

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

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:00-11:00 and Thursdays 10:00-11:00 or by appointment.  
Drop-ins welcome.

### 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, California, Northwest Coast, Northeastern Woodlands, Southeastern Woodlands and the American Southwest), ranging from mobile 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 class discussions, students will research peoples in several culture areas 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

Based on their own research, students will submit three (or more) brief ethnographies on three different culture areas. These assignments are to be submitted during the time period designated to the appropriate culture area (see Course Schedule). Students may complete as many of these assignments as they like; their best three 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.

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.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1	Introduction to the course and to major themes
Weeks 2-3	The Arctic
Week 4	The Subarctic
Week 5	The Plateau and Great Basin
Week 6	The Plains
Week 7	California
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