

Indigenous Environmental Politics **(UENV 3610 - UGLB 3620)**

Course Description

Indigenous communities are at the forefront of struggles for social and environmental justice today. This course explores the roots and emergence of Indigenous ecological politics, with special attention to land rights, communal forests and waterways, resource extraction and development projects. The course will explore the underlying Indigenous understandings of kinship with the Earth and its diverse inhabitants—sometimes referred to as cosmopolitics—and we will explore how concepts such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) have emerged alongside the growing social and ecological crisis. Some of the cases we will look at include the rights of nature, the role of "Pachamama politics" in the Andes, Water Defenders and Indigenous resistance in North America, and the role of Indigenous identity and land issues in South Asia.

Course Goals

The aim of this course is to introduce students to a range of Indigenous environmental and political struggles taking place today around the world. Students will engage with a wide range of theoretical, empirical and narrative materials offering an introduction to Indigenous environmental politics from the perspective of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors and scholars. Students will come away with a better understanding of some of the central issues of concern for many Indigenous communities, as well as some of the main debates in Indigenous studies, settler colonialism and studies at the intersections of religion, nature and culture.

Required Course Texts

Alpa Shah. *In the Shadows of the State: Indigenous Politics, Environmentalism, and Insurgency in Jharkhand, India.* Duke University Press, 2010.

Cherie Dimaline. *The Marrow Thieves.* Dancing Cat Books, 2017.

Fikret Berkes. *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management (4th Ed).* Taylor and Francis, 2017.

Macarena Gómez-Barris. *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives.* Duke University Press, 2017.

**Additional course readings and content will be posted on Canvas.*

Policies and Procedures

Class Organization

- **Class Participation:** Students will be expected to have done all assigned reading before class and to take an active role in all classroom discussions.
- **Group Presentations:** Students will be put into small groups, and each group will be responsible for leading a class discussion on readings from that week.
- **Short Essays:** Students will write 3 short essays in response to a reading or question.
- **Final Research Paper:** The final paper will be in the form of an 8-10 page academic research paper on some aspect of Indigenous environmental politics.

Class Participation (20% of grade)

Students are expected to read and reflect on the assigned material before class, and to actively participate in the class in an informed and respectful way throughout the semester. Please bring all assigned readings (books or handouts) with you to class every week.

Presentations (20% of grade)

Students will be divided into groups and each group will be asked to lead one class presentation. Each student in the group will be responsible for leading one part of the discussion, as well as preparing any handouts or summaries for class. Each group will have 30 minutes to present. Students will receive an overall group grade (10%) and an individual presentation grade (10%).

Short Essays (30% of grade)

Students will be asked to write three short essays (4 pages each) in response to course readings or a specific class topic. These essays will require students to critically reflect, analyze and respond to a specific question or problem. Each essay will count for 10% of your grade.

Final Paper (30% of grade)

Students will write a final research paper (8-10 pages) on a topic of their choosing related to an issue in Indigenous environmental politics.

Class Attendance

More than 3 unexcused absences may result in a grade reduction for the course. Coming to class significant late will count as one unexcused absence. More information concerning class absence policies is available in The New School [Student Handbook](#).

Exceptions for class absences are as follows:

- Personal illness or death in the family (documentation required)
- Religious holiday or participation in university-approved activity (documentation required)
- An act of nature or cosmic event making attendance impossible (flood, earthquake, zombie apocalypse, North Korean nuclear attack)

Assignment Due Dates

Late assignments will have points deducted from the total. This is a firm policy, except for the extenuating circumstances noted above. There are no makeup assignments or extra credit papers. No credit will be given for any assignment more than 1 week late.

Use of Electronics in Class

All cell phones and other electronic devices should be silenced and put away during class. Laptops or tablets are allowed **only** if being used for note taking or referencing an e-book. Ignoring this policy may result in a reduced letter grade for this course. Facebook does not constitute active class participation. Improper use of electronics is grounds for a reduced grade.

Office Hours

Students who wish to meet with me can either speak to me before or after class or e-mail me to schedule a time to meet during regular office hours.

Communications

I will try to respond to all e-mails within 48 hours. If for some reason you do not receive a reply after two days, please send a follow up email.

Writing Help

Students needing additional writing help should contact the University Learning Center at 66 W. 12th St, 6th floor. More info available here: www.newschool.edu/university-learning-center/.

