



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. All lectures and course materials (other than the textbook) 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 become available according to the schedule indicated in the READING LIST. They will remain available for TWO DAYS. So recordings of lectures and related assignments will become available on SCHEDULED MORNINGS at 12 a.m., and remain available

ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING DAY. After that point, you will lose access to both the lectures and the related assignments. You will not be able to re-gain access to these materials after their windows close each night.

At least one day each week (the day is negotiable), I will hold "open office hours" where you can drop in, ask questions, discuss things that are on your mind, etc. Visiting during the office hours is OPTIONAL – you do not have to come to them, no portion of your grade depends on them, and no new course material will be presented in them. The purpose of these sessions is the same as face-to-face office hours: to allow you to ask questions about the course material, your grades, or anything else related to the class. I will send zoom links for office hours via email a few minutes before each meeting.

REQUIREMENTS

1. *Lecture Quizzes*

For all classes containing new content, I will post videos of lectures. At the same times, quizzes will become available containing two multiple-choice questions about each lecture. ALL OF THIS WILL BE FOUND IN CANVAS, ORGANIZED BY DAY, WITH LECTURE VIDEOS EMBEDDED IN THE QUIZ ASSIGNMENTS. So, when you gain access to lecture videos on Monday, you will simultaneously gain access to quiz questions related to those videos. For most lectures there will be four questions about the lecture videos, but in some cases there will be only 2 questions. This will result in a total of 86 questions for the semester. Each question is worth .5% of your grade so that, cumulatively, Lecture Quizzes are worth 43% of your grade. NOTE: this 43% brings the total number of points possible for the course to 103, even though your grade is calculated on a 100-point scale. This will allow you to effectively "drop" your lowest quiz score, or earn up to 3 points of extra credit if you do well on them.

The lecture videos, as well as their related quiz questions, will be AVAILABLE ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON THE DAY AFTER YOU GAIN ACCESS TO THEM. This means that this material will be available to you for 48 hours. After that, you will lose access both to the lectures and to the related assignments. 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 regularly enough so as not to fall behind. You must log into the course regularly to complete these assignments, and they cannot be made-up after they close at midnight.

2. *Papers*

You will have to write two essays. I will provide topic questions, and you will be required to submit your work electronically (on Canvas) on the dates stated in the syllabus. All papers will go through an "originality check" performed by "Turnitin.com." Note that Turnitin also SCANS FOR AI-WRITTEN PAPERS, and the use of AI for course papers is considered plagiarism (see below).

For paper #1, you will be required to write 3 pages (typed and double-spaced). This paper is worth 25% of your grade.

For paper #2 you will have an option of different topics. One option will be due about 2/3 of the way through course, and the other will be due on the day of the final. If you choose the first option, you will not have to write on the second one. If you do not choose the first option, you must write on the second option. For either option you will be required to write 2 pages (typed and double-spaced). This paper is worth 15% of your grade.

3. *Tests*

There will be one test at the end of the session. This is SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE ON THE SPECIFIC DATE INDICATED IN THE READING LIST. If you will be unable to access Canvas on this date, YOU MUST MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO TAKE THE TEST OUTSIDE THE DESIGNATED DATE.

The test can be accessed/started at ANY TIME ON THE DESIGNATED DATE. But it will be TIMED so that ONCE YOU START IT, YOU WILL ONLY HAVE 1.5 HOURS TO COMPLETE IT. After 1.5 hours, the assignment window will close. If you start the test after 10:30 p.m., it will automatically close at midnight, so please give yourself enough time to complete your work.

The test will be cumulative, and cover all of the material in the course. Be aware that you will be asked to do more than repeat information in exams: answers will require the application of ideas and the use of critical thinking skills. Each test is worth 15% of the final grade, making this requirement worth a total of 20%.

ENGAGEMENT

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.

WORK COMPLETION POLICY

This course has three “major,” or increased point value, requirements: the two papers and the test. You must complete all three of these assignments to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of the point total you have earned through other coursework.

MISSED/LATE WORK

Missed work sometimes can be made up on the condition that you either inform me beforehand or provide me with a formal written/documented 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 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>”.

All papers for this course undergo electronic plagiarism reviews. This process checks for AI-generated papers, traditional plagiarism, overlap with other students’ work, and even overlap with your own work for other courses, all of which violates this course’s academic integrity standards. 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.

NOTE: I will not accept papers with more than 30% overlapping, plagiarized, or AI-generated content. In cases with low percentages of such content, even if you are not formally charged with plagiarism, you will have to re-write your work to meet acceptable standards to receive a grade.

GRADING

Final grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

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|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 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.

TEXT

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

RESERVE MATERIALS

All readings that are not in the course textbook are available electronically on Canvas, and can be found within the daily course modules.

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 – I will hold office hours virtually on days/times that we collectively decide. Other days and times by appointment.

Office Location – Collins Classroom Center (CCC) #488-C

E-mail – cdiehm@uwsp.edu