

Transcript Summary

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Narrator: Lary Schafer, professor at UAF

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Native American religions, Christianity, Third World, Fourth World, technology, time-based versus space-based religions, shamans, curing, time and space, nature, assignments, ducks.

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(Short silence followed by Native American singing and drums).

(00:05:05)

(Music continues for 30 more seconds as Schafer speaks). Lary Schafer introduces himself as an instructor for Humanities 294, Native American Religion. This is Tape Number Five, he believes, dealing with Assignment Three. Schafer says he wants to talk about Deloria's writings, and course assignments.

Schafer says that Deloria writes about the concept of guilt in Christian religion, and how it is such a negative factor in human life that it drags people down and forces people to do certain things out of guilt. Deloria also addresses the militancy of groups such as the Native American Indian Movement, and events that happened at Wounded Knee and the takeover of the BIA building years ago when materials and files were destroyed. Schafer says that Deloria writes that the blame is on the Christian churches, because of their feelings of guilt for not participating earlier in Indian movements. They jumped on the bandwagon later on and gave militant groups anything they asked for, and so that they paid for the militant actions against the dominant society.

Schafer says his own feelings are that he is not so sure, but the idea has merit. He himself has dealt with churches that perhaps would have gone that far had the opportunity been available.

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Schafer says that Deloria also touches on the American Indians' reluctance to join up with other movements, like Third World movements such as the Mexican American Raza movement or the Black

movement. A Canadian Indian named Manuel and another named Posluns (George Manuel and Michael Posluns) deal with a concept they call the Fourth World.

Schafer says most students are familiar with Third World, or underdeveloped or colonized countries. The colonized people are trying to get their share of the dominant majority culture. It's related to wanting a greater share of the wealth, and a greater participation in the society.

Whereas, Schafer says, American Indian groups are more concerned with controlling their own lives, and living the kind of life they want and having the quality of the life they want. They don't want to join the Great Society to get their share, but to survive as they see fit within their own cultural frame. Schafer says he believes this is the main difference, and the cause of reluctance on the part of American Indian groups to join with other Third World movements.

(00:10:32)

Schafer says that (Manuel and Posluns?) deal with the concept of the perception of land, and the difference between how American Native and European white man see the land. The Indian sees it as communal, a source of life, and a very sacred spot. Native Americans refer to Mother Earth. The European or Christianity concept is that land has to be bought, sold, and exploited, and this outlook on land has caused the modern technological world to lose sight of ecological factors. If the land is over-pressured, technology will solve it. There is a blind faith in science to cure everything, especially to cure the problems of land overuse.

But land is important and has a special relationship to people – this is the primary thesis of almost all-American Indian religions. Schafer says there are many examples in “Black Rock Speaks” about the Sioux's relationship to the land.

Schafer says that one of the problems with modern technological society is the ability of Christianity to meet various spiritual needs of people, including Indian peoples. There are concerns about Indian religions surviving in a contemporary high-tech culture. Christianity isn't working, so people are looking for something that's more feasible, and there has been a turn to naturalistic types of religions such as Zen Buddhism and Oriental religions that are highly naturalistic, pragmatic, now-oriented, space-oriented and individual-oriented.

(00:14:13)

Schafer continues: There are other signs that Native American religion is becoming very popular. Indian religious ceremonies in the Southwest have become more like shows than religious ceremonies. Tickets are taken, and there are bleachers. It's very social. Indian religions are becoming recognized. Deloria writes that Native American curing with herbs and plants and various medicines is making a comeback. There was a special grant for training shamans, which is now seen as very valuable by PHS (public health services?) as important for the health of Native American people. Many Native American people are attempting to go back to early religions, but so much time has gone by, and putting beliefs into contemporary terms is going to have to be done by today's generation.

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Schafer talks about readings on time and space. A chapter on time and space is crucial. He asks students to take time to understand the chapter before responding to the third assignment, or to send him questions if they do not understand.

Schafer says the author argues that place has the highest possible meaning to Native American people. White men have a time orientation; ultimate value lies with time, and time is seen as a linear ordered sequence of events.

Schafer gives an example. The Nez Perce finished a two-volume work on their history. It was written and published and reviewed as a history book. The reviewers said things did not happen in the order talked about in the book. History was not important to the Nez Perce in terms of a lineal (linear) process, but it's important to them in terms of what it can teach them about the meaning of where, not when, happened. It's an exciting and interesting book to read, Schafer says.

(00:20:04)

Schafer talks about the modern world, and how electronics impinge upon us and our sources of information. He talks about the McLuhan(?) Thesis that we have instant information, and see things happen as they are happening. There's no difference between us in terms of time any longer. Technology is such that there is rapid transportation; travel around the world in a day and call around the world in seconds. Schafer mentions television and satellite TV. Time is no longer important in this kind of world. So, this suggests that the real difference now between people is their relationship to a specific place. The spatial difference is now the only thing that's really fundamentally different between peoples.

Schafer asks students to think about this concept and adds that, if this is true, we have to rethink our ideas of universal religions. If people are fundamentally defined as different by their relationship to specific areas, then universal religions do not meet the needs of the world any longer, and become irrelevant. We're now looking at a great many localized religions. The universal religion, in the sense of one creator, one people, one God, may not be valid any longer.

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Schafer continues: Time-oriented religions and spatial-oriented religions demand a different approach to operate. Participation and experience become more important. Native American religions demonstrate this participation and experience that people have with a religion. Schafer says the author suggests that time-oriented religions see the religious values and the religious worth according to the cultural technology produced. A religion is only good if it really produces something tangible that you can sell, buy, or do something with it.

Schafer continues: An example of this is the American Protestant ethic, or Calvinism. This is what sociologist Max Weber(?) says perpetuated America's greatness in terms of its technological advances. The premise of this Puritan ethic is that the more you have, the better off you are, because that's proof that God is on your side. How could you gain any material wealth and well-being if God isn't with you? The more you work, the harder you work to gain and acquire material wealth. It's a circular thing that you can't lose, unless you're poor and God doesn't like you.

Schafer says that what happens with Christianity from his experiences is that the true essence and quality of the religion is lost. He says that some have heard religious sermons about how poor the church is and how much you need to contribute to it.

Schafer says that the author sums up by saying a number of things, the biggest point is that there is an important movement by contemporary America for religious insight into American Indian religion, and a return to the nature movement. There is a great demand now for small farms and for acreage away from town so that people can get away from it all.

Schafer says the book about war(?) is difficult to talk about. It's full of radical thoughts. He suggests students read the whole book as it is very interesting.

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Schafer encourages students regarding the papers that they are writing. He is looking forward to the papers, and has been pleased with the ones that have come in so far. He mentions that some students were confused by the concepts of personal power as opposed to impersonal power. Underhill had a chapter on impersonal power, but didn't have one on personal power. He encourages students to go to the index and look up personal power and find pages that address the topic. Personal power is basically a special power that is for a personal individual and it's not a general thing for everybody.

Schafer continues talking about the assignments and asks students to get them in post haste. The questions and readings are not difficult. If he doesn't hear from students relatively quickly by word of mouth or a message, he says not to worry about it and he will just give them a "W" for withdrawing from the course. He doesn't want 18 people sending him assignments two weeks before school is out. He would also like a page or two of evaluation of the course. He will summarize the evaluations and get back to everyone.

In conclusion, Schafer says, "And don't shoot too many ducks. I just looked out my window here, and ducks and geese are flying all over hell, quacking. In fact, I suppose after this tape, I gotta go out and maybe see if we can get some ducks for dinner tomorrow."

(00:32:12/00:32:18)

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