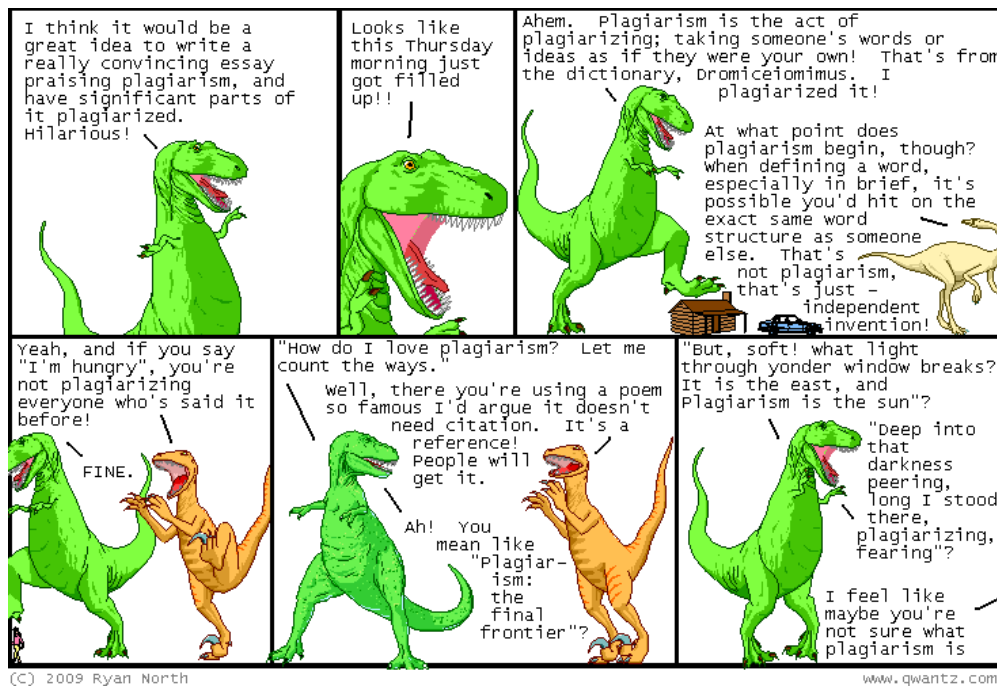
Disability Support

The professor will make every effort to accommodate any special needs students may have in the classroom. Students who have a physical, medical, learning or psychiatric disability may be eligible for reasonable accommodations at the University per the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. To access these services, students must visit the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) to provide documentation and receive an accommodation plan. More info available at: www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services/.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a sign of intellectual laziness. Students found guilty of plagiarism risk an F for the course. The New School's statement on Academic Honesty and Integrity can be found [here](#):

“The New School views ‘academic honesty and integrity’ as the duty of every member of an academic community to claim authorship for his or her own work and only for that work, and to recognize the contributions of others accurately and completely. This obligation is fundamental to the integrity of intellectual debate, and creative and academic pursuits.”



Classroom Conduct

Students are expected to treat each other and the professor with courtesy, and refrain from any personal attacks. Due to the nature of political disagreements, arguments may emerge from time to time over deeply-held convictions. Students are encouraged to express their beliefs and convictions, but must do so respectfully, and without insulting or attacking fellow classmates. Any discriminatory remarks, personal attacks or threats will not be tolerated, and students will be asked to leave the class if they cannot respect their peers or the professor.

Gender Pronouns

I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate/preferred name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. If you would like additional assistance regarding communication about your preferred name or pronoun please let me know.

- PART I: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND -

Week 1 (1/23 and 1/25): Welcome & Course Introduction

Tuesday 1/23 will be our first class. Hand out course syllabus and review goals, organization and materials for class. Introduction by students and professor.

Readings:

- **John Grimm and Mary Evelyn Tucker** - "Indigenous Traditions and the Nurturing Powers of Nature" (14)
- **Enrique Salmón** - "Kincentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human-Nature Relationship" (7)
- **Jay T. Johnson** - "Place-based Learning and Knowing - Critical Pedagogies Grounded in Indigeneity" (9)
- **Patrick Thornberry** - "We Are Still Here" (22)

Activity:

- Walking Fieldtrip (Please dress appropriately for being outside for 30-45 mins)

Week 2 (1/30 and 2/1): Critical Indigeneity & Settler-Colonialism

Readings:

- **Patrick Wolfe** - "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native" (23)
- **Maya Mikdashi** - "What Is Settler Colonialism?" (11)
- **Lorenzo Veracini** - "Facing the Settler Colonial Present" (21)
- **Leanne Betasamosake Simpson** - "Intro" and "Land as Pedagogy" - As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance (40)
- **Jonathan Clapperton** - "Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and the Politics of Postcolonial Writing" (8)
- **Kyle Whyte** - "Indigenous Environmental Movements and the Function of Governance Institutions" (13)
- **Ron Johnson** - "Nations Rising" (9)
- **Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez** - "Trump, NAFTA, and Indigenous Resistance in Turtle Island" (5)

Assignments:

- Writing Assignment #1 - Handed out

Week 3 (2/6 and 2/8): Sacred Ecology & Indigenous Knowledge (TEK)

Readings:

- **Fikret Berkes** - Sacred Ecology (Ch 1-4, pgs 1-104)

Assignments:

- Writing Assignment #1 - Due in class

Week 4 (2/13 and 2/15): Challenges and Opportunities of TEK

Readings:

- **Fikret Berkes** - Sacred Ecology (Ch 9-12, pgs 193-288)

Activity:

- Walking Fieldtrip (Please dress appropriately for being outside for 30-45 mins)

