflections essay - due 3rd Tuesday 5 pm

Choose one of the ceremonies we have experienced during our course. Use one or more of the theoretical models from our course readings to analyze the ritual.

- In what ways, do scholarly categories provide a useful tool for interpretation?
- In what ways, do academic attempts fall short?
- What are the limitations of relying on personal experience?
- What are the limitations of relying on academic analysis?

In other words, describe ways in which academic attempts explain experience as well as ways in which experience provides a useful critique of religious studies. Finally, offer your own personal reflections on your own experience in ceremony. Self-critique requires a high level of self-awareness and subtlety.

- Length=approximately 4 pages - due 3rd Tuesday 5 pm
- Email your essay to me at bcoriell@coloradocollege.edu in Word format.

(name the document using the format - "JonesJoe.Ceremony.doc" or docx)

- After editing, we will post the essays to our course website on the Ceremony Reflections page:
[CC Web - Indigenous Religious Traditions](#)

#4 • Final Project (presentation + web summary) - due 4th Monday 9:15 am

Choose a project based upon an interest that been sparked or a passion that has formed as a result of this course. The possibilities are nearly endless:

- pick a novel, series of short stories, film(s), music or dance form that engage issues of indigenous religious traditions to analyze in light of what we have learned in class
- explore a topic we could have addressed in class (given more time) such as the urban Indian experience, native activism, indigenous approaches to environmental issues, comparisons between Lakota ceremony and other tribal traditions, etc.
- examine and edit a video project based on materials collected during our time at Pine Ridge such the teachings by Mike Sr. and or Mike Jr.

You get the idea. You have great latitude in what you may choose. Remember that time is limited, so pick a project that has available resources and is doable. But I do expect ALL the projects to accomplish the following:

- expand your understanding of indigenous religious traditions
- use what we have learned in class to interpretation the importance of religion and spirituality to understand native experience
- communicate what you have learned with your colleagues and classmates on Monday and Tuesday of our final week together

You may work individually or in groups. You have about 15 minutes of class time (more for groups) to share and discuss what you have learned in your independent study. Every person (or group) will post a summary of their learning to the "Independent Projects" page on our course web page. Include as much as possible, but keep your summary to one page (a bullet point summary is fine as long as the general public could understand what you are communicating. I'll grade your presentation and web summary separately. I hope you will have fun with this.

- Come prepared to present to the whole class on the 4th Monday at 9:15 am
- Our smart classroom has lots of media possibilities. Make sure the set-up works for your materials.
- In addition, post the one-page summary to our course website on the Independent Projects page:
[CC Web - Indigenous Religious Traditions](#)

#5 • Letter of Gratitude - due 4th Tuesday 9:15 am

Write a letter expressing gratitude to some person or persons for their contribution to your learning in this course. The idea is to communicate some of what you learned and how you have been affected by community participants who have served as resources in our learning about Indigenous Religious Traditions.

I recognize that each of us has had a very different experience in this course. Write your letter in a way that feels authentic for you. I am not expecting anyone to disclose more of themselves than is comfortable or that everyone's experience was uniformly positive. My hope is that this exercise will provide you with the opportunity to reflect on your learning and communicate that those who have served as our teachers.

Bring your handwritten or printed letter to the Wopila Pipe Ceremony in Shove Chapel on the last day of class. I will pass on your letter to those you choose to thank.