



Indigenous  
Ecological  
Knowledge  
RELS 305

MW 4-5:15

This course explores the diverse ways of understanding and responding to the world that emerge from Indigenous cultures.

Indigenous Ecological Knowledge refers to the Indigenous or Native bodies of long-term knowledge related to human beliefs, practices and experiences embedded in specific locations. There is no one IEK, rather, there are multiple versions of such knowledge based on the unique relationships of individual communities to places throughout the world. With a focus on Native North

America, this course will introduce you to Indigenous cultures and religions as unique forms of knowledge. We will explore environmental justice movements, sacred lands and medicines, climate change adaptation, religious resiliency, food sovereignty, and ecological restoration. Interdisciplinary in nature, this course seeks to understand how Indigenous ways of being and relating to natural environments are at once religious, scientific, philosophical, political, and economic. We will analyze how settler colonialism, dispossession, cultural genocide, and the rise of capitalism have affected the climate crisis generally, and Indigenous peoples in specific. We will foreground the voices of Indigenous scholars and scientists and look to real world case studies, just as we consider what counts as “religion” in America.

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### Course Objectives

- ◆Evaluate the religious expressions of diverse Indigenous communities by identifying key figures, groups, ideas, and events and synthesizing the connections between them;
- ◆Gain an interpretative framework for analyzing Indigenous concepts of sustainability and environmental justice in light of the current ecological crisis;
- ◆Analyze Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies as unique bodies of knowledge;
- ◆Develop fundamental methodological and theoretical concepts utilized in the study and analysis of Native American and Indigenous Studies
- ◆Develop research skills and improve ability to write analytically and comparatively about broad themes and historical moments, as well as specific texts and case studies;
- ◆Design and implement a final research project using course material, as well as outside primary and secondary sources.

### Required text

*Traditional ecological knowledge: learning from indigenous practices for environmental sustainability.* Edited by Melissa K. Nelson and Dan Shilling. (Cambridge University Press: 2018).

## Course Requirements

This course has four non-negotiable requirements: 1) attendance, 2) reading the assigned texts, 3) participation in seminars, and 4) respect for deadlines. Class attendance is mandatory. Participation in discussion is not an option, but an important part of the final grade. I will make note of students who make consistent and substantial comments in class, and those who do not. Students must read all articles and texts in order to be prepared for class and to be able to accomplish assignments. I expect that you will spend an **average of two hours preparing for each class** and roughly **two hours per page when writing papers for class**. Finally, students must manage their time properly in order to submit assignments on the deadline.

### Course Assignments

Class Participation	200 pts.
Discussion Questions	200 pts.
Discussion Leadership	100 pts.
Reading Response Papers	200 pts.
Annotated Bibliography	100 pts.
Final Paper	200 pts.

### #Coronavirus Content

Our classroom is large enough to accommodate all students socially distanced. You must be wearing a mask at all times. You will not be allowed to eat in class and if you must take a drink, do so and very quickly put your mask back on. Only students quarantining or isolating will be allowed to join class via Zoom. In-person attendance is required. I trust you to tell me directly any time you are going to miss class due to health issues and in turn,

I will trust that the explanation you give for your absence is honest and truthful. If you miss class due to COVID, make up activities will be assigned. If you are sick for a prolonged period of time, we will work together to determine a plan of action that will benefit your learning. More than two unexcused absences, however, will harm your final grade (I will subtract 20 points for each extra absence) and more than six total absences, barring major health or family issues discussed with the instructor, will result in a failing grade. Before the drop/add deadline, students should decide whether the course plan on the syllabus matches their own circumstances.

Due to the reality of COVID, we may be required to change tactics and move the course fully online. This may include a shift in course requirements and due dates, but we will do what we need to ensure the safety of students and instructor and you will be given all necessary information in a timely fashion. We will remain flexible and vigilant—we got this!

## Participation in class, seminars and exercises (20%)

Active student participation is crucial for the success of this course and the development of your individual learning. We learn best when we learn together. Throughout this course, we'll spend considerable time laying a foundation conducive to respectful but challenging discussion through which we can all grow. We will grapple with complicated, emotional, and thought-provoking topics as a community. In this endeavor, we will seek to be supportive of each other and to actively reflect on our own assumptions. In-person attendance is mandatory, as is participation in class discussions and work performed in groups. In discussion, aim for substantial contributions over quantity of comments. That is, comments should respond to those made by others—listen to each other, move the discussion forward, and pose new questions for consideration.

