

Department: ANTH

Course No: 3902 [253]

Credits: 3

Title: North American Prehistory

Contact: Kevin McBride

Content Area: CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

Catalog Copy: 3902 [253]. North American Prehistory Either semester. Three credits. McBride Prehistoric cultures from the earliest human migrations to North America to European contact, with emphasis on the regions east of the Mississippi River.

Course Information:

a. Course Description: North American Prehistory will examine the history of Native Peoples of North America from the first inhabitants (ca. 15,000-30,000 years ago) to contact with Europeans. The lectures and readings will be organized according to geographical/cultural areas and closely follow assigned readings. Course content will draw from archaeology, linguistics, physical anthropology and primary written records.

b. Course Format: Lectures expand on issues addressed in assigned readings, chosen to provide relevant historical and cultural contexts to the weekly topic. Assigned readings complement lectures. **Course Requirements:** Students will take two exams in addition to the final exam. Exams will be based on lectures, assigned readings and class discussions. Each exam will count 1/3 of the final grade.

c. Major Themes: Peopling of the Americas, History of Hunter-Gatherers and Horticulturalists in North America, Contemporary Issues in Indian Country (NAGPRA, Federal Recognition), Methods of Reconstructing Native Histories, Regional and Cultural Diversity.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.:

1. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility: Readings, lectures, films and discussions will elicit reactions and opinions from students which they will have to articulate orally and in writing (exams). The process of reconstructing past lifeways, particularly with respect to issues relating to peopling of the New World, will require students to synthesize data and information from a variety of sources and disciplines including Cultural Anthropology, Archaeology, Physical Anthropology, Biology, History and Geography. As such, students will learn the value of interdisciplinary approaches to reconstructing the past and for addressing specific problems in the prehistoric record. Class format will encourage discussions based on films and assigned readings.

2. Acquire moral sensitivity: This course will help students empathize with peoples from cultures

other than their own, reflect on cultural stereotypes in general and Native Americans in particular. Students will also understand and appreciate the complexity and variety of Native American cultures in North America, and how their histories affect native people today. This course will help students empathize with peoples from cultures other than their own and reflect on Native American cultural stereotypes (e.g. savage vs. noble Indian) which have shaped historical and contemporary perspectives of native people. Lectures and readings will inform students of the effects and impacts on native societies following the arrival of Europeans (e.g. disease, dislocation/landloss, Christianity),and present current and historical issues of importance to native peoples and scholars including genocide, slavery, ethnicity and identity.

3. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience: Through the readings, lectures and films students will be introduced to the rich history and diversity of cultures in North America over the last 20,000 years as expressed through oral history/tradition, folklore and the archaeological, historical and material records.

CA4 Criteria:Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences thoughts, values, and/or modes of creativity: The course will explore 20,000 years of native history in North America emphasizing the diversity and complexity of native cultures across time, ecological setting and socio-cultural complexity. The course will introduce students to the world views, perspectives and beliefs of native societies as expressed through mortuary ritual, art, linguistics, monumental architecture and analysis of cultural landscapes. Students will also examine native perspectives of themselves and of “others” (i.e. Europeans) as expressed through European primary sources, oral tradition, material culture and mythology. The diversity of belief systems and cultural practices in the Americas will be discussed using specific case studies based on socio/cultural complexity, adaptation and mortuary ritual (e.g. hunter-gatherers/horticulturalists and bands/tribes/chiefdoms). Students will understand the importance of becoming aware of their own cultural biases while attempting to understand native societies of the past and today and the historical events that have helped to shape our perspectives of contemporary Native Americans.