

## **American Indian Philosophy**

### **Cultural Duty: Indigenous Philosophy through Literature and the Arts**

Fall, 2004

INTR-310-Oi

#### **Course Description:**

Contemporary Indigenous philosophy as demonstrated through the arts, literature, prayer, story, and song. Brief comparative work between Western philosophy and philosophy of Indigenous Western Hemisphere will be offered.

This seminar will investigate Indigenous American philosophy and culture through literature, music and the arts. This course is directed to students with interests in English, Art, Music, Social Sciences, Sociology, Philosophy, Psychology, Native American Studies, Anthropology and Education. Students will gain further understanding of the challenges Native writers and artists face in educating (correcting) the non-Native public, while sustaining and paying tribute to traditional tribal audience. Further investigation will be made regarding the commitment of Native writers/artists to present an accurate portrayal of the cultural ideology while working in contemporary media. Through text, audio and visual survey of Indigenous art, music and literature, we will investigate essences of cultural sustainability and responsibility, integral to survival of Indigenous cultural creative expression. This seminar approaches Indigenous thought and cultural responsibility through a wide variety of genres and creative media in order to better access and digest the dance between integral philosophy and propriety. Through this course, students will gain a valuable alternate perspective and derive a greater intellectual understanding of Native philosophy/sensibility and the challenges for Indigenous artists working in the homeland. We will devour the paintings of Emmi White Horse while engaging in the melodious saxophone of Joy Harjo, furthering the exploration in entertaining the value of Choctalking by LeAnne Howe. This course will rely upon dialogue while working for illumination and greater sense of understanding what is at stake for the Indigenous American when she/he works in a creative form for the general public.

#### **Methods & Goals:**

At the onset of each session, subject matter will be introduced. Following initial presentation, we will begin discussion and field a variety of student-directed topic points for further investigation. My position will mostly comprise of facilitation. The seminar will present disparate materials which through a dialogue will culminate. We may elect to establish point and counterpoint teams, partner study groups, and/or teams of intimate discussion with speculative interpretation. Throughout each session students will be required to express their understanding of dialogue and related elements. Students are encouraged to fully engage the experience and make their own diverse interpretations conversational matter. At each conclusion, students will be given topic prompts to dwell upon to initiate discussion for the next engagement. Students are encouraged to reflect upon their own specific disciplinary traditions during this course. Students will thus be encouraged to consider through their individual cultural lenses and bring further illumination into the continuing dialogue. We live in a narrativising culture in the sense that we inherently strive to draw conclusions and create relativity. By course conclusion, students should welcome participating in, initiating and leading discussion. Students will further be prepared to place an alternate context/perspective onto related matters and thereby derive a greater understanding of the whole. Whereas, in such space, the essential nature of Native philosophy dwells.

#### **Cis:**

The following note on Cis courses is a conglomeration of excerpts from the Hartwick materials: The purpose of these interdisciplinary, non-departmental courses is to enable students to participate in the sharing of ideas which extend beyond the limits of a single academic department and which emphasize the interdependence of all academic disciplines. In addition to the courses that follow, the College offers other interdisciplinary courses which are of a more experimental nature and tend to be proposed and offered for one term only. COIN, the Committee for Interdisciplinary and Non-Departmental Courses, oversees these courses.

#### **Required Reading:**

*Power and Place.* Vine DeLoria

*Look to the Mountain.* Dr. Greg Cajete

*Sister Nations.* Heidi Erdrich and Laura Tohe, ed.

*Reinventing the Enemy's Language.* Joy Harjo, Gloria Bird, et al.

*Visit Teepee Town.* Diane Glancy and Mark Nowak.

These books have been ordered. Due to the small press situation, it may be a while before they arrive. These books are written for educators, as bridges into the culture and thought of the American Indian student and family group. We have them in use in this course because they bring to our discussion the insight and integration necessary for cultural philosophy awareness and integration more readily than most texts afford.

On library reserve: *Sister Nations*, Hedi Erdrich and Laura Tohe, ed.

On library reserve: *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*, Joy Harjo, Gloria Bird, et al.

These two anthologies include writers whose work we are investigating in class. They also serve to introduce many other Native women writers and works to the discussion. Other resources may be added into reserve as we proceed. Handouts are expected to be distributed from time to time. My teaching goals include inspiration of creative process and thought, instilling a zest for learning and encouraging theoretical and philosophical arenas, complimenting the ongoing search for analysis and further development in writing and producing literary works.

