Professor Jeff Ostler
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Office Hours:
   Mon, 10:30-noon
   Tues., 11:00-12:30
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Course Description:

Black Elk, an Oglala Lakota (Sioux), was born in 1863 and lived until 1950. As a young boy, he received a powerful vision in which spiritual beings took him to the center of the earth, the Black Hills of South Dakota. Black Elk was present when the Lakotas and their Cheyenne allies killed Custer on the Little Bighorn in 1876. He traveled to Europe with “Buffalo Bill” Cody’s Wild West Show, participated in the Ghost Dance movement that swept western Indian reservations in the late 1880s, and witnessed the Seventh Cavalry’s massacre of 250 of his people at Wounded Knee in 1890. In the early 1900s, Black Elk was baptized as a Catholic and spent many decades as a catechist, though in his later life, he went to the Black Hills to call on the spirits of his vision. Black Elk Speaks, an interpretation of his life written by John Neihardt, was first published in 1932 and has since become one of the most well-known texts in American Indian studies.

In this course we will use Black Elk Speaks as the basis for exploring several issues about the history and culture of the Lakota and Indian nations of the Great Plains from the 1800s to the present, including:

- the Black Hills, the center of Lakota territory and their most sacred land.
- treaties between the Lakotas and the United States.
- Lakota strategies for dealing with the American invasion of their lands (including militant resistance and various kinds of accommodation).
- Lakotas’ relationships with other Indian nations, including the Cheyennes, Pawnees, Crows, and Arikaras.
• environmental and economic change, including the decline of bison populations and colonial economic relationships.

• the relationship between “traditional” Lakota religion and Christianity.

• scholarly debates about the extent to which Black Elk Speaks accurately portrays Black Elk’s life and his worldview.

• Lakotas and the modern world

Assignments:

1. A mid-term essay of 4 pages, due Oct. 30. (25%)

2. A longer paper (6-8 pages) on a topic related to the course, due at the time of the final exam (Dec. 6, 1:00). (30%)

3. A one-paragraph statement of the topic for the longer paper, due Nov. 20 (not graded, but failure to submit the statement will result in penalty of one full grade on the paper).

4. Final exam, Dec. 6, 1:00. (30%)

5. Periodic quizzes on the readings. (15%, though failure to earning a passing grade on all quizzes combined will result in a deduction of an additional full grade).

[Note: Graduate students enrolled in HIST 569 have separate requirements.]

Readings:


Articles and Book excerpts (full list at the end of the syllabus). Available on Blackboard.

Schedule:

Week 1:
9/25: Introduction: Black Elk and the history of Plains Indians
9/27: Lakotas and the Plains
    Reading: Irwin, Powers
Week 2:
10/2: Lakotas and U.S. to the 1868 Treaty
   Reading: Treaty text
10/4: Begin discussion of Black Elk Speaks
   Reading: Black Elk Speaks (through p. 123), DeMallie 1

Week 3:
10/9: Conclude discussion of Black Elk Speaks
   Reading: Black Elk Speaks (finish), DeMallie 2
10/11: Destruction of the bison
   Reading: Krech, Isenberg

Week 4:
10/16: Little Bighorn and taking of the Black Hills
   Reading: Ostler, Report and Journal of Proceedings
10/18: Pawnees
   Reading: White, Van de Logt

Week 5:
10/23: Colonialism
   Reading: Hoxie, Utley, Veracini
10/25: Colonialism—continued
   Reading: Standing Bear, Amiotte

Week 6:
10/30: Wild West shows
   Reading: Moses
   MID TERM ESSAY DUE
11/1: Tecumseh to Wovoka
   Reading: Dowd, Ruby and Brown, Mooney 1

Week 7:
11/6: Black Elk’s engagement with the Ghost Dance/Wounded Knee
   Reading: Mooney 2
11/8: Black Elk and Christianity
   Reading: Steltenkamp, Holler, Markowitz

Week 8:
11/13: Debates about Black Elk
   Reading: Rice, Linden, Howard, DeMallie 3
11/15: Lakotas and modernity
   Reading: Deloria, Swan
Week 9:
   Reading: Wilkinson, Harvard Project 1 & 2
   PAPER TOPIC STATEMENT DUE
11/22: No class

Week 10:
11/27: Black Hills, 1877-present
11/29: Return to Black Elk Speaks
   Reading: Reread Black Elk Speaks

FINAL EXAM: Thurs., Dec. 6, 1:00

FINAL PAPER DUE: Thurs., Dec. 6, 1:00

LIST OF READINGS


Harvey Markowitz, “Converting the Rosebud: Sicangu Lakota Catholicism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 32 (Winter 2012): 3-23.


