AMERICAN INDIAN THOUGHT AND CULTURE  
PHI 4400/PJ 3100

See: http://www67.homepage.villanova.edu/barbara.wall/ for additional information

Dr. Barbara E. Wall  
Office: SAC 304
Office Hours: Please contact my office and Mrs. Bray will make an appointment for you.  
Call x95431.

We will explore the culture and philosophical thought of the Navajo, Hopi and Lakota Nations in terms of their metaphysical, epistemological and ethical world views. Through the study of their mythology, we will better understand the methodology and uniqueness of their contributions to culture, philosophy and religion. These cultures and world views exhibit similarity and difference in their conceptual development of origin myths, ethical conceptions of good and evil, immortality and death, issues of race and racism, relationship to the world of nature, and the experience of the sacred.

There will be a fall Campus Ministry service break trip to Tohatchi Navajo Reservation. You are encouraged to participate in this trip.

Required Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farella, John</td>
<td>The Main Stalk</td>
<td>University of Arizona Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zolbrod, Paul</td>
<td>Diné Bahanè</td>
<td>Univ. of New Mexico Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walters, Anna Lee</td>
<td>Ghost Singer</td>
<td>Univ. of New Mexico Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>Courlander</td>
<td>The Fourth World of the Hopis</td>
<td>Univ. of New Mexico Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marshall, Joseph</td>
<td>The Lakota Way</td>
<td>Viking Press</td>
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Supplemental reading assignments can be found in pdf format on Dr. Wall’s web page.

August 26  
General introduction to the course material with focus on the philosophical world views of the American Indian in contrast to a western philosophical world view.

August 28  
Read: Hanke chapters from Aristotle and the American Indians – This will be an opportunity to examine Aristotle’s conception of the nature of the human person. In addition, we will explore the theological and philosophical controversies of the 15th – 16th centuries on the nature of the American Indian and the African peoples who were victims of slavery.
September 4  Discussion of articles on *Race and the American Indian*
- “Columbus: the Bones and Blood of Racism” by Basil Davidson
- “Columbus and the War on Indigenous Peoples” by Michael Stevenson
- “Unlearning Columbus: a Review Article” by Chris Searle
- “1492: The Violence of God and the Future of Christianity” by Pablo Richard

September 9  *Ghost Singer* – This novel by Anna Lee Walters depicts Navajo life as it is lived in traditional fashion and the contrast with living in two different cultural worlds of the Navajo and white culture. Walters will introduce you to the world of the Navajo, especially their beliefs about the nature of the world and the relationship between the world of humans and the rest of nature. Pay close attention to the importance of religious ritual as the means to bring balance and harmony in one’s life. One reviewer claims: “This well-researched and well-written tale interweaves elements of traditional Navajo beliefs and history, anthropological collections at the Smithsonian, ghosts of long-dead Navajos never allowed to rest, and the struggles of present-day Native Americans and Anglos to understand belief systems.” Think about the “power of storytelling” in the narrative.

September 11  Metaphysics: *Origin Myths* – This is the story of creation in Navajo thought. Focus on the metaphysical distinctions between the static and active dimensions of reality which provides an organizing principle upon which the linguistic classification of the world is established for the Navajo. Your readings treat the levels of knowledge and the relationship between truth and belief for the Navajo.

September 16  Navajo Metaphysics: *Diné Bahane*, pp. 97-168; *The Main Stalk*, chs. 3 & 4 – Treatment of the nature of time, birth and death and the nature of medicine.

September 18  Navajo Ethics: *Diné Bahane*, pp. 169-278; *The Main Stalk*, chs. 5 & 6 – In the Navajo world, the creation of beauty and the incorporation of oneself in beauty represent the highest attainment and ultimate destiny of the person. Beauty is essential to the good, happiness, health and harmony. Beauty and harmony are essential to one’s relationships of kinship and social solidarity.

September 23  Human Sexuality: Walter Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh, Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*

September 25  *Diné Bahane* (continued) – Navajo Spirituality

October 2  Introduction to the Hopi metaphysical world view: The Hopi Creation myth is also one of emergence from previous worlds. The religious world view is one with their philosophical world view. The purpose of Hopi life, religious ceremonialism, is to help maintain the harmony of the universe. Read Christopher Vecsey’s “The Emergence and Maintenance of the Hopi People.” We will discuss the meaning of time, language, power of story – all essential to their metaphysical world view.


October 9  Mid-term Exam

October 14-18  Fall Break

October 21  Vecsey (continued) – the integration of order and freedom, and the importance of the virtue of humility.

October 23  Hopi: World View and Ethics: *The Fourth World of the Hopis*, pp. 9-17, chs. I-III – treatment of the creation myth and the creation of a religious and philosophical world view on the nature of the good, life after death, etc.

October 28  Hopi: World View and Ethics (continued)

October 30  *The Fourth World of the Hopis*, chs. IV-IX

November 4  *The Fourth World of the Hopis*, chs. X-XIV, XIX, XX


November 11  Lakota Thought: *The Lakota Way* by Joseph Marshall, chs. 1-6

November 13  *The Lakota Way*, chs. 7-9

November 18  Guest: Marvin Clifford – Lakota from Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota

November 20  “In the Spirit of Crazy Horse”
November 25  
*The Lakota Way*, chs. 10-12

December 2  
Current Issues in American Indian Thought (handouts)

December 4  
American Indian Issues on the Environment (handouts)

December 9  
American Indian Issues on the Environment (continued)

December 11  
Review

December 18  
Final Exam 1:30 - 4:00 p.m.

**Papers:** Using the texts and articles for class assignments, write a six page paper on the assigned topic. Papers not handed in on the due date will receive a reduction in grade. You must include textual references from the course material to support your claims. At the end of the paper, include one page of your own personal reflections on the material. Since this course is a writing intensive course, you must take paper #1 to the Writing Center for review prior to submission for class.

**Paper #1**  
“Issues of Race/Racism and their Effects on American Indian Peoples and Cultures”

Due: September 16

**Paper #2**  
Select one of the following topics:

- “Navajo Conception of the Ethical Life”
- “Navajo Conceptions of the Divine/Sacred”

*If you participate in the Fall Break Trip to Tohatchi, you may write your paper on “What you have learned about the Navajo way of life.”*

Due: October 23

**Paper #3**  
Select one of the following topics:

- “The Philosophical World View of the Hopi People”
- “The Philosophical World View of the Lakota People”

*You will need to take a more specific topic within these large parameters. We will discuss each topic on an individual basis when I meet with you in my office.*

Due: November 25
Course Requirements

Percent of Grade

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Three Papers</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid Term Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>(this will include leading a discussion on assigned readings)</td>
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Papers are due on the date indicated. Each unexcused late paper will receive a reduction in grade.

Attendance Policy: You are allowed three unexcused absences from class. Your presence and participation is crucial for our mutual learning from each other. Your grade will be dependent on your participation.

Consequence of Cheating: All students are subject to the University’s official Academic Integrity Policy Statement, which will be strictly enforced:

The code of Academic Integrity of Villanova University addresses cheating, fabrication of submitted work, plagiarism, handing in work completed for another course without the instructor’s approval, and other forms of dishonesty. For the first offense, a student who violates the Code of Villanova University will receive zero points for the assignment. The violation will be reported by the instructor to the Dean’s Office and recorded in the student’s file. In addition, the student will be expected to complete an education program. For the second offense, the student will be dismissed from the University and the reason noted on the student’s official transcript.