#### **Further Expectations:**

You are expected to be present in each class during the semester. If you intend to miss class, let the instructor know as soon as you do. Three late arrivals will be recorded as one absence. You will receive an F for participation if you accumulate five absences. If you have a need for timeless testing, or other medically related special service, please let me (and all of your teachers) know as soon as possible.

Missed exams/assignments and late assignments could present a major problem. You are expected to make deadlines on all assignments

and be present for testing. Expect at least a letter grade drop for late assignments unless there are extenuating and previously excused emergency circumstances. Extensions on writing assignments and makeup work will not be given unless there is a case of illness or emergency.

Academic Dishonesty is a serious matter. Please refer to your student handbook.

### **Grading:**

- Class participation, demonstrated comprehension, short individual assignments, and a final paper will all serve to measure achievement in this seminar.
- Short individual assignments will count for 25% of the course. Discussion and classwork 40%. A final paper will count as 35% of the total grade score.
- Please check your email for updates, or class announcements.
- Fieldtrips may take place!

### **Copies**

If you need to bring in print copies of assignments, for any reason, the following will apply:

- Copies should be legible, black on white, letter-sized, and single-sided. Prose should be double-spaced to allow for annotations.
- Copies must be stapled and collated.
- Copies must have author's name and contact information (address/phone/email), suitable margins on every side, and come in 12 point Times New Roman or New York font.

Do not, under any circumstances, give the instructor, or a peer the only copy of your original work during this course.

### **Notice:**

Items on the syllabus are subject to change depending upon needs of the class and unexpected availability of resources for the instructor. I am somewhat in contact with most of the people whose work we are investigating. Being creative sorts, we typically welcome adaptation and flux, rather than dispute it. Change keeps that muse active. Generally speaking, most significant changes will be discussed with the class upon occurrence.

### **Course schedule:** (subject to amendment)

**Week one:** Seminar introduction. Juane Quick-to-See Smith video (with Joy Harjo narrative poems and M. Scott Momaday narration). Beginning discussions.

Thursday 9/9

**Week two:** Joy Harjo video/Native Joy For Real: For love of Jim Pepper.

Thursday 9/16

**Week three:** Ulali/LeAnne Howe/Hulleah Tsinhajinne/Robert Alexie/Gail Tremblay: Breaking the bowl.

Thursday 9/23

**Week four:** Adrian Louis/Luke Warm Water/JoAnne Bird/Don Montileaux/Two Eagles/Indigenous: Northern Plains Grieving & Love of Landscape.

Thursday 9/30

**Week five:** Walela/Rita Coolidge/Sara Bates/Kim Shuck: Eastern Directions. Video: Revolutionary Art.

Thursday 10/7

**Week six:** Buffy Sainte-Marie: The Force of Live Volcanos.

Thursday 10/14

**Week seven:** Sherman Alexie/Gloria Bird/Char Teeters: Spokane School?

Thursday 10/21

**Week eight:** Simon J. Ortiz/Joseph Marshall III/Buffy Sainte-Marie: Separating the branches and grasses.

Thursday 10/28

**Week nine:** Heid, Lise and Louise Erdrich; Joy Harjo, Hulleah Tsinhnajinne, and Maxxine Stevens; Lee Francis, Paula Gunn Allen and Carole Lee Sanchez: Bringing along the tribe.

Thursday 11/4

**Week ten:** M. Scott Momaday/Leslie Marmon Silko/Lee Maracle/: Lodgepoles.

Thursday 11/11

**Week eleven:** Robert J. Conley/Diane Glancy/Linda Hogan: Marginalized.

Thursday 11/18

**Week twelve:** Orlando White/Sherwin Bitsui/Emmi White Horse/Black Fire, Sharon Birch: New Southwest.

Thursday 11/25

**Week thirteen:** WPBA Northern Plains Intertribal Poetry Bout/Santee Smith/Kateri Damm/Maxxine Stevens: Claiming ground.

Thursday 12/2

**Week fourteen:** The unexpected. Tributes: Jesse Ed Davis, Allan Houser, Loyd Kiva New, Susan Campbell/Oscar Howe/Will Sampson.

Thursday 12/9

**Week fifteen.**

Final exam date to be determined by registrar. I'll let you know once available. We have to meet that date even though you will have a final project in lieu of the exam.

#### FALL TERM

Classes Begin Tuesday Sept 7

Alumni Weekend Fri-Sun Oct 8-10

October Break Sat-Tues Oct 23-26

Parents' Weekend Fri-Sun Oct 29-31

Thanksgiving Recess Begins Wednesday Nov 24

Thanksgiving Recess Ends Sunday Nov 28

Last Day of Class Monday Dec 13

Reading Days & Examination Days Tues-Sun Dec 14-19