The College of Charleston community is enriched by students of many faiths that have various religious observances, practices, and beliefs. We value student rights and freedoms, including the right of each student to adhere to individual systems of religion. The College prohibits discrimination against any student because of such student's religious belief or any absence thereof. Please let me know at least a week before the religious holiday so I might make appropriate changes to group work.

## Discussion Questions (20%)

It is very important that you not only **read the assigned material**, but also that **you critically examine and interrogate it**. Throughout the semester we will work to recognize and critique arguments, set primary sources in context, and compare and contrast multiple readings and authors. As you read, you should take note of the issues and questions that you want to bring to the discussion. All members of the class, students and instructor alike, are responsible for understanding, explaining, analyzing and teaching the material under discussion. Even on days when you are not a discussion leader, you are responsible for bringing discussion questions to class. You may

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miss four of the 24 available postings, that is you must **post 20 times** total. Use these misses wisely. Before each class you must post on our OAKS discussion board by noon the day of class. Your post should do two things for each reading assigned that day (this will occasionally be two):

1. Rearticulate the reading's most important point in your own words.
2. Pose a question raised by the reading for further discussion in class.

## #Discussion Leadership (10%)

The most successful learning comes from you. Thus, you will be required to lead discussion twice throughout the semester. You will be required to do the assigned reading well in advance so you can meet with your partner and successfully lead discussion. You will spend 3-5 minutes introducing the readings, authors, and summarizing what you believe to be the most important aspects of the text. Following your introduction, you will lead class discussion by posing at least 5 relevant questions to be discussed (you may mine these from your peer's posts on OAKS). You are encouraged to create and print handouts with a brief introduction of the author/tribes and questions for the class, as well as upload them to OAKS.

Suggestions for writing discussion questions:

- Avoid yes/no questions, unless they have a strong "why" or "how" component.
- Avoid purely factual questions with short answers. Stress questions that require thinking/interpretation.
- You might quote a significant sentence from the reading and ask a question about it.
- Try to tie the reading to what we've learned about or talked about in other class sessions. For example...
- Ask questions that ask for comparison or connections between the subject of the reading and other things we've been studying.
- Ask questions that call for evidence, either from the reading or from elsewhere in the course.

During class discussion, take a leadership role in asking the questions, raising interesting issues, presenting relevant information, and keeping the discussion centered on relevant issues. During class discussion, you're the person responsible for calling on other people to talk. Make sure everyone has a chance to speak, and try not to call on the same person too often if other people have their hands up. Encourage everyone to participate.

**Grading criteria:** Discussion leadership will be graded on the following scale: **Preparation and thought (20 points)** – Did the leaders communicate and understanding of the issues in the assigned readings? Did they effectively tie in those issues to larger themes in this course? Was there a handout? **Questions (20 points)** – Did they have (at least) five prepared questions and use them during class? Did the leaders follow the syllabus guidance in preparing the questions? Were the questions relevant, thoughtful and appropriate? **Leadership (10 points)** – Did the questions engage the class? Did the leaders interact well with the class and keep discussion moving?

## #Reading Response Papers (20%)

**Task:** Reinforce and critically apply readings, class discussions, classroom exercises, and any other materials that we discussed in class in a 4-5-page paper. Please double-space. Eleven or twelve-point type. Chicago Footnotes, APA or MLA citations required (in-text and works cited). Upload a digital copy to OAKS before class begins.

**Grading Criteria (100 Points):** *25 Points* – Overall presentation of the paper (grammar, spelling, clarity of prose, and citations, as well as sentence and paragraph structure, flow, transitions, and organization); *35 Points:* Engagement with sources and course material (Does the paper use at least three sources from the course to answer the prompt? Does the paper adequately use quotations or summaries of sources in the explanation? Does the paper use the sources to develop and support a larger argument?) *40 Points:* Development of a thesis/argument (Is there a clear thesis statement? Was the thesis supported with evidence from the readings throughout the paper? Does the thesis answer the prompt? Does this paper go beyond merely restating the prompt to creatively engage with the material?)

**Paper 1: Decolonizing Indigenous Ecological Knowledge.** What are some of the issues we must attend to when studying Indigenous religions and ecological knowledge? That is, how do settler colonialism, capitalism, Euro-American conceptions of "wilderness," and myths about the "ecological Indian" contribute to the ecological

crisis and marginalization of Indigenous people? Synthesize and analyze the topics covered in units one and two, with reference to at least three sources and recommend a course of action for respectful study of IEK.

