
Exploring Lakota Sioux History

OSHER 316-001

Dates: Wednesdays: September 2 – October 7

Time: 9:30 am – 11:00 am

Location: Online via Zoom

Instructor: Ephriam D. Dickson III

ephriam3@yahoo.com

Course Description:

Best known today as the tribe of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, the Lakota nation grew into the most powerful political and military force on the northern Great Plains during the 18th and 19th centuries. New native sources are yielding unparalleled detail, affording us an opportunity to better understand their history from a unique internal perspective not possible before. Our goal is to broaden our perspectives of American history to include the deep history of native nations.

Texts, Materials, and Supplies:

There are no required texts for this course. However, if you would like to read something in parallel to the course, I recommend the following two books:

Pekka Hamalainen, *Lakota America: A new History of Indigenous Power* (Yale University Press, 2019)

Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Course Overview:

Week 1: Following introductions, we will begin by considering what types of primary sources are available for reconstruction Lakota history. In addition to the usual sources by fur traders, military officers and early ethnographers, we will also



explore traditional Lakota sources such as oral history and winter counts. We will begin our story with several Lakota traditions about their origins and connection to the Black Hills of South Dakota.

- Week 2:** During this class, we will discuss the role of the tiyospaye or community in Lakota history, review the Lakota's traditional leadership structure, and how they engaged in diplomacy and war. We will also review their westward migration from the Great Lakes region to the northern Great Plains and their inter-tribal relations during a period of environmental and political instability.
- Week 3:** We will next explore earlier interactions with Europeans in the Great Lakes fur trade and its impact on Lakota politics.
- Week 4:** During this session, we will discover the Lakota perspective during the period of war and treaty making with the U.S. Government from the 1850s through the 1870s.
- Week 5:** Next, we will explore the story of the Lakota as they were settled onto the Great Sioux Reservation, the rise of the Ghost Dance movement and the tragedy at Wounded Knee in 1890.
- Week 6:** In our final class, we will review Lakota history from the twentieth century to present, focusing on the resurgence of Lakota culture and identity as well as how government-to-government perspectives are shaping politics. We will talk about rise of political activism, from Wounded Knee 2 to the recent protests at Standing Rock over the Dakota Access Pipeline.