

**Indigenous Studies 2700**

**Tsi niyakwaton – Tsi niyakwenton**

**What we say – What we mean**

**Looking at Etymology and Metaphor in an Iroquoian Language**

**TBA 2019-2020**

**Wednesdays 10:30-1:30**

**SSC-3108**

Instructor: David Kanatawakhon-Maracle

Office Hours: TBA

Indigenous Studies Program, Office SSC-3214

Email: david.kanatawakhon@uwo.ca

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**Course Description:**

**Tsi Niyakwaton – Tsi Niyakwenton “What We Say – What We Mean”:** *“Looking at Etymology and Metaphor in an Iroquoian Language”*

It looks like a duck, it walks like a duck, and it quacks like a duck, but it’s really a fox in disguise. And so likewise with any Iroquoian language, in this case Mohawk, where what one says does not always tell you what one means. We use language to create verbal pictures but how we interpret that picture can be purely cultural. For example, take the Mohawk word **tewakatonhwentsyoni** which is often interpreted as “*want*” in English, or sometimes “*need*”. But that’s not exactly what a Mohawk is saying. The literal interpretation comes across as “*I benefit myself of the land*”. Now it basically refers to the same as the English but it is more culturally relevant as it relates the land to the fulfilling of one’s need. The Mohawk language here has created an expression to describe the state of being in need of something, and since all needs are fulfilled by accessing the land, then it makes good cultural sense to create a relation between the two. This particular word expresses the Mohawk (Iroquoian) cultural connection to the land. One should always keep in mind: *“Mohawk is what it means in Mohawk, not what it means in English.”*

When looking into the construction of expression in an Iroquoian language, in this case Mohawk, one begins to realize that “*what we say and what we mean*” can be very different. The language is chock full of metaphors that, in some cases, have very deep cultural roots.

Mohawk, and Iroquoian languages in general, make frequent use of these sorts of descriptions to describe states of being, activities, and events. Creating new descriptions becomes an important part of naming new things that find their way into our every day lives. You will look at the vocabulary of language used in everyday informal and formal situations and take it apart, or deconstruct the vocabulary to discover its underlying cultural references and how this reflects the values and world view of the speakers. You will look at how the understanding of some vocabulary has changed over time where we have kept the word but have changed how we reference it.

This course will appeal to anyone who is interested in how speakers of a language use it to define the world they live in and how they deal with intrusions from outside that world view as they adapt to a changing culture or to anyone who has a curiosity about how a people adapt their language to changing times. And this course will appeal to anyone who sees linguistic construction as a valuable tool in understanding a people's world view and their cultural philosophy.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course you will:

- be able to deconstruct vocabulary to discover its underlying cultural references and attitudes;

- have learned how vocabulary has changed through time to reflect current usage;

- be able to see the vocabulary differently as an expression of the Mohawk (Iroquoian) world view rather than as an English interpretation;

- have acquired an appreciation and understanding for how the Iroquoian (Mohawk) language reflects the values and cultural world view or philosophy of its speakers: i.e. *"you are what you speak"*;

### **Attendance and Participation**

Active participation in a course like this is very important. Student involvement in group discussions and language practice sessions can enhance your learning experience. The more you use the language you are learning, the easier it becomes to use it. It can also improve your pronunciation and language skills acquisition.

Regular attendance is important to the class dynamic and your success in this class. Missing one class, especially the two-hour session can very quickly put you far behind. Arriving late, unless you have a valid reason or have previously informed the instructor of such can be

disruptive to the class. The instructor takes regular attendance and arriving on time reflects a desire to learn the language and as respect for the course, the other students and the Professor. Remember, you have chosen to attend this course and it is up to you to maintain good attendance and participation.

## **Important Policies**

### ***Policies for Assignment Deadlines***

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 his/her academic responsibilities. Students are expected to act in a timely manner when seeking and arranging accommodations. A student seeking academic accommodation for any work worth less than 10% must contact the instructor or follow the appropriate Department or course specific instructions provided on the course outline.

Policy on Accommodation for Illness:

([https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_illness.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf)).

### ***A Note on Plagiarism***

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea 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 scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

### ***Plagiarism Checking***

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for 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 ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)).

### ***Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class***

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

### ***Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness***

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation:

[https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html)

### ***Accessibility Options***

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 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

### ***Scholastic Offences***

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### ***Mental Health***

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western ([https://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](https://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

### **Method of Evaluation:**

Further details such as content, marking criteria, and deadlines will be provided as each assignment is introduced in class. The student will be given ample preparation time to ensure that appropriate language and skills are used and will be allowed to use visuals as aids in their presentation

Vocabulary Construction: 10%

The student will demonstrate their ability to recognize various and particular aspects of a Mohawk word, or phrase and be able to describe the break-down of the vocabulary.

Vocabulary deconstruction: 25%

The student will deconstruct a word or expression (a vocabulary string) and effectively denote its cultural reference in the language as a metaphoric expression and be able to recognize its etymological makeup.

Research and Presentation: 25%

The student will use available sources to search out complex vocabulary to deconstruct and analyse. The presentation will utilize Power Point for visual accompanied by a verbal description of the deconstruction.

Explaining Cultural Significance: 10%

The student will be able to explain and discuss the cultural significance of various vocabulary actively used within the language.

Creating New Vocabulary: 15%

The student will be provided with the opportunity to create new vocabulary relevant to contemporary times which may not be presently available in the language. This new vocabulary will then be presented in class before one or more speakers of the Mohawk language to gauge the cultural correctness of the words.

Attendance and Participation: 15%

**PLEASE NOTE:** There will be no Final Exam for this course as the total evaluation will be based on the evaluation methods shown above.