

# Community Based Research in Indigenous Studies/ A Field Course in Land Healing and Responsibility

Indigenous Studies course 4023F  
Geography and Environment course 3001F  
Earth Sciences 3023Y

**Orientation Class; Friday Sept 8th, 11AM, Biol and Geol Sci Building (BGS) Room1065**

**Field work dates: Every Friday AM Sept 15th to Oct 20th , 2023;**

**Bkejwanong day visit; On Saturday Oct 21st\*, we will travel by rental vans/cars to the Nin.Da.Waab.Jig Heritage Centre, WIFN**

## **Co-Instructors**

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**Teaching Assistant:** TBD



## **1. Course Description**

This semi-remote field course immerses students in Indigenous peoples' perspectives on reciprocity, restoration, invasive species remediation, land stewardship, and connections to, and responsibilities to, land and water. Instruction will primarily be by community leaders and elders based at Bkejwanong Territory (Walpole Island First Nation). Community-based research embodies Indigenous concepts of reciprocity. This means that students will not be the sole beneficiaries of knowledge gained in the course. In this reconfigured version of the field course, activities will take place on the campus of the UWO which is situated on a part of Turtle Island for which Great Lakes peoples have been in a relationship of responsibility for millennia. Students will come to know and respect the campus area in this context, providing an indirect benefit to the longstanding stewardship responsibilities of the Bkejwanong community. Students will use their personal and collective gifts and talents to assist in activities such as habitat observation, mapping, and related research in the process of growing and/ or re-introducing native and endangered plants and trees.

## **2. Learning Objectives**

This course is designed to introduce students to the historic and contemporary realities experienced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The approach, grounded in community-based methods, offers students a unique experience in the social, environmental, and political contexts that have shaped the lands, waters, and habitats of the region.

In this course, students will be exposed to complex social and environmental histories and situations, all with the broad goals of enhancing their overall understanding of:

- the colonial outcomes of land use and policy-making
- decolonization in a campus context
- historical and contemporary interactions between people and diverse ecologies
- the ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can work together toward common objectives

### 3. Course Fee

The fee for **this course will be \$75 payable** to the undergraduate coordinator. **Before the first day of Field Work** Please make your deposit at this site:

<https://geoenvironment.purplepay.uwo.ca/>

The fees go toward field work supplies, transportation, and, an end-of-course feast(!). Unused funds will be returned to students. In the past, Social Science students have been eligible for reimbursement from the university.

### 4. Background

Bkejwanong Territory, which in English means “Where the Waters Divide,” is home to the Anishinaabeg of Walpole Island First Nation. Their current community is situated on six islands in the St. Clair River Delta, the largest freshwater delta in North America. The traditional homeland territory of Bkejwanong extends beyond the islands to Lake Huron, the Detroit River, Lake Erie, Michigan and Southern Ontario.

Despite centuries of colonization, the Anishinaabeg still consider the traditional territory their home, and as such they have inherent rights when it comes to the development of land and waters both on the delta, often referred to as the “Reserve” and in their traditional territory. Over the past two centuries, these rights have often been ignored, or worse, attempts have been made to remove these rights by the Canadian government, non-Indigenous industries and settler society.

During this time the pre-settlement land cover of the UWO campus has been reduced to small groves of selected Carolinian trees, and isolated copses, maintained as part of the Sherwood Fox arboretum, interspersed are small patches of prairie and an Indigenous teaching garden. Along the waters of the Deshkan Ziibi (“Antler River”), renamed Thames River in 1793, are stretches of mixed Indigenous and invasive riparian plants and trees. East campus includes the junction of the Deshkan Ziibi with the Medway Creek tributary which drains a remarkably biodiverse area of rare plants and fresh water mussels within the City of London. First Nations dwellings along the Medway Creek date back 1000’s of years. While much of Walpole Island remains biologically diverse, it too faces pressures from development and degradation. Nevertheless, it stands out as a biodiversity giant among the intensely farmed Carolinian zone and is home to one of the largest contiguous tracts of forests in southwestern Ontario, globally imperilled oak savannah and tallgrass prairie remnants, one of the largest wetlands in the Great Lakes basin, and rich coastal waterways. These habitats support more than 70 species at risk.

Successive generations of agricultural, industrial, and town planning have not included Indigenous presence and land-use planning and practices, while often disregarding and degrading bioregional ecosystems. As a result, one of the current challenges facing both the Indigenous and surrounding non-Indigenous communities is to maintain and restore the remnant and marginal Carolinian forest, oak savannah, tallgrass prairie, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems. Such restoration efforts and care of existing remnant habitats are understood to be key to Indigenous cultural survival. While there are no easy solutions to the environmental challenges, in the area occupied by the UWO education about decolonizing the planning process in line with Indigenous-centered approaches is an important goal in this course.

## **5. Cultural awareness**

Students are expected to have a basic understanding and respect of Anishinaabeg culture and the Carolinian ecozone as well as shared approaches of other First Nations in southern Ontario. Peoples of the Haudenosaunee and EELÜNAAPÉEWI LAHKÉEWIT (Delaware) cultures are also close to London, mostly downriver from the UWO campus. Appropriate ethical and cultural respect will be expected of all students throughout the duration of the course. Students are not expected to be cultural experts, and relevant cultural understandings will be shared with the students as part of the learning process. Specifically, the concept of reciprocity as it relates to the 'host' Anishinaabeg community at Bkejwanong will be used as a pedagogical tool before, during, and after our community-guided experience.

