

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

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

First Class; Friday Sept 13th

Field work dates: Every Friday AM Sept 13th to Oct 25th , 2024

Field trip date: MANDATORY Bkejwanong day trip; On Saturday Nov 2nd*, we will travel by rental vans/cars to the Nin.Da.Waab.Jig Heritage Centre, WIFN

Classroom: Fridays Nov 15th to Dec 6, 10:30AM to 12, Wampum Learning Lodge

Co-Instructors

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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:

- 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. 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.

4. 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 LAHKÉEWIIT (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.

5. Course Assessment

Participation in field work and final field trip **20%**

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

Reading Assignments on Braiding Sweetgrass **15%**

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 Sept 23

Reflection 2 on the chapters in the section “Picking Sweetgrass”; DUE OCT 15

Reflection 3 on the chapters in the section “Braiding Sweetgrass” DUE NOV 4

Reflection 4 on the chapters in the section “Burning Sweetgrass” DUE NOV 25

Journal Reflections based on Field sessions **20%**

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 be asked by the instructors to consider a short, question relating to course material and daily encounters. Upload your reflections/responses to OWL by midnight Wednesday that follows the field session.

Individual Project **40%**

By Friday, Oct 11th, 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 **pdf file** with 5 images taken during course activities plus caption and text description. Images can be of nature, culture, people, adventure, geography, etc. DUE in your OWL Dropbox, put your name in the filename, by Friday, NOV 15th, 2024. The submission will be shared with the class at an end of term gathering.

8. Location, Timing, and Nature of Course Activities

SEPT 13 to OCT 25 FIELD WORK

We will meet for weekly Friday morning field sessions at 8:30am in the parking lot of the Ivey Spencer Leadership Centre starting Friday Sept 13th.

Here is the google map link for our meeting place every Friday at 8:30: It is the lower parking lot behind the Ivey Spencer Leadership Centre on Windermere Rd.:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/kkWonGLE2Ev6DjCX6>

Please note that Braiding Sweetgrass author, Dr. Robin Wall-Kimmerer, will be visiting our field site Friday morning, Oct 18th...it is reading week and attendance optional but it will be very special!

SATURDAY NOV2nd MANDATORY FIELD TRIP to BKEJWANONG ; same meeting place and time, On Saturday Nov 2nd, we will travel by rental vans/cars to the Nin.Da.Waab.Jig Heritage Centre, WIFN for a day of teachings and habitat visits.

NOV 15 to FRI DEC 6th WAMPUM LEARNING LODGE CLASSROOM WORK: FRIDAYS 10AM-NOON

For the last month of term we'll be meeting to complete individual projects and have a potluck meal at the Wampum Learning Lodge from 10AM to NOON every Friday starting Nov 15th.

Preparation

- Field Clothes; work or hiking boots, comfortable pants for yard work that can be tucked into socks (tick prevention), long sleeve shirt, hat, rain gear, water bottle, lunch, sunscreen
- 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.
- Clipboard, notebook for field observations/ reflections, pens, pencils
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) you wish to use such as face masks, hand sanitizer, etc.

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 Accommodation for Students with Disabilities.](#)

General Information about missed work:

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

Absence from Course Commitments

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. [Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the Student Medical Certificate or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.](#)

Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays. Where a student will be unable to be in class due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to the absence.

Note: 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.

10. 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.

11. 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](#).

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>).

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.