

**TH5/714 (3) Indigenous Theologies and Epistemologies**  
**Class dates: 9 AM – 12 PM, Thursday Sept 16 – Dec 2, 2021**  
**No Class Oct 28, 2021 because of reading week**

**Course Description:** This course is an exploration of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The course foci include Indigenous identity, Indigenous ways of teaching, ceremony and their implication for the practice of theological reflection. The course focuses primarily upon North American Indigenous groups through dialogue, media, assigned reading.

Students will meet for weekly sessions to talk about Indigenous identity and its development within dominant North American society.

This course will assist students with inquiring into Indigenous Identity as a way of thinking and being rather than a concept of identity and separation. Throughout discussions and writings, all are supported to explore personal and collective experiences past and present.

Throughout all exploration, the emphasis will be on foundational spiritual teachings from Indigenous thought and protocol and the teachings of Christ.

**Required Texts** Texts are available on Amazon

Styres, Sandra. *Pathways to Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous Thought*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 2017.

Charleston, Steven (Ed). (2015). *Coming full circle: constructing Native Christian theology*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press.

**Recommended Texts**

Texts are available on Amazon

Alfred, T. (1999). *Peace, Power, Righteousness an Indigenous Manifesto*. Don Mills, Ontario, Oxford University Press.

Archibald, J.-A. (2008). *Indigenous Storywork: educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. Vancouver, UBC Press.

Battiste, Marie (Ed.), *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Kidwell, Clara Sue, Homer Noley, and George E. Tinker. *A Native American Theology*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001.

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: characteristics, conversations and contexts*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

Miller, J.R. "Compact, Contract, Covenant: The Evolution of Indian Treaty-Making." In *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts*, edited by Theodore Binnema and Susan Neylan. Vancouver, British Columbia: UBC Press, 2007.

Peelman, Achiel. *Christ Is a Native American*. Ottawa, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Novalis-Saint Paul University; Orbis Books, 1995.

Treat, James. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Twiss, Richard. *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys*, (Downers Grove: IV Press) 2015.

Waters, Anne, *American Indian Thought* (selected essays), (Wiley-Blackwell) 2003

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Winnipeg, Fernwood publishing.

Woodley, Randy. *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision. Prophetic Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012.

## Competencies

1. Define the broad parameters of Indigenous ways of knowing.
2. Begin to discuss, articulate, formulate and critique the questions that are used to explore Indigenous identity and Indigenous knowledge.
3. Begin to be able to compare and contrast Indigenous ways of knowing and being concerning Western Christian Theology
4. Document the environmental, cultural, and historical influences shaping the relationship between Indigenous Ways of knowing and being and the colonial enterprise
5. Discuss ways to learn from different Indigenous ways of understanding without being guilty of cultural appropriation.

## FORMAT AND CONTENT

The assignments include synopses of assigned reading and a final project.

## Requirements

Participation and Reading: 60%

Students are required to read assigned portions of the required texts. Each student is expected to participate in class discussions. Learners are encouraged to come prepared to engage in a dialogue about the reading assigned for each class. Each student will be required to lead a dialogue during one of the times we meet together as a group. In addition, each student will post to canvas before each class 6 bullet points for the assigned reading for the day. Three of the points will be descriptive of the reading, and three of the points will be evaluative.

Final project: 40%

Students will write a 4500-5000-word double spaced essay exploring in greater depth an Indigenous culture-specific way of understanding vital theological concepts: God and creation; ceremony or worship; and ethics or law. After describing these terms make comments on how they might aid in de-colonization of Modern Christian theology. **Due December 9.**

## **COURSE POLICIES**

1. **Attendance** Learners are required to attend all the class sessions.
2. **Reading and assignments** Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. **Submission of assignments**

Written assignments should follow the format set out by the *Society of Biblical Literature*. (A concise form of key examples may be found, free of charge, at <https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/pubs/SBLHSupp2015-02.pdf>)

Please note the following additional criteria.

- All assignments must be submitted as a word document to the course canvas page.

- All assignments should have a title page containing all of the pertinent information.
- All assignments will be double-spaced in 12 point New Times Roman.
- All assignments must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents.
- The file name submitted ***must*** begin with the student's surname and designate the particular assignment. (e. g. Smith Theology Paper 1.doc)
- The professor will return all submissions to the canvas page.
- Failure to submit assignments in the form outlined above will result in a grade reduction of a full letter grade, at least. In some cases, it may require the student to resubmit the assignment according to the proper format. Such may also, consequently, be subject to the penalties of late submission.

**4. Academic honesty** Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.

**5. Inclusive language** in speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when referring to God.

**6. Assignment and Course Evaluation**

- Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is "Not Approved") including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number of grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.
- Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.

**7. Late assignments**

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course. All assignments must be completed in a manner that meets the expectations of the professor in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

**8. Limitation on use of social media**

Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand.

9. VST is committed to creating a safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