## **6. Preparation**

Students will have a mandatory orientation meeting as a first class before field work begins. Students are expected to bring the following items for the field components:

- a smart phone for GPS work and photography (a few devices can be made available for signout as necessary)
- Any personal medication, notification of potential health related issues, allergies, sensitivities, and emergency contact information / health card.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as face masks, hand sanitizer, etc.
- Hat, water bottle, hiking shoes, rain gear, sunscreen,
- Clipboard, notebook for field observations/ reflections, pens, pencils

## **7. Course Assessment (next page)**

## **Reading Assignments on Braiding Sweetgrass** **20%**

Students will **submit to their OWL Dropbox** four, written reflections on their reading of the course textbook “Braiding Sweetgrass” available as a downloadable ebook at UWO library.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/west/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=1212658>

Each reflection should be one to two pages in length. If you’ve already read the book, it’s worth going back. It is also very rich so try not to rush it. We have divided the book in to four groups of sections;

Reflection 1 on the sections “Planting Sweetgrass” and “Tending Sweetgrass” DUE OCT 2

Reflection 2 on the chapters in the section “Picking Sweetgrass”; DUE OCT 23

Reflection 3 on the chapters in the section “Braiding Sweetgrass” DUE NOV 6

Reflection 4 on the chapters in the section “Burning Sweetgrass” DUE NOV 27

## **Personal Reflections** **25%**

At the end of each field day students will write about the day’s activities and record, on loose-leaf paper or a journal, their thoughts, questions, and insights into what they’ve learned. Students may also be asked by the instructors to consider a short, question relating to course material and daily encounters. Please upload your reflections/responses to OWL weekly.

## **Individual Project** **40%**

**By Friday, Oct 6th**, students will identify a project that is realizable by the end of term. This project will be developed in consultation with the instructors. The project must fall within the scope of the course philosophy and community needs identified by members of the Walpole Island Heritage Centre, and focus on some aspect of restoration or cultural protocol, with an ethic of reciprocity. If the project is a paper, the topic and focus of the paper will be determined in conversation with the instructors. Project examples: Adventive species removal from campus site, vegetation and soil observations, species identification and mapping, pollinator and tree planting, care and weeding, water monitoring, educational treaty resources and documentation.

## **Photographic Portfolio** **5%**

For this assignment you will prepare a powerpoint file with up to ten (10) images taken by you on the trip. Images can be of nature, culture, people, adventure, geography, etc. and are to be delivered in your OWL Dropbox, by Friday, OCT 27th, 2023 (~two weeks after field work). The up-to-10 pictures per person will be shown to the whole group at a post-fieldwork gathering. You must accompany your collection with a text file (in softcopy PDF format) that contains a brief Title and Caption for each picture or you can embed this in the powerpoint/keynote file.

## **Participation** **10%**

Showing up to field work and class trips on time and ready to learn.



## 8. Location and Nature of Activities



This is a semi-remote field course guided by elders and knowledge holders at Walpole Island First Nation/ Bkejwanong Territory.

**Classroom;** most days we will meet near the field site at Ross Park (below) but for the first class, and in bad weather, we will use Rm. 1065 in the Biological and Geological Sciences Building. After field work is complete (late Oct) we will meet Friday mornings at the Wampum Learning Lodge until the end of the term.

**Field work;** We will meet every Friday (except 29SEP, no class) at 8:30 AM at **Ross Park** on the east side of Richmond St., south of Windermere, starting Friday Sept. 15th. Here is a google maps link: <https://goo.gl/maps/ha43f7n7SGojYLAR7>

**Expect to be out of doors for the full morning and ready to start at 8:30.**

**Bkejwanong day visit;** On Saturday Oct 21st\*, we will travel by rental vans/cars to the Nin.Da.Waab.Jig Heritage Centre, WIFN for a day of teachings and habitat visits.

\*Subject to change based on pandemic conditions and community policy on visitor access

### **Course Text**

Robin Wall Kimmerer. *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Milkweed Press, 2013. (available free/ online at UWO libraries):

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/west/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=1212658>

## 9. Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

### Academic Consideration for Student Absence

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Medical Illness - Undergraduate Students](#)

[Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#)

### Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

## 10. Make-up Examinations

Makeup assignments will be granted with approved documentation only. All documentation for missed materials must be provided to the Academic Counselling Office within 48 hours of the scheduled deadline, otherwise the instructor will assign a grade of zero.

Note: missed work can only be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is not sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty of Social Science Academic Counselling Office.]

## 11. Continuity of Education Plan (in-person class pivoting to online learning)

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the university to direct courses move away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

## 12. Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence.

[Include this paragraph on plagiarism-checking software only if relevant. If not relevant delete the paragraph below]

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 for such checking 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> ).

[Include this paragraph on computer marked multiple-choice tests if relevant. If not relevant delete the paragraph below]

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

## 13. Western's Commitment to Accessibility

The Department of Geography and Environment strives at all times to provide accessibility to all faculty, staff, students and visitors in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. [Information regarding accommodation of exams](#) is available on the Registrar's website.

More information about "[Accessibility at Western](#)" is available.

## 14. Mental Health

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit Western's [Health and Wellness website](#) for more information on mental health resources.

## 15. Support Services

[Western's Support Services](#)  
[Student Development Centre](#)

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html).

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).