American Indian Beliefs and Philosophy
NASX 304E Section 01 Syllabus

Course description: “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 compares to 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.

The course will also provide the student with an understanding of ethical traditions, with the ability to distinguish one tradition from another, and will provide the student with the ability to identify ethical issues in human experience.

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
5) Understanding of various ethical issues.

Required Readings


LaPier, Rosalyn. *Invisible Reality: Storytellers, Storytakers, and the Supernatural World of the*
NASX 304 Syllabus

*Blackfeet.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017


**Weekly Schedule:**

Week 1: August 19: Introduction

Week 2, August 24, 26: Religion and Ethics/Latin American World View systems

Week 3, August 31, September 2: Latin American World View systems
   *Tedlock*, Book Report due Wednesday

Week 4, September 7, 9: North American World View systems
   **MONDAY: NO CLASS LABOR DAY**

Week 5: September 14, 16: Invasion I
   *Johnston*, Book Report due Wednesday

Week 6, September 21, 23: Invasion II

Week 7, September 28, 30: Invasion III

Week 8, October 5, 7: Invasion IV
   **Midterm Paper Due** Wednesday at start of class

Week 9, October 10, 12: Native Religion and Christianity
   *LaPier*, Book Report due Wednesday

Week 10, October 17, 19: Native American Church

Week 11, October 24, 26: Syncretism

Week 12, November 2, 4: Traditional Expression of Native Religion

Week 13, November 9, 11: Modern Issues I
   *Basso*, Book Report due Monday
   **NO CLASS WEDNESDAY: VETERAN’S DAY**

Week 14, November 16, 18: Modern Issues II

Week 15, **Final Paper due** Monday November 23, 3:10 PM
Written Assignments:

**Book Reports:** 1-2 page (500 words maximum) analysis of the reading assignment for Tedlock, Johnston, LaPier, and Mihesuah books. Use assigned questions. 10 points each. Must be typed or computer generated, double spaced. INCLUDE WORD COUNT. 2 point deduction for every late paper. Lowest passing grade will be dropped. 30 points total.

**Midterm and Final Papers** consist of both essay questions assigned by the professor. 30 points each. 5 point deduction for late papers.

**Class Participation and Attendance:** 10 points

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Reports</td>
<td>93-100: A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90-92: A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Paper</td>
<td>88-86: B</td>
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<td>80-82: B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>77-79: C+</td>
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<td>73-76: C</td>
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<td>Class Attendance</td>
<td>67-69: D+</td>
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<td>60-62: D-</td>
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<td>60: F</td>
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All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students must be familiar with the University of Montana Student Conduct Code: http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php

This course is accessible to and usable by otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the modification process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at www.umt.edu/disability

**UM has a Cultural and Ceremonial Leave Policy:** “Cultural or ceremonial leave allows excused absences for cultural, religious, and ceremonial purposes to meet the student’s customs and traditions or to participate in related activities. To receive an authorized absence for a cultural, religious or ceremonial event the student or their advisor (proxy) must submit a formal written request to the instructor. This must include a brief description (with inclusive dates) of the cultural event or ceremony and the importance of the student’s attendance or participation. Authorization for the absence is subject to approval by the instructor. Appeals may be made to the Chair, Dean or Provost. The excused absence or leave may not exceed five academic calendar days (not including weekends or holidays). Students remain responsible for completion or make-up of assignments as defined in the syllabus, at the discretion of the instructor.”

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