

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, EDUCATION AND COMMERCE
ANTHROPOLOGY 2500, FALL 1999
NORTH AMERICAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-2:00 p.m., Wednesdays 10:30-11:30 a.m. 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, 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. Students will learn of peoples of different culture areas, some in 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

Students will submit brief ethnographic summaries of five different culture areas, as discussed in the course text (for a total of 40% of the course grade). They will also write a more complete ethnography on a culture of one area, using sources additional to the text (20% of course grade). These assignments are to be submitted by 3:00 p.m. Friday of the time period designated to the appropriate culture area (see Course Schedule). You may complete as many of these assignments as you like; your best marks will be used in calculating the final course grade.

The results of research into a specific topic, crossing the boundaries of culture areas, will be submitted in the form of an essay on the last Friday of classes, and will be shared with other students near the end of the term (20% of course grade).

A further 20% of the course grade will be earned on in-class assignments, whose timing and content will be at the discretion of the instructor. Many opportunities to earn points will be provided, so there will be no make-ups for these.

COURSE TEXT

Oswalt, W. H. and Neely, Charlotte (1999) This land was theirs: a study of Native Americans. Mountain View, California: Mayfield.

ASSIGNMENT	%	DUE DATE
Ethnographic summaries	40	Fridays; see Course Schedule
Essay - Cross-cultural topic	20	Last Friday of classes
In-class assignments	20	Throughout term

All but the in-class assignments are marked on the stanine system, i.e. out of 9. Divide points received on in-class assignments by 4 to determine your stanine grade on 20% of the course grade, up to a maximum of 9.

FOR STUDENT USE

You may wish to keep track of your grades here.

BRIEF ETHNOGRAPHIES (8% each)

Culture area	Grade
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1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

RESEARCH ETHNOGRAPHY (20%)

Culture	Grade
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CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH (20%)

Topic	Grade
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IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (Divide by 4 to calculate your stanine mark)

Score:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Score:	H	I	J	K	L	M	N

RESEARCH ETHNOGRAPHY

Value: 20%

Due Dates: See Course Schedule

Length: up to 10 pages, double-spaced--some 2500 words

In this essay, you are to synthesize the description of a culture and society presented in the ethnography/ies you have read. Using books and any other sources at your disposal (e.g. television, videos, Internet, journals, interviews), you are to compile and present information on a people's way of life. Check sources with the instructor. Your aim is to construct as clear an image as possible of how they lived prior to the 20th century. Early in your paper, include a discussion of the principal sources of your information, to avoid the constant need for references. Include the following topics:

A presentation and evaluation of your sources

Ecological adaptation

- geographical location, climate

- productive activities; resources available and used, technological base (tools and knowledge)

- 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; gender relations

- non-kin based organizations

Political organization

- type of government and authority structures

- conflict resolution and social control--law, enforcers

- relations w/ neighbors--war, trade

Ideology and/or religion

- art forms

- mythology, deities, forms of worship

- ceremonies and rituals

In an essay of this length (up to ten pages, or 2500 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.

BRIEF ETHNOGRAPHIES

The topics are the same as above, but most can be presented in chart form, and your source of information is the text.

CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH

Due Date: Essay is due the last Friday of classes. Presentation of research to other students will take place during the last week or two of classes. **YOU MUST** submit a brief description of your topic and sources at the end of week 11.

Value: 20% of final course grade

Length: approximately ten pages, or 2500 words

For this assignment, you are to describe, compare and contrast the practices North American Aboriginal peoples in at least three different culture areas. Possible topics (not to be taken as recommendations) include funerary practices, art, body decoration, clothing, warfare and peacekeeping practices, cuisine. . . You may (but need not) restrict yourself to the peoples whose ethnographies you have already studied. It is expected that you will demonstrate what you have learned about how anthropologists approach these topics. The results of your research will be shared with a group of students during the last week of classes, and one of the take-home questions will be based on this exchange. (The content of this question will be determined based on the research papers you submit.)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Weeks 1-2 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE AND TO MAJOR THEMES

READINGS:

- Chapter 1. Answers to popular questions (1-30)
- Chapter 2. Indian-non-Indian relations (31-71)
- Chapter 15. Current realities, fears and hopes (501-508)

Weeks 2-3 THE ARCTIC

READINGS:

- Chapter 4. The Kuskowagamiut: Riverine Eskimos (107-144)
- NEED A SUPPLEMENTARY READING ON POLAR ESKIMO.

Week 4 THE SUBARCTIC

READINGS:

- Chapter 3. The Chipewyan: Subarctic hunters (71-106)
- Robin Ridington, Freedom and authority: teachings of the hunters, in
NATIVE PEOPLES: THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE, (232-259)

Week 5 THE PLATEAU AND GREAT BASIN

READINGS:

- Chapter 5. The Cahuilla: Gatherers in the Desert (145-174)
- NEED MORE GREAT BASIN,

Week 6 THE PLAINS

READINGS:

- Chapter 6. The Crow: Plains raiders and bison hunters
(175-213)

Week 7 CALIFORNIA

READINGS:

- Chapter 7. The Yurok: Salmon fishers of California (214-248)

Week 8-9 THE NORTHWEST COAST

READINGS:

- Chapter 8. The Tlingit: Alaskan salmon fishers (249-291)
(American oriented, e.g. 0 on potlatch prohibition.)

Week 10 THE NORTHEASTERN WOODLANDS

READINGS:

- Chapter 11. The Mesquakie: warriors and farmers of the Woodland fringe
(367-403)
- Chapter 12. The Iroquois: warriors and farmers of the Eastern Woodlands
(404-446)

Week 11 THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST

READINGS:

Chapter 9. The Hopi: Farmers of the desert (292-328)

Chapter 10. The Navajo: Transformations among a desert people (329-366)

Description and sources of cross-cultural research topic due by Friday.

Week 12 THE SOUTHEASTERN WOODLANDS

READINGS:

Chapter 13. The Eastern Cherokee: Farmers of the Southeast (447-476)

Chapter 14. The Natchez: Sophisticated farmers of the deep south (477-500)

Week 13 STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON CROSS-CULTURAL TOPICS

Cross-cultural research essay due on Friday.