

The Doctrine of Discovery: From Myth to Reality
Mondays, January 11—February 8 (5 weeks) from 5-6 pm CT / 6-7 pm ET

+++

Course Description

The Northern Great Lakes Synod Council declared May 2020 to May 2021 as a “Year of Discovery.” It is a call for our synod members to better understand and appreciate the history, heritage and culture of Native American peoples, to reflect on the historical content of the Doctrine of Discovery, and to engage in dialogue with Native American siblings.

This brief course entitled, “The Doctrine of Discovery: From Myth to Reality” will help us understand how the Doctrine of Discovery has had a critical part in our American and religious psyche, and how it has helped create a society that has harmed and continues to harm our Native siblings. And perhaps this Year of Discovery can also invite you to a sacred place...a place of discovering a valuable culture worth learning from, a spirituality filled with grace and gratitude, and an awareness that we are all related.

As a church, may we stand with them in this endeavor.

+++

Course Material

** = *Required to purchase. Both are available new and used on Amazon or other sources*

****Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, ivpress.com, 2019**
ISBN 978-0-8308-4525-5 [print]; ISBN 978-0-8308-8759-0 [digital]

+++

****Barry Lopez, *The Rediscovery of North America*, Vintage, 1990; ISBN 0-679-74099-6**

****Other readings** will be available online or made available to class participants through email, or they are available on the Synod Website home page (scroll down to Year of Discovery) <https://www.nglsynod.org/>

+++

To whet your appetite, consider this!

1. Myths are stories drawn from a society's history that have acquired through persistent usage the power of symbolizing that society's ideology and of dramatizing its moral consciousness--with all the complexities and contradictions that consciousness may contain. ~Richard Slotkin
2. What passes for identity in America is a series of myths about one's heroic ancestors. ~James Baldwin
3. It would be better not to know so many things than to know so many things that are not so. ~Felix Okoye

4. American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful, and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it. ~James Baldwin
5. Concealment of the historical truth is a crime against the people. ~General Petro G. Grigorenko, USSR, 1975
6. One is astonished in the study of history at the recurrence of the idea that evil must be forgotten, distorted, skimmed over. We must not remember that Daniel Webster got drunk but only remember that he was a splendid constitutional lawyer. We must forget that George Washington was a slave owner... and simply remember the things we regard as creditable and inspiring. The difficulty, or course, with this philosophy is that history loses its value as an incentive and example; it paints perfect men and noble nations, but it does not tell the truth. ~W.E.B. Du Bois
7. By idolizing those we honor, we do a disservice both to them and to ourselves... We fail to recognize that we could go and do likewise. ~Charles V. Willie
8. Those who don't remember the past are condemned to repeat the eleventh grade. ~James Loewen

+++

Weekly Assignments

Week 1 [January 11]

Read: (all are available at <https://www.nglsynod.org/> and scroll down to resources under Year of Discovery)

- Synod Resolution for Year of Discovery – [click to view](#)
- Year of Discovery Article by Rev. Julie Belew – [click to view](#)
- Doctrine of Discovery 1493 – [click to view](#)
- The Year of Discovery, Part One–The Americas Before Columbus – [click to view](#)
- The Year of Discovery, Part Two–Discovery and our American Legal History – [click to view](#)
- The Year of Discovery, Part Three–Discovery and the 21st Century – [click to view](#)
- The Year of Discovery, Part Four–Listening to Native Voices – [click to view](#)

+Look at: Wisconsin's American Indian Reservation & Trust Lands – [click to view](#)

+Watch: Episcopal Church's video link: <https://episcopalchurch.org/library/video/episcopal-church-exposes-doctrine-discovery>

Week 2 [January 18]

Read:

- Angela Weiler, The Requerimiento (1513) (Description of legal statement written by an advisor to the King of Spain, used to justify violent treatment of native Americans who refused to be converted)
<https://press.rebus.community/openamlit/chapter/the-requerimiento/>

- Barry Lopez, *The Rediscovery of North America*
- James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, chapter 2: "1493: The True Importance of Christopher Columbus"

Week 3 [January 25]

Read:

Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, Introduction and chapters 1-5

Week 4 [February 1]

Read:

Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, chapters 6-11

Week 5 [February 8]

Read:

- Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, chapter 12 & Conclusion
- In Good Time Article, Rev. Dave VanKley, The Lutheran, Nov. 2000, – [click to view](#)
- Who Owns the Land, Rev. Dave VanKley – [click to view](#)
- ELCA Churchwide 2016 Assembly—Repudiation of Doctrine of Discovery – [click to view](#)
- Vance Blackfox, Reflection on the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly’s Repudiation
https://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/1202?_ga=2.211378261.1985872786.1592237917-1362125866.1503510635
- Tink Tinker, The Doctrine of Christian Discovery: Lutherans and the Language of Empire,
https://elca.org/JLE/Articles/1203?_ga=2.165782782.1985872786.1592237917-1362125866.1503510635

Short videos on Manifest Destiny

- Khan Academy Manifest Destiny: causes and effects of westward expansion
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/civil-war-era/sectional-tension-1850s/v/manifest-destiny>
- Manifest Destiny & "American Progress" (John Gast Painting).
Nov 30, 2020 · Uploaded by APUSH Simplified
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCZmBMo_jhM

- **Envisioning Manifest Destiny: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way** by Carol Wilson and Dr. Steven Zucker
<https://smarthistory.org/seeing-america-2/migration-and-settlement/leutze-manifest-destiny/>
- **Kansas Historical**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLmUht9QOIE>