

**ANT 401/501:**  
**NATIVE AMERICAN ART: SEMINAR ON INDIGENOUS ART AND IMAGINAIRE**

Spring, 2009  
T, Th, 3:00 – 4:30 PM  
Cooper Hall, Room C3

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Office Hours: T, Th: 9:30–10:30 & 2-3  
-and by appointment.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Although it is often pointed out that Native American languages do not contain words for art, it is nevertheless true that Indigenous people have been producing compelling objects and performances for thousands of years. This is a senior-level seminar on the subject of North American Indigenous visual representation and expression (what we will call ‘art’), approached from an anthropological perspective emphasizing the social agency of art and art-like objects. The treatment of the subject is not all-inclusive, but rather focused on three specific units. The first unit is a preliminary archaeo-historical survey of Native art, roughly corresponding to the culture areas that Kroeber propounded in the 1930s. The second unit focuses on the archaeological art of the Eastern Woodlands, especially that of the so-called “moundbuilders,” such as the Adena-Hopewell and Mississippian peoples. The third unit focuses on the historical and contemporary art of the Haudenosaunee and Iroquoian peoples. The course ends with a consideration of contemporary Native art across the continent. By social agency is meant power. The anthropological approach used here draws on the work of Alfred Gell, and asks of these artworks what sorts of social relationships they mediate, how they mediate them, for whom, and why. The format of the seminar will generally be that of a discussion, supplemented with occasional lecture, films and other visual material.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

- \* - students will gain substantial knowledge of Native American art forms, styles, and practices.
- \* - students will develop ability to apply a theoretical framework to cultural data.
- \* - students will develop an appreciation of the social power of artworks.
- \* - students will significantly enhance their understanding of the history of North America.
- \* - students will become conversant in the dilemmas of modernity.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

*Native North American Art*, by Janet Berlo and Ruth Phillips (1998). Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780192842183.

*Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South*, edited by R. F. Townsend (2004). Art Institute of Chicago and Yale University Press. paperback edition, isbn 0-300-10601-7.

The third text will be made available for free, electronically. It is *Pictures and Power: Haudenosaunee and Iroquoian Visual Expression, from the Seventeenth Century into the Twenty-First*, by Neal B. Keating (forthcoming in 2010, University of Oklahoma Press).

*All Additional Readings Will Be Made Available Electronically, via Angel*

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Seminar Research Project (35%)
2. Two Exams: midterm and final (25% + 25% = 50%)
3. Attendance and Participation (15%)

### 1. Seminar Research Project (35% of your final grade):

You have several options for this. You may either

1) write a standard, problem oriented research paper (approximately 15pp. in length) on social agency and Native American art (either archaeological, historical, or contemporary);

or

2) write a research paper (approximately 15pp. in length) analyzing an actual piece of Native American art;

or

3) You may create a work of art that critically responds or relates to Native American art, and is accompanied by a short explanatory paper (6-8pp. in length).

- A handout detailing these options and guidelines will be given out in an upcoming class meeting.

### 2. Two Exams: midterm and final (25% + 25% = 50% of your final grade)

The midterm exam will be in-class, and of mixed format. Guidelines will be provided in advance. The format for the final will be take-home essay questions, approximately 5-6 questions each, based on the prior readings. The final will not be cumulative, but will cover the readings from the second half of the term.

### **3. Attendance and Participation - (15% of your final grade).**

You are expected to be present and prepared for every class session. Being prepared means having completed the reading in advance, and ready to engage with your peers and I in a critical discussion or other classroom activities. Bring questions, comments, and arguments with you and be ready to raise them when called upon. Starting in week 3, students will take turns leading off the discussion for the assigned readings and facilitating discussion. While any unexcused absence detracts from your grade, five or more unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for both attendance and participation.

### **SCHEDULE OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS:**

#### **Week 1: Introduction**

January 27, Tuesday: Introduction and review of syllabus.

