

Instructions for Final Project Religion, Nature, and the Environment Spring 2020, Dr. Gordon

In this project you will do research into a topic of your choice relating to the intersection of religion and the environment—or of spirituality and nature—in a Native American culture or cultures. While the main focus of the project can be on any geographic region of North America, every project will need to relate to Native American settlement in the Pittsburgh region in some way and to the exhibition on Native Americans in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. The end result will be a roughly 6-page paper and a 1-page public-facing summary of the part of your topic related to the Pittsburgh region. This project is worth 20% of your final course grade.

1. Research

There are numerous books on Native American religion and spirituality on the Hillman 4th floor, primarily the E78 and E98 stacks. In addition, there is a Hillman LibGuide for this project where you can find copious resources:

<https://pitt.libguides.com/religionnature>

Several of the important books that focus on Pennsylvania are on 2-hr Hillman reserve. This guide is where you should start your research. Sai Koros (sak198@pitt.edu), the Digital Humanities Coordinator of ReligYinz: Mapping Religious Pittsburgh, and Chris Lemery (clemery@pitt.edu), the liaison librarian for Religious Studies, put this together and we should all be grateful to them.

The Grim reading on the syllabus, “Indigenous Traditions: Religion and Ecology,” provides a nice overview and references to important sources; the Deloria and Sponsel readings from that week could also be useful. Finally, there are plenty of resources on the indigenous cultures page of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology:

<http://fore.yale.edu/religion/indigenous/>

2. Topic Choice and Project Design

As you do reading on the topic, try to focus on something that really interests you. This will make for a more enjoyable research process and probably a more engaging piece of writing.

There are a number of ways you might approach this:

- You might focus on some element of Native American belief, ritual, or myth (such as a creation myth) and its embeddedness in environmental knowledge, lifeways, or subsistence strategies.
- Or you might come at it from the opposite direction, focusing on a piece of Native American art, sculpture, or some element of material culture and use it to shed light on the intersection of religion and the environment.
- A third option is to think about the religious and/or spiritual dimensions of an animal like a turtle, bear, turkey or beaver; a plant or tree, like maple or sage; or a natural feature like a river or mountain.
- A fourth is to apply the approach of some formative thinker in the history of religion (e.g., Eliade, Durkheim) to a case study or studies related to Native American nature spirituality.

In any case, during the topic selection phase you should begin thinking about how your paper will meet both of the following two “local” requirements:

- a. Some discussion (at least 1 page and 1 related photograph or image) of the Native American peoples who inhabited southwestern Pennsylvania, including the Shawnee, Lenni Lenape/Delaware, Iroquois or Osage peoples and the connection of their cosmologies or ritual systems to the local environmental niche. The objective of this part of the project is to think about the intersection of religion and environment in the ecological niche of southwestern Pennsylvania while learning about the Native American cultures that inhabited the region in the past. Note that:
 - Papers entirely focused on the presence of one of these cultures in the Pittsburgh region will meet this stipulation automatically, as long as they relate to the local environment in some way.
 - Those focused on other regions or cultures should devote at least 1 page to this topic; for example, you can focus on local cultures as one of a few case studies illustrating your point; or as an illuminating comparison to your main culture or topic of inquiry.
- b. Some discussion (at least 1 page and 1 photograph) of an artifact, type of artifact, or major component on display at the Alcoa Foundation Hall of the American Indian on the top floor of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. The objective of this component is to get you engaged intellectually in a local museum exhibition of relevance to this course. Note that:
 - Papers entirely focused on something from the exhibition will meet this stipulation automatically.
 - Those focused on other topics should devote at least 1 page to this, using it as an illuminating example, comparison, or the like.

Try to keep your topics focused and distinct from other students’ projects. Once you have a working topic, you will need to post it on the GoogleDoc below (and accessible on Courseweb), where you will supply a working title, and a short paragraph (3-4 sentences) that will summarize the topic and mention how you plan to meet the two “local” requirements. Project topics must be posted by 11:59pm on Friday March 27.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eu8If7E5hP7m3HP63Mm9nk2_m07RpHNgHQyAfuFN9s8/edit?usp=sharing

3. Project Workshop

On Friday Apr. 10 we will be conducting an in-class activity where you will discuss your projects with small groups, deal with challenges, and brainstorm solutions. By this point you should have begun serious research into your project and have a sense of how it is taking shape.

4. Project Presentation

The project presentation dates are according to your groupings for the panel discussions: Group 1: Mon, Apr. 13; Group 2: Wed, Apr. 15; Group 3: Fri, Apr. 17. You will each talk for 4–5 mins about your project. I will keep strict time. Make sure to include the following in your presentation: your main conclusions; the sources you used; the connection to local Native American cultures and the local environment; the connection to the Hall of the American Indians

at the Carnegie Museum. You will need to have images selected and ready for the presentation (see below). Your presentation will be worth 15% of your final project grade.

