



With the growing awareness of environmental problems brought about largely as a result of Western technologies, lifestyles and attitudes, many people have looked to other cultures and traditions for “greener” alternatives. It is often thought that American Indian cultures present perfect examples of such alternatives, and there is significant popular sentiment that indigenous peoples can provide the tools – ideological and practical – to lead us toward an ecologically brighter future. One of the most notable and troubling things about this sentiment, though, is that it is seldom informed by an understanding of what people within these cultures themselves have to say about environmental issues, or about their own ways of relating to nature. In this class, then, we will be making the effort to listen to the voices of American Indians who are addressing themes and problems connected to environmental philosophy and ethics.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

What are American Indians saying that is relevant to environmentalism? The primary goal of this course is to find out. It is very important, however, to understand from the outset what this course is *not*. In the first place, it is not an anthropology or history course that will try to reconstruct and examine the lives and cultures of native peoples as they may have existed prior to, or during the time of, early contact with Europeans. Nor is it a course that will focus primarily on what scholars or environmentalists are saying *about* native peoples’ relations with nature. There are substantial obstacles to, and problems with, these sorts of approaches in the context of a course dealing with environmental philosophy, and many good reasons to take the approach of letting native writers speak for themselves. Thus, the course materials are contemporary, and are for the most part written by American Indians concerned with environmental problems. Our goal in taking this approach is to put our own presuppositions – positive or negative – aside as much as possible, in order to understand and assess the views with which we will be presented.

That being said, we will read a number of essays at the start of the semester that will help us to understand in broad terms how contemporary and traditional American Indian views may compare and contrast with contemporary and traditional European-American ones. We will also have readings that will require us to identify key terms and problems in contemporary environmental ethics, and to understand how American Indian authors position themselves in relation to some of the key problems of environmental philosophy, including environmental justice. Finally, we will encounter a number of essays that will force us to grapple with some of the broader social and political dimensions of American Indians’ engagement with environmental issues, and perhaps to question the very project of “American Indian Environmental Philosophy.”

In addition to theoretical essays that we will read, we will examine a number of concrete environmental cases in which American Indians are involved, and try to get a sense of how to navigate the often murky waters where issues of environmentalism, colonialism, and social justice intersect. My hope is that you leave the course not only having developed the academic skills emphasized by any philosophy course, but with a greater understanding of and ability to think critically about environmental issues in a socially and ecologically complex world.

#### **COURSE STRUCTURE**

This course is structured to be completed 100% online. Other than the textbook, all lectures and course materials will be available through Canvas, all assignments will be completed there, and all graded work will be submitted there.

All lecture materials, and some of the graded assignments, will be available on a WEEKLY rotation. Recordings of lectures and related assignments will become available on MONDAY MORNINGS at 9 a.m., and remain available ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY. After that point, you will lose

access to both the lectures and the related assignments, and the next week's cycle will begin. You will not be able to re-gain access to these materials after their windows close on Sunday nights. This does NOT pertain to papers or exams, which are NOT on a weekly rotation.

In addition to the online work, you also have the OPTION of attending an IN-PERSON DISCUSSION session. These meetings are OPTIONAL – you do not have to attend, no portion of your grade depends on them, and no new course material will be presented in them. The purposes of these meetings is to allow you an opportunity to discuss what you are learning, ask questions about the materials you are working through, and to interact with me and your classmates in a way that you will likely find helpful. These meetings are scheduled for THURSDAYS from 2-3 p.m., and attendance is limited to 10 people. Strict adherence to COVID-19 guidelines is required, and I'll give you more information about these meetings via email. If you choose to attend, please (a) COME PREPARED WITH QUESTIONS or COMMENTS, and (b) BE PREPARED TO TALK. It'll be fun!

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### 1. LECTURE QUIZZES

For all classes containing new content, I will post videos of lectures at the start of the week. Most of these lecture videos will be accompanied by quizzes containing two multiple-choice questions. ALL OF THIS WILL BE FOUND IN CANVAS, ORGANIZED BY WEEK, WITH LECTURE VIDEOS EMBEDDED IN QUIZ MODULES. So, when you gain access to the lecture videos on Monday, you will simultaneously gain access to quiz questions related to those videos. For nearly every class there will be two questions about the lecture videos. This will result in a total of 40 questions for the semester. Each question is worth .5% of your grade so that, cumulatively, Lecture Quizzes are worth 20% of your grade.

