

**Syllabus**  
**Western University**  
**First Nations Studies Program**  
**Department of Geography**  
**FNS 2601G / Geog 2411G Indigenous Environments**  
**January 6, 2015 - April 30, 2015**

## **Instructor Information:**

Lecture location, date and time: PB & A 150. Every Monday, 11:30 – 1:30 pm.

Tutorial: UC 220 Tuesday 9:30 – 10:30 am.

Instructor: Dr. Rick Fehr (Office: SSC 3207. Email: rfehr@uwo.ca) Office Hours: Wednesdays: 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Teaching Assistant:

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\*This syllabus is subject to change.

## **Course Description**

This course will explore environmental perspectives, issues, and concerns among Indigenous peoples across North America and around the world. The material, lectures, and tutorials will build from a framework that emphasizes Indigenous understandings of the environment from traditional perspectives and contemporary realities.

## **Course Objectives**

Students in this course will develop a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous environmental concerns and perspectives. The course will emphasize, as its primary theme: colonial and industrial society's drive toward progress often comes at the expense of Indigenous health, livelihood, and habitat. Emerging from this theme is a foundation of Indigenous thought, perspective, and critique of the industrial milieu and corollary marginalization of Indigenous peoples. To achieve this objective, students will be encouraged to develop a critical approach to the study of Indigenous environmental issues. This approach will require independent readings, cooperative dialogue and presentations, as well as developing critical research and writing skills for the subject.

# Course Readings

Bibliographical information for mandatory course readings will be found on the OWL webpage for FNS 2601G / Geog 2411G, in the forums under “Weekly Reflection Journals.” Readings have to be complete by the time class begins.

# Course Evaluation

## Profiles Assignment

Profiles in Invasive Species:	15%
Profiles in Indigenous Species:	15%
Contributions to student discussions:	5%
Attendance and participation:	10%
Community Environmental Profile:	20%
· Written component:	10%
· Presentation component:	10%
Weekly Journals:	15%
Exam:	20%

# Assignments

## Profiles in Invasive Species

During the first week of class, students will identify and choose a species that is **invasive** to the Great Lakes region to profile over the term. The species can be an aquatic or terrestrial plant, fungi, mammal, bird, crustacean, invertebrate, insect, etc..., but must be considered Indigenous to another part of North America or the world. For the purposes of this assignment, it does not matter how the species has been in the Great Lakes region or whether or not it has found a niche within the regional environment. For this assignment, students must produce five academic and five non-academic sources (for a total of ten) that

focus on the effects this species has had on the regional ecosystem and the Indigenous populations, as well as the response by Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. In the forum section of OWL, students will post bi-weekly updates that will include the following information: 1. A narrative about what the student learned for that week's installment about the species being profiled. This narrative can be as long as the student wants it to be, but proper bibliographic citation is required for information that is drawn from externally. 2. The two sources chosen for that week's profile installment along with an accompanying annotated bibliography that highlights the source's focus, relevance, scope, and how the article has informed the student and who the intended audience is.

## Profiles in Indigenous Species

During the first week of class, students will identify and choose a species that is **indigenous** to the Great Lakes region to profile over the term. This assignment differs from the **invasive species** assignment because students are encouraged to investigate the cultural significance of the particular species they have chosen to profile. While taxonomic information about the species life and habitat is welcome, students should also consider the species in the context of historic and contemporary Indigenous land use. There is room for creative thinking in this assignment, and this is encouraged. For instance, if a student is able to locate the Indigenous words for a particular species, a discussion of Indigenous perspectives expressed in the word is acceptable. Similarly, it is acceptable for students to explore their particular species from more ecological perspectives (how does this species depend on other species within a habitat, how does it benefit other species, what conditions allow this species to become invasive?). In the forum section of OWL, students will post bi-weekly updates that will include the following information: 1. A narrative about what the student learned for that week's installment about the species they are profiling. This narrative can be as long as the student wants it to be, but proper bibliographic citation is required for information that is drawn from externally. 2. The two sources chosen for that week's profile installment along with an accompanying annotated bibliography that highlights the source's focus, relevance, scope, and how the article has informed the student and who the intended audience is.

## Contributions to student discussions

Indigenous approaches to environment take a broader living systems approach. As students familiarize themselves with invasive and indigenous species in the Great Lakes region, they will come to realize that species fulfill unique functions within the broader ecosystems in which they live, and the knowledge they come across could assist others in the class in their profile projects. While students are expected to research their chosen species, it is anticipated that they might find academic and non-academic material that could assist other students. Students will read each other's forum posts and offer any thoughts that might assist the student in their profile project. For instance, if a student is researching the muskrat for the Indigenous species profile, she might find information on cattails and *phragmites australis* that could assist students researching either of these plants. The student researching the muskrat would then post a reply to the other students topic (discussion 1, 2, 3...) with the potentially useful information and provide

the context about how this information might be useful. This is not an opportunity for students to critique each other, and if replies to discussions are baiting or flaming the student instigating the matter will receive zero and have their reply removed. Other disciplinary measures could be taken if the forums are used for abusive behaviour toward anyone else.

