

## **Response Paper 2: The Era of the Middle Ground (1650-1815)**

*Due: Thurs., Oct. 15.*

### **Readings:**

Rafert, The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People: 1654–1994. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996. (Chapters 1–2, esp. pp. 33–45).

White, Richard. 1991. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Read pp. 1–93, on reserve)

**Length, etc.:** 4–5 pages. All papers should be typed and double-spaced, with reasonable (about one-inch) margins. Be sure to give your paper a descriptive title (i.e., not just “Response Paper 2”). See the directions sheet from the last response paper for further instructions.

### **The assignment**

As Rafert (1996:34) notes, the period from 1650 to 1815 is sometimes called the era of the “Middle Ground” for Indian peoples of the Great Lakes region, including the Miami and the Potawatomi, because Native American groups in the region were able to find an accommodation with the European powers that made it possible to maintain their cultures in many respects even while they underwent acculturation in others.

Your topic for this paper is to explain the concept of the “Middle Ground” and to discuss some of the ways that Indian groups and Europeans found to accommodate each other’s cultures so that they could forge and maintain alliances and develop joint ways of operating.

As before, you should include concrete, factual information in your essay, and you should be sure to provide citations for any facts that you mention that are not simply general knowledge, as well as for any quotations that you include. Provide a list of references at the end of your paper. (Note that page numbers are given in bibliographies for articles and for book chapters in edited volumes, but not for books that are written by a single author or a single group of authors. So if you cite information from a book, such as White’s *The Middle Ground*, you need not include page numbers in your bibliography for the sections you’ve cited.)

### **Questions to address:**

- (1) What is the “Era of the Middle Ground”? What does the term “Middle Ground” mean?
- (2) How did the Miami and other Native American groups in our region resist efforts by the European powers (and then of the New United States) to control them during this period?
- (3) How did the cultures of these Indian groups change during this period? In what ways did these changes reflect European influence, or reaction to European influence?
- (4) In what ways did these Indian groups maintain their own cultural traditions, perhaps in transformed ways?

**Note:** The best way to answer these questions is not just to discuss them in abstract terms, but to do what White does and relate them to stories of particular relevant events. For example, you might show how Indian people sought to fit their traditional ideas into new French forms, and thereby achieve their ends, by telling the story of the Huron leader “the Baron” and his attempt at diplomacy, as described by White (pp. 53–56). Or you might discuss the differences between French and Indian ideas of murder and explain how these evolved together by briefly discussing a couple of the murder trials that White describes. There are many such topics to choose from.