**Paper 2: Native relations with the natural world.** Units three and four consider case studies of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge. Use this paper as an opportunity to dig deeper into one of the cases. For example, you may focus on a sacred landscape, animal-human relations, or food sovereignty. Find an additional peer-reviewed, scholarly, and/or Indigenous source on the issue to complexify your analysis of the case study. Who are the stakeholders and what is at stake? What role does religion play in the case? How are ecological and religious sustainability intertwined in this particular example? Do you have suggestions for next steps or possible paths to resolution? This should serve as a stepping-stone assignment for your final paper by getting those research juices flowing. Use at least two in-class sources, as well as one new resource.

### #Annotated Bibliography (10%)

An annotated bibliography is excellent preparation for your research project. They encourage you to critically evaluate sources as you develop a debatable, interesting, and current thesis. Writing an annotated bibliography will help you identify what has already been written about your topic, what the issues are, and what people are arguing about, in order to develop your own point of view.

**Task:** Identify five *academic* sources that pertain to your final research paper. You must include a summary and evaluation of each source. These annotations should be written in paragraph form (200-300 words per source) and include the following information:

1. An explanation of the main purpose of the source—what is it trying to argue? Why was it written?
2. A short summary of key findings or arguments of the source
3. The academic/intellectual credentials of the source. Does it appear in a peer-reviewed journal? Is the author someone who has expertise in the area?
4. Any shortcomings or biases you notice
5. The value of this work as a contribution to the topic you're exploring.

### #Final Research Paper: (20%)

The final paper is the major academic enterprise of this course. It involves research and reading new material besides the assigned texts for this class, both secondary and primary sources. In support of academic freedom and personal interests, you may propose a research paper on any aspect of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge of your own choosing. Your paper must be a critical analysis of your chosen topic, thesis-driven (i.e. you must argue something), based in the appropriate theory and methodology, with summary and description kept to a minimum. Your research should be supported by a minimum of five academic sources outside of course material.

Start with something that interests you. You may expand on a topic we discussed in class with a different tribe or a tribe we discussed in class, but with a new topic; you may explore a movement or tribe from near your hometown or a region you've never been to; perhaps the interaction of a religious community with the government or missionaries; you may take a historical approach that illuminates the under-examined practices of a tribe or turn a critical eye to a contemporary movement. **You must choose your topic by March 22 and meet with the professor (for approval) before the Annotated bibliography is due.**

The paper must contain between 2,000-2,500 words (8-10 pages), with references and footnotes included. Please double-space. Eleven or twelve-point type is preferred. **Due to OAKS April 25 at 3:30 PM.**

### Course Schedule (\*denotes reading in textbook)

#	Date	Topic	What to Read	What's Due
1	1/11	Introduction	In class: Syllabus <i>Question for consideration: What is sustainability?</i>	
<b>Unit 1: Theorizing Indigenous Knowledge and Colonialism</b>				