## **Attendance and participation**

Attendance and participation in “Indigenous Environments” is critical to developing a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives, issues, and concerns confronting Indigenous communities. It is important that students attend classes and tutorials regularly as they develop their profiles projects, their community profile project, and the discussions and lectures will form the foundation for the exam in April. The grade for attendance and participation will be evenly split between presence in the lectures / tutorials and active listening and dialogue during class time.

## **Community Environmental Profile**

Students will get together during the first two weeks of class and form groups of three or four. Each group will focus on an Indigenous community in the Great Lakes region to focus on. As the term progresses, students will research the particular environmental profiles of the community, the community’s history within the broader the traditional territory and the ways the land and aquatic systems were used, how has this changed and why, and by examining contributions to the profile projects the ways the community is effected by invasive species and the current health of its indigenous species. There may be unique environmental concerns related to health and pollution that the students choose to focus on as well. Each group should meet regularly, and each group might assign specific areas of focus for each student in the group. Toward the end of the term, the groups will present during the lecture.

Written component: The written component to this assignment will be a five-page paper that each student writes individually, and turns in independent of the group. The paper can be self-reflective (use of personal pronouns is all right, so long as it is in context), but must properly cite material that was used for the presentation. The goal of the paper is to take the instructor on the journey you went through in your research process and the insight that you gained about Indigenous environments. The paper will have a closing paragraph, separate from the paper content, that describes the tasks that were agreed on by all members of the group and if the work was distributed equitably.

## **Weekly Journals**

There will be a total of five weekly journal reflections based on some aspect of Indigenous environments. The goal of the reflections assignment is get students to think critically about Indigenous perspectives on matters of importance to Indigenous peoples. The topics could range from Indigenous philosophy, the restoration of traditional practices, Indigenous environments in the electronic age, and expressions of Indigenous self-determination. Students will track down the article based on the bibliographic information provided by the instructor on OWL, and will then compose a reflection based on a thorough reading of the article and possibly some prompts given by the instructor in class. The length of the

responses is up to the students to decide, but they should be written clearly and concisely, they should be proofread with proper bibliographic citation, and they should provide context into the chosen topic.

## Exam

The exam will be essay based and will focus on readings, the profiles project, and lecture content (as well as guest lecture material) over the course of the term.

# General Instructions

You must follow all assignment instructions and codes of the university handbook (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>).

1. Syllabus is subject to changes in order to facilitate corrections, clarification, and the inclusion of guest speakers.
3. Prerequisite checking - the student's responsibility.
4. Late penalties will be calculated as a **loss of 5% per day**. End date for all "late" assignments is the same date as the final exam.
5. In cases of missed class or classes for bereavement, spiritual holidays or serious illness, students must notify the professor of their situation in order to make necessary accommodations.
6. Minimum attendance required to take final examination in the University regulations stipulate that an instructor may refuse to let a student take the final examination in a course if the student has, in the instructor's judgment, missed too many classes. In the case of this course, I will set the threshold at five tutorials or lectures per term: any student who has not attended at least five tutorials or lectures will receive an email from the professor advising them not to take the final exam. Similarly, if a student has a cumulative grade of 30% or less, the student will be prohibited from writing the exam.
7. All lectures and tutorials are mandatory and not optional. Accommodations will follow only for students who can provide documentation or have made prior arrangements with the professor. It is the student's personal responsibility to attend both lectures and tutorials.
8. Research with living people (interviews for research assignments) requires a lengthy process of approval through the Western Research Ethics Board. As a result, students are not permitted to conduct any interviews, formal, or informal, as part of your research.
9. Non-medical absences. Failure to meet the assignments submission deadlines will result in late penalties. Late penalties will be calculated as a **loss of 5% per day**. End date for all "late" assignments is the same date as the final exam. No assignments will be accepted after this date and will receive the mark of 0 or fail. Note that if you are late in handing in an assignment, it is your responsibility to ensure that the instructor receives a hard copy.
10. Non-medical absences from midterms and finals will result in a failing grade or mark of 0.

11. Medical absences will follow the university codes as set out in the “Policy on Accommodation of Medical Illness”: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>). Documentation is required for medical academic accommodation and it should be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Dean’s office and not to the instructor. It will be the Dean’s office that will determine if accommodation is warranted. Students must set provide in writing a date when their assignment(s) will be submitted. Late penalties will be calculated as a loss of 5% per day. Providing such documentation is submitted, reasonable effort will be made to accommodate your situation. If such documentation is not provided, I will impose a late penalty on assignments that are late; missed exams will be given a mark of zero.

12. Support Services within the Student Development Centre:

- a. Writing Support Centre: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/>
- b. Learning Skills Services: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning/>
- c. Psychological Services: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych/>
- d. Services for Students with Disabilities: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>

13. Registrar’s Services: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/>.

14. Use of Electronic Devices. Students are permitted to use laptops for class note taking only (no facebook, msn messenger or any other peer to peer communication services are permitted – students caught using those sites will be asked to leave). Turn phones to mute while in class. Students are permitted to digitally record the lectures on a voice recorder.

15. 2012-2013 Academic Calendar: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2012/pg7.html>

## Statement on Academic Offences

### THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE PLAGIARISM

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.