ANTH 360 - Spring 2006
Native Religions & Christianity in the Americas
(REVISED SYLLABUS)

Spring 2006: Tu 3:10 – 6:10 PM, OH 212

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Office hours: M 2 – 5 PM, Tu 12 – 1 PM, & by appointment

The European conquest of the Americas was accompanied by an ambivalent process of religious acculturation usually designated by the euphemism “spiritual conquest.” This terse label stands for a broad range of intellectual projects devised by European missionaries to translate and negotiate Christian terms and codes of behavior, which were irrevocably changed by native forms of accommodation and resistance. This course examines the broad range of indigenous responses to the introduction of Christianity in indigenous societies of the Americas from an anthropological, ethnohistorical, and linguistic perspective. Through a regional focus on northeastern North America, Mesoamerica, the Andes, and the Amazon Basin, we analyze the impact of Christian colonial/postcolonial evangelization projects on indigenous languages, religion, literary genres, social organization and gender roles, and examine contemporary native Christianities—including those influenced by Protestantism—through readings and films.

Required books (available at the Vassar bookstore)


Grading

- General participation and discussant role 35 %
- Position paper 5 %
- Outline and first draft of research paper 20 %
- Presentation 10 %
- Final draft of research paper 30 %
General participation and discussant/question writer role (35 %). You will prepare for class by taking notes on the readings, and coming to class prepared to discuss the main points they raise. This is a seminar, not a lecture course. This means that you are responsible for introducing questions, discussing the readings, and responding to my input and that of your fellow students. Your grade will reflect quality, relevance, willingness to learn, and frequency of participation. After our first meeting, the class will be divided, much like many Amazonian and Andean societies, into two halves, (alpha) and (omega), of an imaginary Andean ayllu. These halves—or “moieties” in anthropological terms—will alternate as they lead class discussions. Members of each moiety will alternate as they serve as discussants—each member will be allocated one session during which he/she will summarize the major arguments in the day’s readings, and present a critical reaction to them. The rest of the group will draft and hand out at least 4 discussion questions about the readings, which they can direct either to specific members of the other half or to the other moiety as a whole. At the next session, this arrangement will be reversed.

Position paper (5 %) You will write one brief position paper (3-4 pages) due on Feb 28 in response to one of several essay-format questions regarding the intersection of Christianity and indigenous beliefs.

Research project. This course requires the completion of a research paper (16 – 20 double-spaced pages in 12-pt. font or smaller, excluding notes and bibliography). Your topic should address the intersection of indigenous religious practices and Christian evangelization in a location in the Americas. You may engage in a comparison of two case studies, at least one of which must be based in the Americas. I will provide you with a list of suggested topics, and you will choose after having discussed your interests and potential sources.

Outline and bibliography (5 %) and first draft of research paper (15 %). You will hand in a brief (1-2 pp.) paper outline on March 7 and a minimally annotated bibliography on March 28, and I will respond with suggestions before you complete a first draft (at least 8-10 pp.), which you will turn in on April 11. Copies of this draft will be distributed to other class members before your presentation so they may prepare questions and comments. Any delays in turning in outlines or drafts will be reflected in this part of your grade.

Optional second draft and final draft of research paper (30 %). If your first draft is substantial but not quite satisfactory, I will ask you to turn in a second draft on May 2. If you turn in an excellent first draft, this second draft will be optional. I will let you know whether you need to do a second draft by April 18. This will not substitute as a later date for a first draft; to turn in a second draft, you must have first turned in a substantial first draft on April 11. You will then turn in a complete final draft of your research paper, along with a bibliography and standardized source citation, on or before May 18 at 4 PM.

Presentation (10 %). Not only do you get to develop a project of your choice; you will also dazzle us with your knowledge of the topic in a short (10-15 min.) presentation at a social hour/roundtable on May 9.

Attendance and extension policies. Attendance and lateness will be noted at each session. You should have, at most, one unaccounted absence. More than one such absence will result in a downward adjustment of your final grade at my discretion. Contact the Dean of Students immediately if you have a personal or health emergency; they will notify your professors, and your grade will not suffer. If you have a disability, you should discuss your needs with me so we can make special arrangements ahead of time. Please note that extensions for turning in your work will be given only under exceptional circumstances (i.e., family emergencies or illnesses corroborated by the Dean of Students) and on a case-by-case basis.

Films. A number of films and documentaries relating to course topics will be shown on select Mondays between 5 and 8 PM at Blodgett 321. We will discuss these films in class on the following day. I will try to
keep these films on reserve for those who have **recurring** commitments during that time slot.
# Course schedule

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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Caitlin, Laura, Karolyn, Jake</th>
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<th>SESSIONS</th>
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<td>(Readings marked with (★) are at the course Blackboard site under “Readings.”)</td>
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WEEK 1

T Jan 31

Introduction: Religion, conquest and Christianity in comparative perspective

WEEK 2

M Feb 6, FILM: *Cabeza de Vaca* (Nicolás Echevarria, 1990, 113 min.)

T Feb 7

Heresy and diabolism: Defining Christianity through exclusion


WEEK 3

T Feb 14

Reconstructing Nahua and Inca cosmologies: An overview

- Silverblatt, Irene. Chapters 2-3 (pp. 20-66). *In MSW.*

WEEK 4

M Feb 20, FILM: *Black Robe* (Bruce Beresford, 1991, 101 min.)

T Feb 21

Language and native Christianities among the Nahua and the Huron

Burkhart, Louise. 1996. Chapters 2-3 (pp. 37-101), prologue (pp. 105-108), & paragraphs 1-20 of *Nahuatl* version of play (pp. 111-121; read corresponding commentary in pp. 165-185). *In HW.*


WEEK 5

T Feb 28

Invisible wars: The repression of indigenous devotions in New Spain

Gruziniski, Serge. 2001. *War* (pp. 30-60). *In IW.*


WEEK 6

FILM in class: *Carnival in Q’eros* (John Cohen, 1990, 32 min.)

T Mar 7

Christian extirpators and Andean religious practices in colonial Peru

Silverblatt, Irene. *Political Disfranchisement* (pp. 148-158); *Cultural Defiance* (pp. 159–196); *Women of the Puna* (pp. 197–210). *In MSW.*