Anthropology 487

Selected Topics in Northwest Coast

Ethnography: Potlatch

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SUBJECT/NUMBER OF COURSE

DESCRIPTION

This course looks at anthropological descriptions and interpretations of potlatching, a key institution of First Nations of the Pacific Northwest. Ecological, social, structural and post-modernist approaches are examined, as well as the roles of kinship and descent groups. The symbolic representations used in potlatch ceremonies and the role of the potlatch/feast system in contemporary court cases are also discussed.

RATIONALE: No upper level course on Northwest ethnography is presently available; an upper level course on the Pacific Northwest complements the existing lower level course, ANTH 111, and allows students to delve into greater detail topics introduced in ANTH 111.

COURSE PREREQUISITES: ANTH 102 and ANTH 111 required. ANTH 387 suggested.

COURSE COREQUISITES: None

HOURS PER TERM

Lecture 30 hrs
Laboratory hrs
Seminar 30 hrs
Field Experience hrs

Student Directed Learning hrs
Other - specify: hrs

TOTAL 60 HRS

MAXIMUM ENROLMENT: 25

Is transfer credit requested? Yes No

AUTHORIZATION SIGNATURES:

Course Designer(s): Douglas Hudson, Ph.D. Chairperson: 
(E. Davis) Curriculum Committee

Department Head: Jean Ballard Dean: J.D. Tunstall

PAC: Approval in Principle (Date) PAC: Final Approval: (Date)

OUTLN95/01/dd
SYNONYMOUS COURSES:

(a) replaces [N/A] (course #)

(b) cannot take [N/A] for further credit (course #)

SUPPLIES/MATERIALS:

TEXTBOOKS, REFERENCES, MATERIALS  (List reading resources elsewhere)

Anth 487 Coursepack (specific articles for each section)

OBJECTIVES:

This course will provide a basis for participants to do the following:

C demonstrate a knowledge of selected anthropological articles, ideas, and interpretations of the potlatch-feast system in the Pacific Northwest
C develop a working vocabulary of anthropological concepts used in the interpretation and comparative study of the potlatch-feast system
C demonstrate a critical awareness of the basic premises and ideas of relevant anthropological articles through writing, discussions, and presentations
C carry out independent research on a selected topic relevant to the course
C explain and compare similarities and differences in the potlatch-feast system, especially in terms of varieties of social and political organization, ceremonies, and gender relations

METHODS:

The course is based on lectures, discussions of assigned readings, and seminars. Participants will be responsible for in-class discussions of assigned readings.
STUDENT EVALUATION PROCEDURE:

1. Research paper and presentations 3 x 20 = 60%
2. Test 20%
3. Participation (based on attendance and participation in discussions, using a discussion/seminar journal) 20%

COURSE CONTENT

Week 1 Introduction to course

Weeks 2-3 Ethnographic Descriptions of the potlatch/feast system

Weeks 4-5 Overview of Interpretations of the potlatch/feast system
(ecological, economic, social, structural, symbolic)
Wike, J., The Role of the Dead in Northwest Coast Culture. Article

Weeks 6-8 Descriptions and Interpretations of the Haida, Tlingit and Tsimshian clan-feast system
Cove, J., The Gitksan Traditional Concept of Land Ownership. Article
Readings on Delgamaakuw
A/V: Raising the Gilhast Pole; Time Immemorial
Assignment 1

Weeks 9-11 Descriptions and Interpretations of Kwakwala potlatching.
A/V: A Strict Law Bids Us Dance
Assignment 2

Weeks 11-13 The Potlatch Law and Its Interpreters
Assignment 3

Week 14 Presentations
Reading Resources:
Blackman, M., Florence Edenshaw Davidson: The Life of a Haida Woman.
Seward-Smith, Daisy, 1979, Prosecution or Persecution.
Wike, J., The Role of the Dead in Northwest Coast Culture. Article.

Journals:
American Anthropologist
American Indian Culture and Research Journal
Canadian Journal of Native Studies
Cultural Survival Journal
Ethnohistory
Arctic Anthropology

American Ethnologist
B.C. Studies
Canadian Review of Anthropology and Sociology
Culture
Ethnology