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## **Anthropology 243b: Indigenous Traditions and Ecology Spring 2005**

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### **Course Description**

This course focuses on indigenous and other non-modern peoples' mode of being in the world, of experiencing reality. This focus becomes necessarily a double one, with one eye on indigenous/non-modern modes of being in the world and the other eye on the modern Western (now cosmopolitan since it is found everywhere in the world among certain classes) way of understanding and seeing reality.

The first part of the course introduces the contemporary situation in terms of cultural and biological loss of diversity. We will be using Darrell Posey's textbook published by the United Nations Environmental Program. The second and third part address broad philosophical issues involved when one attempts to grasp indigenous/non-modern view points from a modern cosmopolitan starting point. In part two we will read and think about the boundary between nature and culture as it is constructed in modernity and how this contrasts with indigenous/non-modern peoples' way of understanding reality. The third part focuses on the ecological entailments of the shift from orality to a phonetic alphabetic consciousness. Some understanding of orality is indispensable when approaching the study of indigenous/non-modern peoples since these are often oral peoples. The fourth part introduces us to the world of shamanism and questions reality or rather our taken-for-granted perception and experience of it. The world of shamanism also introduces us to the relationship between indigenous/non-modern peoples and certain kinds of plants. This part will also take us on a vicarious shamanic journey, through richly illustrated visions by a famous Peruvian shaman. We will also make ourselves familiar with the world of plants used world wide in shamanism and certain religious practices. The last and fifth part of the course questions our taken-for-granted perception of reality. We read anthropologists' account of their own experiences with altered consciousness and transformed perception and how this affects their understanding.

### **Contemplation**

**Note:** Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.

We will begin our classes with a few minutes of silent contemplation. My reasons for including this are various. Some are pragmatic: get all of us in the present moment; transition from our busy schedules and pressures to this shared space of the classroom; create some spaciousness inside ourselves to invite all of us to open to what may be for some or many of us totally new worlds; create emotional and intellectual spaciousness to accept without being judgmental, all of our contributions, all our speaking. More deeply: the topic of much of this course deals with things that are lived experience and not intellectual theorizing. Contemplation, even in tiny doses, is meant to give us a taste of a different mode of awareness or consciousness.

### **Requirements.**

1. Good class participation, which means: attend each class and come on time; read with care all works on the syllabus, write and speak contemplatively as much as possible about what you read, see and hear.
2. Before each class meeting, send me via email questions you have about the readings for that class. This will help you focus better on the readings by thinking about questions to ask. It will also help me in organizing the discussion based on the difficulties, interests, problems, etc. you may have about the readings. You should send me the questions no later than 10 AM the day of the class.
3. Two take home exams, the first due on March 9 and the second on April 20. The exams will bear equally on readings, films and guest lectures.
4. One final essay of 5 to 7 pages on a topic of your choice bearing on part V of the course. Due on May 6.

### **Grading**

1. Questions and class participation: 20%
2. Each take home exam: 30%
3. Final essay: 20%

### **Books Available at the Bookstore**

#### **Required:**

#### **Textbook:**

Darrell Addison Posey ed. Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity, UNEP, 1999.

#### **Additional Books**

Abram, David The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World, New York; Pantheon Books; 1996.

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Ho, Ho'okili, Kasha Pele's Volcano: Goddess Body or Energy Resource? Honors Thesis in Anthropology, Smith College, May 2004.

Luna, Luis Eduardo and Pablo Amaringo Ayahuasca Visions: The religious iconography of a Peruvian shaman, North Atlantic Books, 1999.

Schultes, Richard Evans, Albert Hoffmann & Christian Ratsch Plants of the Gods: Their sacred, healing, and hallucinogenic powers. Healing Arts Pr. 2001.

Young, David E. & Jean-Guy Goulet Being Changed by Cross-Cultural Encounters: The anthropology of extraordinary experiences ,Broadview Pr. 1994

### **Reader:**

The bookstore was only able to receive 8 copies of the textbook. The required readings from the textbook plus two other readings not in the required books (Nigel Smith Ch 2 of *The Amazon River Basin* and Jacques Mabit "Blending Traditions") have been assembled in a reader by Central Copies and should be available for purchase at the bookstore.

## **Tentative Class Schedule**

### **M Jan 24.**

Introducing the course.

### **Part I: Contemporary Issues: The Erosion of Cultural/Biological Diversity**

#### **W. Jan 26: Linguistic/cultural diversity**

- Luisa Maffi "Language and the Environment" CSVB pp. 22-35

#### **M. Jan 31: Oil Exploitation and Environmental Destruction**

- Monica Del Pilar Uribe Marín "Oxy in U'wa Territory" CSVB pp. 88-90
- Guest Lecture by Jim Oldham of the NGO Las Lianas.

#### **W Feb 2: Biodiversity and Health and Wellbeing.**

- Gerard Bodeker "Valuing Biodiversity for Human Health and Well-Being" Traditional Health Systems" CSVB pp. 263-267
- Film: *The Shaman's Apprentice*, Bullfrog Films; 54 minutes.