- PART II: GLOBAL ECOLOGIES -

Week 5 (2/20 and 2/22): Africa Ecological Politics

Readings:

- **Dorothy Hodgson** - "Becoming Indigenous in Africa" (23)
- **Byron Caminero-Santangelo** - "The Nature of Africa" (28)
- **Renée Sylvain** - "'Land, Water, and Truth': San Identity and Global Indigenism" (11)
- **Michael Sheridan** - "The Dynamics of African Sacred Groves, Ecological, Social & Symbolic Processes" (32)
- **Alma Gottlieb** - "Loggers v. Spirits in the Beng Forest, *Côte d'Ivoire*, Competing Models" (14)
- **Tsehai Berhane-Selassie** - "The Socio-Politics of Ethiopian Sacred Groves" (14)

Assignments

- Writing Assignment #2 - Handed out

Week 6 (2/27 and 3/1): Asia-Pacific Ecological Politics

Readings:

- **J. Peter Brosius** - "Local Knowledges, Global Claims: On the Significance of Indigenous Ecologies in Sarawak, East Malaysia" (33)
- **Manuka Henare** - "*Tapu, Mana, Mauri, Hau, Wairua*: A Māori Philosophy of Vitalism and Cosmos" (21)
- **Victoria Tauli-Corpuz** - "Interface between Traditional Religion and Ecology among the Igorots" (22)
- **Michael Hathaway** - "Global Environmentalism and the Emergence of Indigeneity - The Politics of Cultural and Biological Diversity in China" (22)

Assignments:

- Writing Assignment #2 - Due in class

Week 7 (3/6 and 3/8): Himalayan Ecological Politics

Readings:

- **Abhimanyu Pandey, Rajan Kotru & Nawraj Pradhan** – “Kailash Sacred Landscapes – Bridging Cultural Heritage, Conservation and Development through a Transboundary Landscape Approach” (14)
- **Carolina Adler, Darryn McEvoy, Prem Chhetri, and Ester Kruk** - "The Role of Tourism in a Changing Climate for Conservation and Development: A Problem-oriented Study in the Kailash Sacred Landscape, Nepal" (19)
- **Jailab Kumar Rai and Sudepp Jana Thing** – “A Biocultural Perspective on the Recognition and Support for Sacred Natural Sites in Nepal” (12)
- **Chandra Singh Negi** – “Cultural and Biodiversity Conservation - Case Studies from Uttarakhand Central Himalaya” (6)
- **Vikram S. Negi, Rakesh K. Maikhuri, Dalbeer Pharswan, Shiny Thakur, Pitamber P. Dhyani** – “Climate Change Impact in the Western Himalaya: People’s Perception and Adaptive Strategies” (14)
- **The Darvi Declaration** (4)

Assignments:

- Writing Assignment #3 - Handed out

Week 8 (3/13 and 3/15): Eco-Politics & Indigenous Fiction

Readings:

- **Cherie Dimaline** - *The Marrow Thieves* (pgs 1-117)

Assignments:

- Writing Assignment #3 - Due in class

Activity:

- Walking Fieldtrip (Please dress appropriately for being outside for 30-45 mins)

Week 9 (3/20 and 3/22): Spring Break Week – NO CLASSES

****No Class on Thursday 3/29****

Week 10 (3/27 and 3/29): Eco-Politics & Indigenous Fiction Con’t

Readings:

- **Cherie Dimaline** - *The Marrow Thieves* (pgs 118-231)

Assignments:

- First Draft of Final Paper Outline due Tuesday

- Part III: LATIN AMERICA & SOUTH ASIA IN FOCUS -

Week 11 (4/3 and 4/5): The Yasuni & Andean Phenomenology

Readings:

- **Gómez-Barris** - The Extractive Zone (Intro & Ch 1-2, pgs 1-65)

Week 12 (4/10 and 4/12): Anarcho-Feminist Indigenous Critiques

Readings:

- **Gómez-Barris** - The Extractive Zone (Ch 3-5 & Conclusion, pgs 66-138)

Assignments:

- Second Draft of Final Paper Outline due Tuesday

Week 13 (4/17 and 4/19): Sacral Politics & Dangers of Indigeneity

Readings:

- **Shah** – In the Shadows of the State (Prologue & Ch 1-2, pgs I-65)

Activity:

- Walking Fieldtrip (Please dress appropriately for being outside for 30-45 mins)

Week 14 (4/24 and 4/26): Corruption, Elephants & Alcohol

Readings:

- **Shah** – In the Shadows of the State (Ch 3-4, pgs 66-129)

Week 15 (5/1 and 5/3): Eco-incarceration & Revolutionary Politics

Readings:

- **Shah** – In the Shadows of the State (Ch 5-6 & Epilogue, pgs 130-190)

Activity:

- Walking Fieldtrip (Please dress appropriately for being outside for 30-45 mins)

Week 16 (5/8 and 5/10): Finals

Wrap-up Discussion & Review

Assignments:

- Final papers due Thursday **May 10th**.