2	1/13	Indigenous Sustainability	Dan Shilling, "The Soul of Sustainability," and Gregory Cajete (Tewa), "Native Science and Sustaining Indigenous Communities," in <i>TEK</i> , 3-26, [23 pages].  Margaret Atwood. (2009). "Time capsule found on a dead planet." <i>The Guardian</i> . [2 short pages]	Discussion Questions
	1/18	<b>MLK Jr. Holiday, no class.</b>		
3	1/20	Native American Religions	Sam Gill, "Place to Begin," in <i>Native American Religions</i> , [15 pages].  Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux), "Thinking in Time and Space," in <i>God is Red</i> [15 pages].	DQs 2
4	1/25	Decolonizing IEK	Micheline Pesantubbee (Choctaw), "Religious Studies on the Margins: Decolonizing Our Minds," in <i>Native Voices</i> , [12 pages].  Louis Warren, "The Nature of Conquest: Indians, Americans, and Environmental History," in <i>A Companion to American Indian History</i> , (2008) 287-303. [17 pages]	DQs 3
<b>Unit 2: Colonialism and the Current Ecological Crisis</b>				
5	1/27	Settler Colonialism	J. Kehaulani Kauanui (Native Hawaiian) and Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism Then and Now," in <i>Speaking of Indigenous Politics</i> (2018). [16 pages]  Michael McNally, "Introduction," <i>Defend the Sacred</i> (2020) [28 pages].	DQs 4
6	2/1	Quadruple Bottom Line	Fonda Walters (Diné) and John Takamura, "The Decolonized Quadruple Bottom Line: A Framework for Developing Indigenous Innovations," <i>Wicazo Sa Review</i> . [19 pages]  *Kyle Whyte (Potawatomi), "What do Indigenous Knowledges do for Indigenous Peoples?" in <i>TEK</i> , 57-77, [20 pages].	DQs 5
7	2/3	Capitalism and Indigenous Ethics	*Dennis Martinez, (O'odham/Chicano) "Redefining Sustainability through Kincentric Ecology: Reclaiming Indigenous Lands, Knowledge, and Ethics," in <i>TEK</i> , 139-172, [33 pages].  Glen Coulthard, (Yellowknives Dene) "For Our Nations to Live, Capitalism Must Die." <i>Unsettling America: Decolonizing Theory and Practice</i> , (November 5, 2013). [4 pages]	DQs 6
<b>Unit 3: Sacred Narratives and Sacred Lands</b>				
8	2/8	Religion and Environmental Law	Michael McNally, "Religion as Cultural Resource," in <i>Defend the Sacred</i> [43 pages].	DQs 7
9	2/10	What is Sacred?	Winona LaDuke (Ojibwe), "Introduction," and "Gods, Squirrels, and the Universe," <i>Recovering the Sacred</i> , [21 pages].	DQs 8
10	2/15	In class short films: <i>Wakening</i> (by Danis Goulet), <i>6th World</i> (by Nanobah Becker) and <i>Kiruna: Space Road</i> (by Liselotte Wajstedt).		Paper 1
11	2/17	Teaching landscapes	Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, (Nishnaabeg), "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation," (2014) <i>Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education &amp; Society</i> 3(3). [23 pages]	DQs 9
12	2/22	Living in Place	*Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), "Indigenous Sustainability: Language, Community Wholeness, and Solidarity," and Jeannette Armstrong (Sylix. Okanagan), "A Single Strand," in <i>TEK</i> 85-107. [22 pages]	DQs 10

Unit 4: Nature-Human Relations				
13	2/24	Reciprocity	*Robin Wall Kimmerer (Anishinaabe), " <i>Mishkos Kenomagwen, the Lessons of Grass: Restoring Reciprocity with the Good Green Earth</i> ," in <i>TEK</i> , 27-53 [26 pages].	DQs 11
14	3/1	Food Sovereignty	*Priscilla Settee (Cree), "Indigenous Food Sovereignty in Canada," in <i>TEK</i> , 175-187. [12 pages]  Suzanne Crawford O'Brien, "Salmon as sacrament: first salmon ceremonies in the Pacific Northwest," <i>Religion, Food, and Eating in North America</i> , [16 pages].	DQs 12
15	3/3	Non-human Animals	*Linda Hogan (Chickasaw), "The Radiant Life with Animals," in <i>TEK</i> .	DQs 13
16	3/8	Hunting	Fikret Berkes, "Cree Worldview 'From the Inside,'" and "Indigenous Knowledge in Context," in <i>Sacred Ecology</i> , 105-118, 202-218.	DQs 14
Unit 5: Global Indigeneity				
17	3/10	Maori Relationships to the Land	*Rachel Wolframm et al. (Ngai Takoto, Te Aupouri, Whakatōhea, Tongo), "Home: Resistance, Resilience, and Innovation in Maori Economics of Well-Being" in <i>TEK</i> .  Regina Pfeiffer, "Maori Religion," in <i>Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion</i> . [5 pages]	DQs 15
18	3/15	Subaltern Relations	Escobar, A. (2016), "Thinking-feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South" <i>AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana</i> , 11(1). [22 pages]	DQs 16
19	3/17	Asian Indigeneity	J. Peter Brosius, "Local Knowledges, Global Claims: On the Significance of Indigenous Ecologies in Sarawak, East Malaysia," in <i>Indigenous Traditions and Ecology</i> . [29 pages]	DQs 17
20	3/22	In class film: Standing Rock		Paper 2
21	3/24	Indigenous Africa	Ogbu Kalu, "The Sacred Egg," in <i>Indigenous Traditions and Ecology</i> . [20 pages]	DQs 18
Unit 6: Native Environmental Justice and Management				
22	3/29	Environmental Justice Movements	Schlosberg and Carruthers, "Indigenous Struggles, Environmental Justice, and Community Capabilities," <i>Global Environmental Politics</i> , [19 pages].  David Pellow and Pengfei Guo, "Environmental Justice," in <i>Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology</i> , [7 pages].	DQs 19
23	3/31	Occupation as Resistance	Greg Johnson and Siv Ellen Craft, "Protective occupation, emergent networks, rituals of solidarity: comparing Alta (Sápmi), Mauna Kea (Hawai'i), and Standing Rock (North Dakota)," in <i>The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Nature: The Elements</i> , (2018) [13 pages].  Greg Johnson, "Materialising and Performing Hawaiian Religion(s) on Mauna Kea," <i>Handbook of Indigenous Religion(s)</i> . [16 pages]	DQs 20
24	4/5	Guest speaker and Annotated Bibliography Due		
25	4/7	Bears Ears National Monument	Brennan Keegan, "Contested Sacredness: Bears Ears National Monument." <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> (forthcoming).	No DQs due
26	4/12	Indigenous Ecofeminism	*Joan McGregor, "Toward a Philosophical Understanding of TEK and Ecofeminism," in <i>TEK</i> , 109-126. [17 pages]	DQs 21

