In early August, 2015, I sat in a tipi with a small group of Settler walkers, and one First Nation participant, on the Wood Mountain Lakota First Nation (treaty four). A Lakota elder asked us why we were headed ‘into the wind’, passing through their nation on our 350-km walk to the Cypress Hills. He listened intently, then told us about traditional Lakota journeys by foot. “I don’t know about pilgrimage,” he said, when he heard the term. “But you are going out on a long journey. Getting to know yourself on the land. That is what the Lakota do, and have always done.”

I am not First Nations, but a settler and the descendent of settlers. My forefathers and mothers were European peasants who came to Canada from 1905-1920. One of my grandparents took the so-called ‘free’ land given by the government and didn’t ask questions (it was in the sand hills, and he was forced to abandon it in any case, and earn his living as a blacksmith). My father worked & sang alongside some of his Métis neighbours. He remembers their tents and songs. When he died last year, I wanted to remember for our family. I am considered an “expert” in some things about European pilgrimage. But I am a beginner, and a student of Indigenous peoples for most of what it means to live in this place, and on this land. The reason I plan and walk what I call ‘dark pilgrimages’ is to remind other Settlers of the history of colonization, expropriation, intentional starvation and oppression that has so conveniently been forgotten in the histories of Canada.

Course description

In this course, we study the theology, history and politics of Indigenous journey, and compare and contrast it to global traditions of spiritual mobility (pilgrimage). We will attempt to define what makes a journey ‘spiritual’ in our postmodern world. Through readings and a wide range of audio-visual material, we’ll examine spiritual mobility in different times and cultures, to compare these with Indigenous journey and with postmodern pilgrimage and travel. Using as example Dr. Anderson’s North West Mounted Police Trail walk in Aug 2015 and the upcoming Battleford Trail walk in August 2017, we will also examine the rise of so-called ‘settler’ pilgrimage, as a meaningful ‘dark pilgrimage’, which may (or may not) in some cases be a restorative first step in recognizing wrongs done to First Peoples. In addition to class work and exams, students must engage in a practical component to the course by designing their own spiritual journey of 10 km or more (those with mobility issues may discuss this with the professor). There will be a written reflection on that journey, with both the pilgrimage and reflection to be undertaken after consultation with the professor.
Course Objectives
By the end of term, you will have gained an understanding of journey as a practice fundamental to human self-understanding. You will compare Asian and European definitions of ‘pilgrimage’ to understandings of journey among various First Nations. Finally, through the practical term project, you will reflect on your own philosophy and experience of pilgrimage/journey as both transformative and spiritual.

Continuing Ed students - Grading:

- **50%** - (one paper for each of the five days, at 10% each) On each day, a one-page reflection paper on the teachings of the day. Please attempt thoughtful and open-ended answers to the following questions: 1/how do I personally define spiritual journey and/or pilgrimage? 2/how do traditional and contemporary Indigenous journeys as I understand them, relate to the traditional European and Asian definitions? And 3/ what is the role of land? 4/ as well, you must pose at least one question for the class to explore. NOTE: This is NOT a research paper and requires no references other than the class lectures, readings, powerpoints and notes for the day.

- **20%** Final Exam (Friday morning, in class) Two essay questions decided in advance with the class; no sources other than class materials.................. 20%

- **30%** - Your Own Pilgrimage: includes a plan of what you will be doing before the walk (10%) and a reflection linking your experience of journey to the classroom learnings (20%)

M.Div students – grading: approved/not approved

MDiv students should be ready to talk about the readings and learnings of the day. They will prepare a journey plan during the week, and discuss it with the teacher.

Additional follow-up assignment for MDiv students (due by or before October 15, 2017): a written or taped personal account of a journey taken across the land, with reflections on the meaning of the land, of the people, and of the story.

Textbook and other course resources:

**Books:**
- Simpson, Leanne. 2011. *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back*, Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, chapters 1, 2 and 5

**Online resources** (see, in addition, the many films and videos in the week's classes). My thanks to Professor Sara Terreault, for whom I am indebted in researching many of these links!
- Reader, Ian. *Introduction to Pilgrimage*. At: http://www.york.ac.uk/projects/pilgrimage/content/faiths.html

Talk given in Montreal by Taiaiake Alfred on “Reconciliation as Recolonization” (47 minutes) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEiNu7UL7TM

Short interview with Metis artist Christi Belcourt on Walking with our Sisters exhibition: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehyOa05ecNA

Feature length PBS film on Trail of Tears: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8o0heHXQF8

CBC TV feature 8th Fire: Whose Land Is It Anyway?: http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2434188300

Groundwork for Change website: http://www.groundworkforchange.org/


Podcasts – somethinggrand.ca

**Proposed Schedule for July 17-21**

**Monday July 17**


*Afternoon*: M.Div. & ConEd students are required to attend a Research Skills Worship at 3:15 pm. Non-Indigenous students have a mandatory orientation on campus from 6 – 8 pm.

**Tuesday July 18**


10:30 – noon The history of Christian pilgrimage, with its antecedents in Jewish and Greco-Roman pilgrimage. Medieval pilgrimage and the economy of holiness. The importance of humility, healing, and the reception of gifts to the paradigm of the pilgrim. Classical themes of pilgrimage: healing, restitution, repentance, thanksgiving. Modern and postmodern themes: protest, education,
self-proving, transformation, therapy. Viewing of Dakota 38:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pX6FBSUyQI

Afternoon: for MDiv and ContEd students together: excursion

Note: M.Div. students will be back at VST before 6 pm.
Pacific Spirit Regional Park “getting to know the land we are on” (2 hour walk)
www.vancouvertrails.com/trails/pacific-spirit-regional-park/
Afternoon tutoring for MDiv students specifically (reflection on the walk – guided questions on getting to know the land we are on - to be handed out and back in)
Readings/viewings: http://www.york.ac.uk/projects/pilgrimage/content/faiths.html

Readings/viewings:

Wednesday July 19

10:30 – noon. Meshkanue: The Long Walk of Elizabeth Penashue:
Afternoon: Museum of Anthropology: Part I (outside looking in?) http://moa.ubc.ca/

Readings/viewings:

Thursday July 20

Morning: 9 – 10:30 Reflection on urban walking: is there ‘land’ in the Indigenous sense, in an intensely urban context? How can the placedness of Indigenous identity relate to the peregrinatio of Christian tradition? The problem/promise of existential migration and post-modernism. (Prof Sara Terreault by Skype or podcast)
10:30 – noon The Journey of the Nishiyuu Walkers
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtSOKsr9eOk Pilgrimage/Journey and narrative (story).
Afternoon: excursion
Afternoon activity for MDiv and ContEd students together:
Museum of Anthropology: Part II (outside looking in?) http://moa.ubc.ca/
Aft tutoring for MDiv students specifically: reflection on the place of the “unbiased (western) observer of Indigenous cultures, and how this paradigm is changing
(be back for a student activity from 6-8 pm)

Readings/viewings:

Friday July 21

Morning: 9-10 summary of learnings. Group discussion and going over exam questions.
10:15 - noon Final exam: on all course materials.
Afternoon:  **no excursion – but for students who are interested:** Urban walking: Gastown, Waterfront, and the Bill Reid Gallery of North-West Coast Art. Consider how landscape (nature, cityscapes, mixed) affect our views of ourselves, our histories and our paths. How can art be an expression of a path taken or imagined?  OR

Visit to (if possible) the Squamish Nation (Norgate – Lion’s Gate Bridge, West Vancouver)

[http://www.squamish.net/](http://www.squamish.net/)  Visit Community Centre and, if possible, Big House