

Intellectual Process in Revising "Shamanism and the Indigenous Art of the Americas" course with Sustainability Connections

R. Stone

I made three main changes to the syllabus for Art History 393/LACS 270 "Shamanism and the Indigenous Art of the Americas" as a result of my participation in the Piedmont Project 2007. All three seek to connect the students' current experience with that of shamans in a more active way, focusing on our being *part of* nature, a fundamental assumption that shamanism and sustainability have in common.

In the very first class meeting I am introducing a more overt inclusion of reported personal "non-linear" experiences in an attempt to complement our Western assumptions that time and space run only in one direction and only our normal waking consciousness is "real." In the past I have tried to elicit verbally in class the students' personal experiences of prescient dreams, encounters with spirits, communication with the dead or with plants and animals, spontaneous visions, etc. This did not work; they were too shy or concerned about being judged to share. In one of our small-group sessions during the workshop, my cohort suggested a more anonymous, and neutral way to get this information via anonymous writing that I would collect and read aloud. I think this method stands to have greater pedagogical success.

Second, I have added a class devoted to having the students try interactive communication in/with nature, based on our nature walks during the workshop and the need to underscore that shamans too work in nature, not a classroom. While ours were oriented toward identifying non-intrusive and intrusive species, my outdoor session would seek to encourage students to not only observe but also to allow any kinds of non-verbal, spiritual messages they might receive from plants and animals to be brought to their awareness and written down in a journal format. Because their worldview that this is not possible may interfere, I include a reading by a grandson of Black Elk, which assumes animals and plants are in active and direct communication with us. I also will require them to try a second time on their own, on the assumption that they might be less resistant without other students around and after being given permission to interact with plants and animals in a new way. I will give them an "out" to simply observe and extrapolate what could be seen as communication (the calls of birds, plants reaching toward the sun, etc.) even if they do not themselves experience what nature is saying directly. They are to write a second journal entry to include both the first and second meditative experience.

Third, I have added a session directly on the interface between shamanic views and practices and those of the post-modern Sustainability movement. Readings from Earth and Spirit: the Spiritual Dimension of the Environmental Crisis edited by Fritz Hull (gleaned from the Piedmont Project website bibliography) will show that the Native American point of view has itself influenced Sustainability initiatives and how closely allied the two are in terms of goals and assumptions. I hope this class, coming as it does at the end of the course when the students have a strong familiarity with the shamanic, will provoke a lively, relevant discussion that will help students "apply" what they have learned to their daily lives. Making connections between seemingly disparate entities is precisely what shamans do, so this summation class in which shamanic and Western worldviews coincide will model the shaman's faith in the unity, the shared life force, of all peoples and phenomena.

Art History 393/LACS 270

Dr. Rebecca Stone

“Shamanism and the Indigenous Art of the Americas”

(date time location)

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Office hours: Weds. 1:30-2:45, Room 127 Carlos Hall

This upper-level seminar covers the basic attributes of visionary spirituality in the ancient and traditional modern Americas, especially from Mexico southward, and applies these to the artistic record. Individual projects focus on objects in the Carlos Museum collection as part of an on-going process of research on visions and ancient art.

Texts:

Harvey, Shamanism: a Reader

Stone-Miller, R. Seeing with New Eyes: Highlights of the Michael C. Carlos Museum Collection of Art of the Ancient Americas (SWNE)

Xeroxed articles (XX) handed out in class or in drop box

TOPICS

INTRODUCTION

Class 1 Introduction to course

Definitions of shamanism
Questioning our worldview

Class 2 Alterity and Anomaly

Read: Alan T. Campbell “Submitting” in Harvey

Tedlock, “New Anthropology of Dreaming” in Harvey

THE SHAMANIC BODY

Class 3 Becoming a Shaman

Read: Harvey, Part 1 "Initiation"

Calderon, Eduardo El Curandero, pp. 43-53 (XX)

Class 4 The Marked Body

Read: Carolyn Tate "The Human Body and the Realm of Spirit" in Human Body, Human Spirit (XX)

Stone, mss. "Disability as Divine: the Shamanic Body in the Ancient Americas" (XX)

Berrin, The Spirit of Ancient Peru, cat. Nos. 69, 73, 78, 127

Class 5 The Gendered Body: Male, Female, Third Gender

Read:

