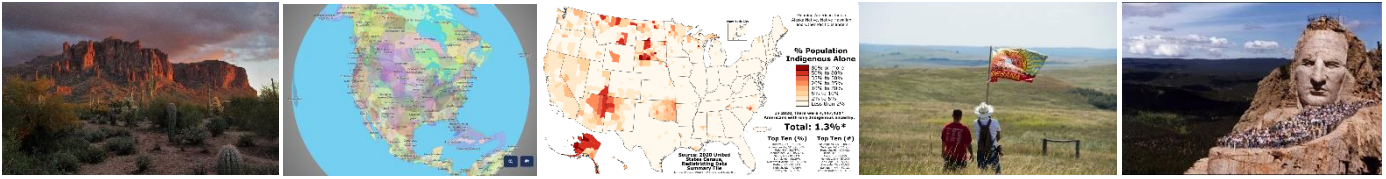


AMERICAN INDIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHIES



PHILOSOPHY 381 CHRIS DIEHM

With the growing awareness of environmental problems brought about largely as a result of Western technologies, lifestyles and attitudes, many people look 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 troubling things about this sentiment, though, is that it is seldom informed by an understanding of what people within these cultures are saying about environmental issues, or about their own ways of relating to nature. In this class, then, we will make the effort to listen to the voices of American Indians who address 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 important, however, to understand from the outset what this course is *not*. 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 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 aside as much as possible, in order to understand and assess the views with which we will be presented.

We will read a number of essays at the start of the semester that will help us to understand in broad terms how American Indian views may compare and contrast with 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.

In addition to some of the more theoretical essays that we will read, we will examine a number of concrete 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 REQUIREMENTS

QUIZZES

I will give unannounced quizzes frequently. These will take place IN CLASS, deal directly with the daily readings, and contain 2 multiple choice questions, each of which is worth 2.5 points (for a maximum of 5 points). As long as you have read, you should do fairly well on quizzes even if you have not fully understood the reading. These are DATE-SPECIFIC CLASSROOM ASSIGNMENTS, which are partly intended to gauge if you are IN CLASS AND PREPARED FOR THE DAY. This means that missed quizzes cannot be taken outside of the class periods in which they are given. At the end of the semester I will drop your lowest score. These will count collectively for 20% of your grade.

PAPERS

I will assign three papers, the topics of which will be given during the semester. These papers should be roughly 2-3 pages long (about 700-900 words), and each is worth 25% of the final grade. Collectively, then, papers count for 75% of your grade for the course.

Paper topics will pertain to course material covered, and will require you to *reflect on* and *react to* topics we've covered (that is, not simply to repeat information or summarize the views of others). Grades for papers will be based on three criteria:

- (1) *Meeting the terms of the Assignment* – addressing the topic questions, proper formatting and length, and submitted on time.
- (2) *Writing* – writing that is clear, organized, and free from grammatical or spelling mistakes.
- (3) *Content* – content that is reflective, creative, and shows an accurate understanding of the course material.

In my comments, I will use the following codes to give you feedback in the body of your papers:

Highlighted items indicate spelling or technical errors.

Pins on items may have one or more of the letters below next to them to indicate...

Awk = awkward grammar or phrasing

Vague = vague or imprecise meaning

Unclear = unclear meaning

Incorrect = incorrect or mistaken statement of an idea

Finally, all paper assignments are required to be submitted in electronic format on Canvas, and will go through an "originality check" performed by "Turnitin.com."

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**.

HOMEWORK

On occasion, I will ask you to do a brief written homework assignment for the purpose of class discussion. Homework will always be due at the *start* of class on the day it is due – no late homework will be accepted. These assignments may count as quizzes, and will factor into your class participation grade.

WORK COMPLETION POLICY

This course has four “major,” or increased point value, requirements: the three papers and the self-directed reading summary. You must complete all four of these assignments to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of your point total from other coursework.

MISSED/LATE WORK

Missed or late work sometimes can be made up on the condition that you either inform me prior to an upcoming absence, or provide me with a formal, written excuse. Late work will be penalized according to the following policy: IF YOU’VE CONTACTED ME beforehand to authorize a late submission, your work will be penalized by a 2% grade reduction for every day that it’s late. IF YOU HAVE NOT CONTACTED ME beforehand to authorize a late submission, your work will be penalized by a 5% grade reduction for every day that it’s late.

ATTENDANCE

You should attend class regularly. Failure to attend will almost certainly result in missed quizzes and in you missing information that is important for exams. Much of the material covered in class will not be available from the readings, and you are responsible for *all* material covered. Also, remember that this is an upper-division philosophy class with readings that can be complex/confusing. PLEASE NOTE: if you are absent, it is your responsibility to get missed information/notes/etc. I prepare lecture notes, which are not type-written manuscripts and which therefore cannot substitute for class notes. In addition, any handouts or power-point presentations I may use will be outlines of what we will cover in class, so these also cannot substitute for class notes. If you plan on being absent, you should make sure you have a reliable classmate to contact for notes.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

I adhere to a strict policy on academic integrity. All questions you have regarding academic integrity should be resolved before you turn course materials in to me. Information can be found in UWSP Chapter 14 <http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs/rightsrightsChap14.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 a grade would prefer. If you want to get 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 simply because it provides a preferable outcome. While I understand that people often like to have grades rounded up, I regard 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.

CLASS CONDUCT

While you are in class, my expectation is that you will conduct yourself appropriately. This includes being attentive, and having cell phones turned off and put away.

E-MAIL NOTICE

When you send me e-mail informing me of upcoming absences, I typically save the message without initially replying to it. I review my e-mails after class meetings, and reply to them at that point, so that I can inform you of anything unusual that may have gone on in class, share ppt.s (which are often being developed or adjusted just prior to class meetings), etc. This way you receive the most accurate information I can provide, even though you may not receive an immediate reply to your message.

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 – Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12-1:50. Other days and times by appointment.
Office Location – Collins Classroom Center (CCC) #416
E-mail – cdiehm@uwsp.edu