January 29, Thursday: *Native North American Art*, chapter 1

#### **Week 2: Introduction**

February 3, Tuesday: *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand* (pp.15-35) Townsend, “American Landscapes, Seen and Unseen”

February 5, Thursday: *Pictures and Power*, chapter 1 & 2

#### **Week 3: The Southwest**

February 10, Tuesday: *Native North American Art*, chapter 2

February 12, Thursday: t.b.a.

#### **Week 4: The West**

February 17, Tuesday: *Native North American Art*, chapter 4

February 19, Thursday: t.b.a.

#### **Week 5: The North**

February 24, Tuesday: *Native North American Art*, chapter 5

February 26, Thursday: t.b.a.

#### **Week 6: The Northwest Coast**

March 3, Tuesday: *Native North American Art*, chapter 6

March 5, Thursday: Library Session

#### **Week 7: Introduction to the Eastern Woodlands**

March 10, Tuesday: *Native North American Art*, chapter 3

March 12, Thursday: MIDTERM EXAM (in-class)

***Week 8: Spring Break: Classes Suspended***

**Week 9: Ancient Eastern Woodlands: Adena-Hopewell**

March 24, Tuesday: *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand* (pp.43-56) Penney, "The Archaeology of Aesthetics"

March 26, Thursday: *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand* (pp.57-81) Seeman, "Hopewell Art in Hopewell Places," & Lepper, "The Newark Earthworks: Monumental Geometry and Astronomy at a Hopewellian Pilgrimage Center"

**Week 10: Ancient Eastern Woodlands: Mississippian**

March 31, Tuesday: *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand* (pp.83-123) Bailey, "Continuity and Change in Mississippian Civilization," Hall, "The Cahokia Site and Its People," Brown, "The Cahokia Expression: Creating Court and Cult"

April 2, Thursday: *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand* (pp.125-165) Reilly III, "People of Earth, People of Sky: Visualizing the Sacred in Native American Art of the Mississippian Period," Diaz-Granados, "Marking Stone, Land, Body, Spirit: Rock Art and Mississippian Iconography," King, "Moundville Art in Historical and Social Context"

**Week 11: Art and Ceremony in the Woodlands: SECC & MACC**

April 7, Tuesday: *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand* (pp.167-205) Steponaitis & Knight, "Moundville Art in Historical and Social Context," Reilly III, "Thoughts on the Preservation of Traditional Culture: An Interview with Joyce and Turner Bear," Dye, "Art, Ritual, and Chiefly Warfare in the Mississippian World"

April 9, Thursday: *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand* (pp. 207-246) Lankford, "World on a String: Some Cosmological Components of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex," Walker, "Prehistoric Art of the Central Mississippi Valley," Townsend and Walker, "The Ancient Art of Caddo Ceramics"

**Week 12: Haudenosaunee and Iroquoian Art in the Colonial Era**

April 14, Tuesday: *Pictures and Power*, Part 2, intro and chapter 3: "Tree Paintings: Pictures in Passages"

April 16, Thursday: *Pictures and Power*, Part 2, chapter 4: "Other Expressive Strategies During the Colonial Era"

**Week 13: Haudenosaunee and Iroquoian Art in the Neocolonial Era**

April 21, Tuesday: *Pictures and Power*, Part 3, intro and chapter 5: "Phase I: Removal, Extinguishment, and Watercolors"

April 23, Thursday: *Pictures and Power*, chapter 6: "Industrialization and the Culture Salvage Industry"

**Week 14: From Neocolonial into the Era of Attempted Decolonization**

April 28, Tuesday: *Pictures and Power*, Part 4, intro and chapter 7: “The Termination Phase”

April 30, Thursday: *Pictures and Power*, chapter 8, “Wounded Knee and Oka,” chapter 9, “Haudenosaunee Artists Who Emerged During the Oka Phase”

**Week 15: Contemporary Native Art**

May 5, Tuesday *Pictures and Power*, chapter 10, “Conclusions”

May 7, Thursday: *Native North American Art*, chapter 7

SEMINAR RESEARCH PROJECT DUE ON MAY 7

**Week 16: FINALS WEEK**

FINAL EXAM DUE BY 4PM ON MONDAY, MAY 11