

Aboriginal World Views: Implications for Education

AEC 1180H: Fall 2011

Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology, OISE/UT

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Course Description

This course will provide a deeper understanding of Aboriginal worldviews and an appreciation of how this knowledge can enhance teaching, learning and research. Learners will examine philosophical views shared by Aboriginal people while honoring a diversity of identities, culture, language, and geographic locations. Course content may include Aboriginal cognitive styles, values and ethics, traditional teachings and indigenous methodologies.

This course will promote an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal perspectives and explore strategies for integrating this knowledge into the work of educators and researchers.

Required Texts

Bopp, J., Bopp, M., Brown, L. & Lane, P. (2003). *The Sacred Tree: Reflections on Native American Spirituality*. Lethbridge: Four Worlds International Institute.

Nelson, Melissa K. (ed). (2008) *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future*. Rochester, VT: Bear & Company.

Other Texts

Please see Book Circle texts below.

Texts are available for purchase from www.goodminds.com, a Native-owned and operated business located on the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory.

Assignments & Evaluation

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| 1. Response papers | 30% |
| 2. Event discussion circle | 15% |
| 3. Participation | 10% |
| 4. Book circle | 15% |
| 5. Final assignment | 30% |

1. Response Papers (30%)

You will prepare 3 short Response Papers (worth 10% each) to course readings and presentations. Each response paper should be 2-4 pages in length and reflect critically on the material. Your first response paper is due in class on **September 26th** and should discuss *The Sacred Tree*. On **October 31st**, your response to *Original Instructions* is due. The final response paper is due on **November 28th** and should include reflection and discussion on your selected worldview text as well as our book circles.

Your response papers should pay special attention to how the readings or presentations embodied or referred to principles, characteristics, or issues relating to Aboriginal Worldviews. Reflections on how you might apply learnings to your personal education work are also appreciated. What did you learn that surprised you, enlightened you, angered you, inspired you? What learning will you carry with you?

Response papers are personal and are difficult to evaluate objectively. I will assign to each paper a mark that is 50% based on the depth of the reflection (how much are you revealing of yourself, challenging yourself, demonstrating critical thought, etc), 25% based on the 'fact base' or how well you use the readings as the base for your reflections (that is, you don't stray too far from the readings in your reflections), and 25% based on overall 'style' which includes grammar, spelling, clarity of communication, and flow.

- Response paper due dates:
 - Texts: **September 26th, October 31st and November 28th, 2011**

2. Event Discussion Circle (15%)

Between September and December you will attend an Aboriginal event, Elder's public teaching, or public talk by an Aboriginal person and participate in a discussion circle to be held in class. You should come prepared to discuss your personal reflections on your experience. Pay special attention to how the event embodied or referred to principles, characteristics, or issues relating to Aboriginal Worldviews. Reflections on how you might apply learning from the event to your personal education work are also appreciated. The goal is not to simply describe the event as it took place but to enter into what you learned from the event about Aboriginal worldviews.

- Event discussion circles will take place in class on **October 17th and November 21st, 2011**

Here are some suggestions for selecting a relevant event for this assignment:

- Check out Dodem Kanonhsa' for public sessions with visiting Elders. See www.dodemkanonhsa.com or phone (416)-952-9272 for more info.
- Visiting Elders at First Nations House, 563 Spadina Ave., 416-978-8227, www.fnh.utoronto.ca.
- Join the Indigenous Education Network (IEN) and First Nations House (FNH) listservs to receive updates of events and also to receive community, academic and other important information.
- Scan postings at IEN, First Nations House, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, Anishnawbe Health Toronto, Native Earth Performing Arts, Native Women in the Arts, or others.
- Traditional Awareness Gathering at the Native Canadian Centre.
- ImagineNATIVE Media Arts Festival takes place October 19-23rd, 2011
- November is designated Aboriginal Awareness Month with events in the Toronto District School Board, and Toronto Public Library.
- Announcements will also be made in class of upcoming events.

3. Participation (10%)

The circle is a symbol of great significance to many Aboriginal people. Discussion and sharing circles will be held in class on a regular basis. This is a time for us to gather, learn, share and grow together in an inclusive space. It is essential that members of the course attend class regularly and come prepared to participate fully in circle and discussions. Active listening is also considered participation. As part of your participation mark you are expected to bring questions for discussion of the readings.