			Margaret Kress, "Sasipihkeyihtamowin: niso nehiyaw iskwewak" (2014), <i>Canadian Woman Studies</i> (31.1) [12 pages].	
27	4/14	Natural Resource Management	Suchet-Pearson, S., Wright, S., Lloyd, K., & Burarwanga, L. (2013). Caring as Country: Towards an ontology of co-becoming in natural resource management. <i>Asia Pacific Viewpoint</i> , 54(2), [13 pages].	DQs 22
28	4/19	Learning from IEK	Fikret Berkes, "Toward a Unity of Mind and Nature," in <i>Sacred Ecology</i> . [20 pages]  Tom B.K. Goldtooth (Diné), "Respect for Mother Earth," in <i>Religion and Ecology</i> . [9 pages].	DQs 23
29	4/21	Concluding Thoughts	*Melissa K. Nelson (Anishinaabe/Métis), "Conclusion: Back in Our Tracks – Embodying Kindship as If the Future Mattered," in <i>TEK</i> . [15 pages]	DQs 24
<b>Final Paper Due: April 25, 3:30PM</b>				

**The Fine Print.** Oaks: OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted. **Grading Scale:** A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 61-62 F: 60 or below. **Late Policy:** Assignments are due at the beginning of the class unless otherwise noted. Any assignment turned in after the deadline is considered late. You will be penalized one letter grade (10%) for each day the assignment is late, up to a week. After a week, I will not accept the assignment. **Regarding plagiarism:** Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed both by the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent. Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>. **Technology Use in Class:** We will be busy in every class session and we don't need any electronic distractions. Silence your cell phones before you enter the classroom. If it rings, I reserve the right to answer it. Laptops are allowed unless it becomes clear that students are misusing them. **Center for Student Learning:** The Center for Student Learning's (CSL) academic support services provide assistance in study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. Services include tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. The services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu>. **Mental & Physical Wellbeing:** At the college, we take every students' mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at <http://counseling.cofc.edu> or 843.953.5640 3<sup>rd</sup> Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit <http://counseling.cofc.edu/cct/index.php>, or meet with them in person 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health. **Diversity Statement:** Consistent with College of Charleston's commitment to inclusivity, I pledge to do my best to run the class in a manner that is respectful of difference, including but not limited to, physical and mental ability, age, socio-economic status, religious identity, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation,

nationality and veteran status. Students are expected to be respectful of these differences in their conduct in class and on campus. **Accommodations:** We all learn in different ways. If you know or believe that you need additional help, the College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply for services at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me one week before accommodation is needed: <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu/>. **Email etiquette:** I am happy to communicate with you via email and will do my best to respond within 24 hours during the week. If it's 3 AM and you're feeling panicked, angry, frustrated, or annoyed, that most likely is NOT a good time to send an email. Ever. To me or anyone else. Take this as an important life lesson. It will serve you well. If you are sure that your questions or comments are professional and appropriate, be sure to include these professional courtesies: 1. In the subject line please indicate the content of the email and 2. Begin your message in the following manner: Dear Professor Keegan... And finish with sincerely, best, thanks, etc. followed by your full name. Do the same for every professor you're in contact with! Professionalism goes a long way.