The lecture videos, as well as their related quiz questions, will be available ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY. After that, you will lose access both to the lectures and to the related assignments, and the next week's cycle will begin. You will not be able to re-gain access to these materials. The point of this is to provide you with some flexibility as to how and when you engage with the course materials, while also making sure that you engage with the class on at least a weekly basis. You must log into the course each week to complete these assignments, and they cannot be made-up after Sundays at midnight.

### 2. PAPERS

I will assign three papers, the topics of which will be given during the semester. All paper assignments are required to be submitted electronically (on Canvas), and submissions will go through an "originality check" performed by "Turnitin.com." These papers should be roughly 3 pages long (about 900 words), and each is worth 25% of the final grade. Collectively, then, papers count for 75% of your grade for the course.

### 3. SELF-DIRECTED READING SUMMARY

Later in the semester, you will be required to select a reading you will do, and write a one-page summary of it. This is due on the day specified in the reading list, and is worth 5% of your grade, graded according to the following 5-point scale:

**5=excellent**/very well-written, information is correct, and answer is detailed; **4=very good**/reasonably well-written, information is mostly correct, and detail is reasonable; **3= good**/average writing, information is somewhat off, little detail or overly vague; **2=poor**/writing is poor, information is mostly incorrect, and there is little or no detail; **1=very poor**/very weak writing, information is almost entirely incorrect and there is no detail; **0=complete failure**

## ATTENDANCE

You should engage the class materials regularly. Failure to engage will almost certainly result in missed assignments and in missing information that is important for papers and exams. You will need to TAKE NOTES ON LECTURE VIDEOS, and CONSULT YOUR NOTES FOR PAPERS. I will not re-post lecture videos for paper-writing. Most of the material covered in class will not be available from the readings, and this is an upper-division philosophy class with readings that can be complex/confusing. Lectures are places for me to try to clarify, explain, and expand upon readings, so paying attention to the lectures is key.

## MISSED/LATE WORK

Missed work sometimes can be made up on the condition that you either inform me beforehand of an upcoming absence or provide me with a formal written excuse. Late work might be accepted, but it may be penalized accordingly.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

I adhere to a strict policy on academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, etc.). Any questions that you may have regarding academic integrity should be resolved before you turn course materials in to me. Information can be found in UWSP Chapter 14, available at: "<http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs/rights/rightsChap14.pdf>". The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. In addition, all infractions will be reported to the university.

## GRADING

Final grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

93-100 = A	90-92.9 = A-	87-89.9 = B+	83-86.9 = B
80-82.9 = B-	77-79.9 = C+	73-76.9 = C	70-72.9 = C-
67-69.9 = D+	60-66.9 = D	below 60 = F	

## TWO NOTES ABOUT GRADES:

1. I'm happy to discuss any questions about the grades you receive, but grades are not "negotiable" in the sense that you can simply request to have a higher grade, or request to do extra work, just to receive the grade you would prefer. If you want to receive higher grades, you should put in the additional effort *before* submitting your work, such that your grade is the highest possible the first time you receive it.
2. I do not "round" grades up or down for any assignments, or for your final course grade. If you finish the semester with, for example, an 89.9, your grade will be recorded as a "B+". I do this because there is no justification for changing a grade—up or down—simply because it provides a preferable outcome. While I understand that people often like to have grades rounded up, I regard doing that as being just as arbitrary as rounding them down, and therefore, to avoid all of that, I let your numerical grade stand as the final determinant of your letter grade.

## TEXTS

*How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova*, ed. Kathleen Dean Moore, et al. (U. of Arizona Press)

## RESERVE MATERIALS

Many of the readings for this course are reserved electronically on Canvas. These are marked as "(R)" on the reading list, and can be found within the weekly course modules. It is your responsibility to get assignments on time and be aware of when they are being read.

## OTHER INFORMATION

Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Religious beliefs will be accommodated according to UWS 22.03 provided that you have notified me of any possible conflicts with the class.

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

Office Hours—beyond the live option discussion time indicated above, I will hold additional office hours virtually on Thursdays from 4-5. Other days and times by appointment.  
Office Location—Collins Classroom Center (CCC) #416  
E-mail—[cdiehm@uwsp.edu](mailto:cdiehm@uwsp.edu)