

Course Outline for: ANTH 1150 Native Americans: Culture, History, and Resilience

A. Course Description:

1. Number of credits: 3
2. Lecture hours per week: 3
3. Prerequisites: None
4. Corequisites: None
5. MnTC Goals: Goal #5 – History and the Social Sciences and Behavior Sciences
Goal #7A – Human Diversity, Race, Power, and Justice in the United States

A meaningful understanding of Indigenous experiences in North America begins with examining the histories, cultural developments, and lasting contributions of Native American peoples who have lived and evolved on this land since pre-historic times. Students explore origin narratives, cultural continuity, and the enduring impacts of European colonization, including systemic oppression and land dispossession. Topics include resistance movements, treaty rights, legislation, and the political sovereign status of Native peoples. We also explore Native contributions to American culture—such as music, literature, agriculture, dance, and spirituality— and address contemporary challenges faced by Native communities today. Through case study analysis, writing, and group discussions, students develop a deeper understanding of Native histories, identities, and the diverse experiences of Indigenous peoples across time.

B. Date last reviewed/updated: May 2025

C. Outline of Major Content Areas:

1. An introduction to the scope, methods, and key concepts of anthropology as a framework for understanding Indigenous cultures and histories.
2. Exploration of the earliest human migrations to North America, including archaeological and genetic evidence for the prehistory of Native American peoples.
3. A survey of the vast cultural diversity among Native American communities, with emphasis on distinct lifeways, belief systems, and cultural traditions.
4. In-depth study of the impact of colonialism on Indigenous Nations (e.g., kinship systems, governance, ceremonial practices) to illustrate cultural complexity and resilience.
5. Analysis of how Native histories and cultural practices have been represented, interpreted, and understood through both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives.
6. Overview of key moments in U.S. and Native American history, focusing on contact, conflict, treaties, assimilation policies, and Native resistance.
7. Investigation of present-day challenges and achievements in Native communities, including sovereignty, education, language revitalization, and social justice.
8. Reflection on the ongoing influence and contributions of Native peoples to North American society, identity, and cultural heritage.

D. Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Apply concepts, terms, and intellectual frameworks necessary to understand Native American cultures. (Goal 5a, 5c)
2. Explain how migrating Native American societies adapted to the North American environment using archaeological and genetic evidence. (Goal 2a, 2d, 5a, 5b, 5c)
3. Analyze the development of diverse group identities within Native American communities, with an emphasis on how these identities reflect cultural traditions and ecological adaptations across different regions and time periods. (Goal 2c, 2d, 5a, 5b, 7Aa)
4. Analyze the impact of colonialism on selected Native American cultures, with an emphasis on experiences of trauma and resilience. (Goal 2b, 2c, 5a, 5b, 7Ad)
5. Understand how representation shapes knowledge and perception by comparing historical interpretations from Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups. (Goal 2a, 2b, 2d, 5a, 5c, 7Aa)
6. Analyze key moments in Native American history, including contact, conflict, treaties, assimilation policies, Native resistance, and the impact of government actions on Native sovereignty. (2a, 2c, 5b, 7Ab)
7. Assess the individual and institutional impact of government policies on Native American self-determination (e.g., political autonomy, economic rights, cultural survival, and community sustainability). (Goal 2a, 2b, 2c, 5a, 5b, 7Ab)
8. Examine the relationship between Native American communities and the fields of anthropology and archaeology (e.g., cultural representation, artifact appropriation, and the treatment of ancestral remains). (2a, 2b, 2d, 5a)

E. Methods for Assessing Student Learning:

Methods for assessment may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Objective and/or subjective exams
2. Quizzes
3. Discussion
4. Research papers
5. Oral presentations
6. Written assignments
7. Reflection essays
8. Group work

F. Special Information:

None