

SEP 1995

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, EDUCATION AND COMMERCE
ANTHROPOLOGY 2500
NORTH AMERICAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Fall 1995
Time: TR 1330-1450
Office: C215
Office Hours: Mondays 10:00-11:00 and Tuesdays 10:00-11:00 or by appointment. Drop-ins welcome.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course serves the dual purpose of helping students learn of the aboriginal societies of North America, and demonstrating the value, techniques and shortcomings of the ethnographic method. We shall study the peoples of the principal cultural/ecological areas of North America (the Arctic, Subarctic, Plateau, Plains, Northwest Coast, Northeastern Woodlands, Southeastern Woodlands and the American Southwest), ranging from foraging bands to agricultural societies. We shall study the coherence between levels of economic, political, social and ideological complexity (or hierarchy) and the environmental factors significant to each. These in turn will be shown to be related to the historical experience of the peoples of these areas, and to the pattern and timing of intrusion by the modern world system. In addition to the overview provided by course texts, students will study one or more culture area in greater depth, focussing on ethnographic method as well as content. Cross-cultural research on a topic of special interest (e.g. art, warfare and/or hunting patterns, kinship and family, diet and health) will help to illustrate the utility of ethnographic study.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

As we begin discussion of each culture area (see Course Schedule), students will submit an assignment designed to assist them in their reading and the organization of information. Students may complete as many of these assignments as they like; their best four marks will be used in calculating the final course grade. (At the end of the course, a take-home question will require cross-cultural comparison, for which these assignments will be most useful.)

An in-depth ethnographic study of one particular culture/people is also required. This is to be submitted as we start our examination of the corresponding culture area. Since this study requires the understanding of a culture and of ethnography, it is recommended that more than one source be used.

The results of research into a specific topic, crossing the boundaries of culture areas, will be submitted in the form of an essay and will be shared with a group of students near the end of the term. A final take-home question will address the value of cross-cultural ethnographic study to the understanding of topics significant to all human experience.

Assignments must be handed in to the instructor in class on the day they are due. Excessive grammatical or spelling errors will result in the loss of 2 out of 9 points.

| Assignment | % | Due Date |
|------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| Culture Area Surveys | 40 | Thursdays: see Course Schedule |
| Essay - Ethnography | 20 | See Course Schedule |
| Essay - Cross-cultural topic | 20 | November 23 |
| Final two questions | 20 | One week after last class |

Grading System

| Grade | Interpretation |
|-------|----------------|
| 9 | |
| 8 | Excellent |
| ----- | |
| 7 | |
| 6 | Good |
| ----- | |
| 5 | |
| 4 | Pass |
| ----- | |
| 3 | |
| 2 | |
| 1 | Fail |
| ----- | |

Required texts

Kehoe, Alice B.

1992 NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS: A COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNT, Second Edition. Prentice Hall.

Morrison, R.B. and C.R. Wilson, eds.

1995 NATIVE PEOPLES: THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE, Second Edition. McClelland and Stewart.

Other readings will be assigned during the term, and will be available on Reserve in the Library.

Prerequisite: Anthropology 1010 (Introductory Anthropology)

COURSE SCHEDULE

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Week 1 | Introduction to the course and to major themes |
| Weeks 2-3 | The Arctic |
| Week 4 | The Subarctic |
| Weeks 5-6 | The Plateau and California |
| Week 7 | The Plains |
| Week 8-9 | The Northwest Coast |
| Week 10 | The Northeastern Woodlands |
| Week 11 | The Southeastern Woodlands |
| Week 12 | The American Southwest |
| Week 13 | Student presentations on cross-cultural topics |

CULTURE AREA SURVEYS

Value: 10%

Due Dates: See Course Schedule

Summarize (perhaps in chart form) the description of the culture area presented in course textbooks. Factors to consider are:

- Ecological adaptation
 - geographical location, climate
 - productive activities: resources available and used, technological base
 - demographic features (size of population and population density)
- Economic organization
 - access to and ownership of resources, e.g. land, animals, tools
 - division of labor and/or occupational specialization
 - distribution or sharing of production; trade and/or tribute
- Social organization
 - residence/settlement pattern
 - type of community: egalitarian or hierarchical society
 - family and kinship structure
 - marital patterns and practices
- Political organization
 - type of government
 - authority structures
 - social control--law, enforcers
 - relations w/ neighbors and other culture areas
 - war, trade, travel, migration
- Ideology and/or religion
 - art forms
 - mythology, deities, forms of worship
 - ceremonies and rituals

As you outline the above, include the names of significant places, peoples, individuals and events.

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

Value: 20%

Due Date: See Course Schedule

- a) Use the description of culture area surveys to describe the people in whom you are interested, in essay form. In an essay of this length (up to fifteen pages, or 3750 words) you will not be able to provide very detailed information. Your aim is to make sense of "your" culture by presenting a holistic view indicating, where possible, how environment, economy, society, political structure and ideological systems are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.
- b) In your estimation, how well are your people described in course texts? How well do they "fit" into their culture area?
- c) How does the personal and social history of the ethnographer influence his or her product: the ethnography? (In order to answer this question you will likely need to utilize more than one ethnographic source, e.g. monographs or periodicals.)