5. Images

High-quality, illuminating images are an important part of this project. Please do your best to find or photograph yourself about 3–4 total, including at least one each for the two “local” elements of the project, and follow these submission instructions for them:

- Please do not embed images in the WORD files you will submit, either your final paper or the public-facing summary. Instead submit them (properly named) to the following shared folder:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GSXIY4Nw1-itikfF9FCnuXGB2NGjwdNk?usp=sharing>

- Number the images (e.g., Photo 1, Photo 2; or Figure 1, Figure 2) and reference them in your final paper.
- Name your image files according to your name followed by the number you’ve given the image, as follows: yourname1, yourname2 (e.g., bengordon1, bengordon2, etc.)
- You should plan to have some of your images in the above folder before midnight on the date of your project presentations. You can change them out or add to them before you submit the final paper if you wish.
- Include captions for any images you reference in the final paper and the public-facing summary.
- Fully credit images in the captions. Make every effort to submit photographs you have taken yourself.

6. The Final Paper

Papers should be about 6 pages (at 12-pt Times New Roman, double-spaced) plus bibliography and images. Make sure your paper includes:

- A title.
- A clear introduction, which states the research question and gives an overview of the paper.
- An obvious organizational scheme; use subheadings if you’d like.
- A summarizing section at the end, which restates the research question and summarizes what the paper has accomplished.
- In-text references and captions for your images.
- A bibliography, which includes only a list of sources cited in the paper, alphabetized by last name of author. Aim for a bibliography with 6–10 sources. You are strongly encouraged to do library research for this project. Use the MLA style for in-text parenthetical citations and for the bibliography. The style guidelines are outlined here: <https://pitt.libguides.com/citationhelp/mla8thedition>

The final paper should be submitted to Courseweb by Tuesday April 21 at 11:59pm. Your paper will be worth 70% of your final project grade.

7. Public-Facing Summary for ReligYinz: Mapping Religious Pittsburgh

This brief summary (approx. 1 page double spaced) will present some element of *local* Native American nature spirituality as it emerges from your research. It should be entirely derivative of your paper and can even recycle language from it. You need not do separate research for this component of the project.

Your summary will be eligible for inclusion on ReligYinz: Mapping Religious Pittsburgh, which will be an informative website about the varieties of religious experiences in the Pittsburgh region, produced by Pitt students like yourselves and including engaging texts and eye-catching images. For an example of a student-generated website on religious life in St. Louis, check out <https://www.archcityreligion.org/>. Your work will be the only on the website to highlight the spiritual dimensions of Native American life in the region. Your summary should do the following:

- Follow the template provided at the end of these instructions and posted separately on Courseweb.
- Use clear and simple language, suitable for a broader audience.
- Include a “further reading” list at the bottom with 2–3 sources. Citations are not required for this summary. (The sources you provide should appear on the bibliography of your paper as well and should be cited in that paper.)
- Describe in the text anything in your images that requires explanation.

Submit your brief public-facing summary as a WORD document to Courseweb by Tuesday April 21 at 11:59pm (the same due date as the paper). This component will count for 15% of your final grade on the project.

If you do not wish for your public-facing summary to be considered for inclusion in ReligYinz, or if you wish for it to be posted anonymously, please let me know in writing via email. Otherwise all submissions will automatically be considered for inclusion.

8. Checklist and Deductions

- Post a project title and brief summary by Friday March 27. 10-pt. deduction for posting late.
- Be prepared for an in-class workshop on these projects on Friday April 10. 5-pt. deduction for failing to participate.
- Give a 4–5 minute presentation on your project in the last week of class, on the date assigned your group. Submit your images by midnight before your presentation date. 15% of final project grade.
- Submit your 6-page paper (70% of grade) and 1-page public-facing summary (15% of grade) to Courseweb by 11:59 on Tuesday April 21. One-pt. deduction per hour for late submissions on both. Make sure your images in the images file are up-to-date and match the in-text image references and captions list in the final paper. Make sure your 1-page summary utilizes the template below.

[Name of ReligYinz thing]

By [First and last name]

[Month, year]

[Write about 300 words in two or three paragraphs with no indentation. Non-English nouns (i.e. specialized or technical language) should be italicized and defined in parentheses. Example: *tallit* (Jewish prayer shawl).]

[For specific places or sites, copy and paste a Google maps html to be embedded. For directions, click [here](#).]

< Include two or more separate, good-quality images in .jpg or .png format. The author must personally photograph these images. To use images that are not personally photographed, the author must submit the image and its complete citation for prior approval. Each file submitted, including this document, must have a name that contains the name of the author and the number of the image (e.g., bengordon1.jpg) >

[insert caption for first image here]

[insert caption for second image here]

Further Reading

[In MLA format, include two or more relevant references for further reading. Do not indent.]