#### **M Feb 7: Agriculture and Soil Management**

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- Miguel Altieri “The agroecological dimensions of biodiversity in traditional farming systems” CSVB pp. 291-297.
- Film *Ritual Agriculture in the Andes* , PRATEC 12 minutes (personal copy)
- Film: *Playing with Poison*, Bullfrog Films. 46 minutes

### **W. Feb 9**

- Lori Ann Thrupp “Linking biodiversity and agriculture: Challenges and opportunities for sustainable food security” CSVB pp. 316-320
- Guest Lecture by Professor John Gerber, Department of Plant, Soil and Insect Sciences, U Mass.

### **M Feb 14: Mountains, the Height of Biodiversity**

- Adapted from Washington Mathews (1897) “Creation of the Sacred Mountains of the Dineh (Navajo); CSVB pp. 333-334.
- Chief John Snow “The Rocky Mountains: Sacred Places of the Stoney People” CSVB pp. 338-339.
- Thomas Schaaf “Environmental Conservation Based on Sacred Sites” CSVB pp. 341-342.

### **W Feb 16**

- Film: *In the Light of Reverence*, Bullfrog Films; 73 minutes.

### **M. Feb21: Forests, Culture and Conservation**

- Darrel Posey “Cultural Landscapes: Chronological Ecotones and Kayapo Resource Management” CSVB pp. 363-364.
- Film: *The Burning Season* , Cinergía Movie

### **W Feb 23: Aquatic and Marine Biodiversity**

- William Wallace Mokahi Steiner “The Loss of Cultural Diversity and Marine Resource Sustainability” CSVB pp. 417-421.
- Film: *Empty Oceans, Empty Nets*, Bullfrog Films , 55 minutes.

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## **Part II: Destabilizing the Boundary between Nature and Culture**

**M Feb 28.**

- Darrell Posey, "Introduction: Culture and Nature – The Inextricable Link" in *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*, United Nations Environment Program, 1999:3-18.
- Nigel J.H. Smith "The ebb and flow of cultures" Chapter 2 in *The Amazon River Forest: A Natural History of Plants, Animals, and People*, Oxford U. Pr. 1999:15-45.

**W. Mar 2**

- Chapter 4 "Voices of the Earth" CSVB pp. 124-166

**Mid Term Take Home Exam given out. Due March 9**

**M Mar 7**

- Film by: Debra Harry *The Leech and the Earthworm*

**W. Mar 9**

- Discussion of Debra Harry's film.

**Spring recess until Sunday March 20**

**M Mar 21: No class.**

**W Mar 23**

- Kasha Ho'okili Ho *Pele's Volcano: Goddess Body or Energy Resource?* Ch 1 through 4.
- Guest Lecture by Kasha Ho'okili Ho.

## **Part III: Perception, Orality and Literacy**

**M Mar 28**

- David Abram *The Spell of the Sensuous*, (SS) Ch. 1 "The Ecology of Magic" pp. 3-30. and , Ch. 3, "The Flesh of Language" pp. 73-92.

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**W Mar 30**

- David Abram SS, Ch. 4, "Animism and the Alphabet" pp. 93-136.

**M Apr 4**

- David Abram SS Ch.5 "In the Landscape of Language" pp. 137-179.
- Guest Lecture by Donal Carbaugh on Blackfeet and Language.

**Part IV: Shamanism and the World of Plants**

**W Apr 6**

- Luis Eduardo Luna and Pablo Amaringo "Introduction" in *Ayahuasca Visions*, 1999:9-44. and Part I "Plant-Teachers and Shamanic Powers" pp. 47-72

**M Apr 11**

- *Ayahuasca Visions* pp. 74 to 131.

**W Apr 13**

- Richard Evans Schultes et al *Plants of the Gods* pp. 7-30. pp. Peruse the Plant Lexicon pp. 31 to 61.
- Ibid. Read "Who uses hallucinogenic plants?" pp. 62- 64.
- Ibid. Read "The most Important Hallucinogenic Plants" pp. 81-105.
- Choose one plant from the rest and share it with the class.

**Friday April 15:**

**Required attendance at Jacques Mabit's lecture, Friday April 15, 7.30 PM, Mullins Center, Massachusetts Room, U Mass.**

**M. Apr 18**

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- Jacques Mabit, "Blending Traditions: Using Indigenous Medicinal Knowledge to Treat Drug Addiction" *Bulletin of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies*, Vol XII, n2, pp.25-32, summer 2002.

**Second take home exam given out. Due on M. April 25.**

**Part V: One Reality or Many? Experiential Anthropology**

**M Apr 25**

- David Young and Jean-Guy Goulet , "Introduction" in *Being Changed: The anthropology of extraordinary experience*, (BC) pp 7-13
- Edith Turner "A visible spirit form in Zambia" in BC pp. 71-95
- Rab Wilkie "Spirited Imagination: Ways of approaching the shaman's world" BC pp. 135-165.

**W. Apr. 27 Last day of classes.**

- Roderick Wilson "Seeing They See Not" BC pp. 197-208
- Antonia Mills "Making a scientific investigation of ethnographic cases suggestive of reincarnation" BC pp. 237-269

**Final essay due on May 6<sup>th</sup>.**

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