Saladin d'Anglure, Rethinking Inuit Shamanism through the Concept of Third Gender" (Harvey)

Joyce, "Beauty, Sexuality, Body Ornamentation, and Gender in Ancient Meso-america" (XX)

Class 6 Curing the Body

Read: Huber and Sandstrom, Mesoamerican Healers, intro (XX)

Calderon, Eduardo El Curandero, pp. 67-103 (XX)

Berrin, The Spirit of Ancient Peru, cat. Nos. 74, 75

SHAMANIC VISION/S AND ART

Class 7 Vision vs. visions

Read: Harner, *Hallucinogens and Shamanism*, pp. 151-190

Schultes, *Plants of the Gods*, pp. 9-30

Class 8 Art and the Visionary: basic principles

Read: *Seeing With New Eyes*, Introduction, pp. xv-xxvi
SWNE entries on cat. nos. 1, 142-144, 146-147, 157,
169, 182-185, 222, 307, 515, 538, 539, 541

*Focus Object Paper due

Class 9 Geometry, Abstraction

Read: Paternosto, "Threading Signs: An Andean Geometry"
(XX)

Pasztory, "Andean Aesthetics" (XX)

Class 10 Disorientation, Internalism

Read: Stone-Miller, *Art of the Andes*, Ch. 2, pp. 17-47

Valdez, "Symbols, Ideology and the Expression of Power
in La Tolita, Ecuador" (XX)

Class 11 Transformation, the Human-Animal Body

Read: Stone-Miller, "Human-Animal imagery, shamanic
visions, and ancient American aesthetics" (XX)

Wolfe and Sleeper, *Wild Cats of the World, Jaguars* (XX)

Class 12 Animation, Transcendence, Unity

Read: O'Day, More than Meets the Eyes" Ch. 7 (XX)

SWNE cat nos. 397, 558

Class 13 Talks

Class 14 Talks

Assignments:

Reading Report

Read an additional article from Harvey and tell the class about it in 5 minutes.

Focus Object Analysis

Write a five-page paper on a piece in the MCCM collection we did not discuss in class, approved by me, that relates to the shamanic body material. Consider gender, disability, and disease issues, if relevant, and apply the readings. Find one additional reading to apply as well and include a copy of it with the paper. Draw the piece freehand and include.

Talk

These will be on the same topic as your final paper. **YOU MAY NOT READ YOUR PAPER AS YOUR TALK**; you must speak it from notes. If you make a powerpoint presentation, do not read your bullet points to us (we can all read). After your talk **come and see me** and we will discuss how your talk turns into your final paper. It may be tweaked in some way, though I am more lenient with the last presenters since they have less time until the paper is due.

Final Paper

This will vary from one person to another, topics to be suggested by either me or you, but approved by me before you begin. Decide on this as soon as possible and give it to me in writing, at latest by _____. The topic proposal

should run 100 words and include five or more bibliographic sources with which you are starting, plus a xerox of the piece[s] you are focusing on, if applicable). Footnotes/endnotes *with page numbers* in any consistent format, then xeroxed figures referred to in the text ("blah, blah, blah (fig. 1)") and with captions as to where it came from *with page numbers*. Bibliography in style of SWNE. 15 pages total, of which 12 or more are written, 3 are drawings (if applicable).

Take-Home Essay due _____(during final exam period)

This is a comprehensive essay summarizing all you have learned. I will give you the question on the last day of class.

Policies

It is the policy of Emory University to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. All students with special requests or needs for accommodations should make this request in person as soon as possible (or before _____).

Honor Code is in effect.

Come talk to me at office hours in 127 Carlos Hall on Weds 1:30-2:45 or by appt. **WHENEVER YOU WANT.** I will put a note on my door if I am sick or have stepped out for a moment.

Tell me beforehand via email or voicemail if there is a problem coming to class or handing in an assignment. Each day missed without advance notice will count against your final grade. Each unexcused day late in handing in an assignment means that your maximum grade for that assignment goes down one grade (A-, B+, B, etc.). In other words, an "A" paper 3 days late gets a "B," and a "B" paper three days late gets a "C."

I reserve the right to determine your final grade, based on your involvement in the class, attendance, participation, timely assignments, and how well the assignments are done (esp. in regard to applying what you are learning in class, getting information out of objects, following up research leads, having original ideas, and writing clearly). I am sympathetic to improvement, completeness of project, and to creativity.