4. Book Circle (15%)

You will be responsible for selecting one of the texts listed on pages 7 and 8 and leading the class through a discussion of key concepts. If you have another text you would like to read for the book circle assignment, please check with instructor first.

- Book Circles will be held in class on **October 31, November 7 & November 14, 2011**

5. Final assignment (30%)

The final assignment is an opportunity to study a topic of your choice relating to Aboriginal worldviews and implications for education. You have two choices:

Option 1: Final paper. Write a final paper (about 10 pages in length) combining aspects of Aboriginal Worldviews with some of the literature or themes discussed in the course. The paper should address a clear question (or questions) related to the place of indigenous worldviews in education research or practice. Please feel free to discuss possible topics with me, if in doubt.

Option 2: Non-written format. You may choose to present your findings in a non-written format (ie. arts-based medium, video, indigenous artistic tradition etc.) If this is of interest, please discuss your plans with me before beginning.

- Deadline for submission of the final assignment is **December 5, 2011**.

Evaluation

For all assignments, evaluation will be broken down by 50% to depth, 25% to 'fact base' and 25% to style.

Depth: if you're writing a conventional academic paper, how strong are your arguments? Do you anticipate objections and respond accordingly? How well do you incorporate key sources in the literature and do you engage with this literature with a confident voice?

If you're writing a more 'applied' piece, how much are you challenging yourself? What have you embodied from Aboriginal worldviews and how well are you communicating this? What innovations from Aboriginal worldviews or educational practices have you attempted to apply in your teaching or research practice and how well did you convey this, reflect on this and demonstrate learning from this in your work?

Fact Base: How well do you use examples to communicate your ideas? What sources do you choose and how well do you engage with them in your argumentation or reflection? How seamlessly do you weave your sources into your work? For non-written assignments, the fact base portion of the mark is applied to how well you convey your understandings of worldview in the piece or in an explanation of how the work embodies or communicates your understandings of indigenous worldviews.

Style: In written assignments, in addition to grammar, spelling, flow, and clarity, style will include your adherence to and proper usage of APA style. On style guidelines, see www.utoronto.ca/writing/document.html. Non-written assignments will be assessed for style with attention to aesthetics appropriate to the work submitted.

Grading

Grades will be determined accordingly:

- A+ "Publishable"
- A Work is consistently of a very high standard.
- A- Work is consistently of a high standard.
- B+ Work is consistently well done with some areas for improvement.
- B Work is well done with room for improvement.
- B- Work is good with much room for improvement.
- F Work is incomplete or does not meet the requirements of the assignment.

Breaking down each assignment into the categories, Depth, Fact Base and Style, is intended to demystify my expectations for the assignments and help pinpoint areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement.

Format

Written assignments should be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins. Please note the length requirements of each assignment and make sure to use a standard 12-point font, like Times New Roman or Garamond. All references and citations should adhere to APA style. To save paper, the submission of electronic versions of assignments is strongly encouraged – please email them to jeanpaul.restoule@utoronto.ca with **AEC1180 assignment** as your subject line.

Extensions

If you cannot submit assignments by their due date, it is critical that you discuss this with me beforehand. Failure to do so will result in late penalties of 5% per day.

Plagiarism

Accusations of plagiarism can be avoided through the practice of good citation. For more information please see: www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html

Reading Schedule

- September 12** **Introduction**
- September 19** **The Sacred Tree**
Read: *The Sacred Tree: Reflections on Native American Spirituality*
- September 26** **Original Instructions**
➤ **Response Paper Due** (Sacred Tree)
Read: *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future* pp. xv-52.
- October 3** **Indigenous Democracies and Kinship**
Read: *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future* pp. 54-136.
- October 10** **No Class**
School closed for Thanksgiving. Make-up class scheduled December 5th
- October 17** **The Power of Women/Food Knowledge**
Event Discussion Circle
Read: *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future* pp. 138-218.
- October 24** **Decolonization and Re-indigenization**
Read: *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future* pp. 220-323.
- October 31** **Book Circle***
➤ **Response Paper Due** (Original Teachings)
- November 7** **Book Circle***
- November 14** **Book Circle***
- November 21** **Event Discussion Circle**
- November 28** **Sharing Circle**
➤ **Response Paper Due** (Book Circle)
- December 5** **Sharing Circle & Closing**
➤ **Final Assignment Due**

***Book Circle Texts**

E. Richard Atleo (Umeek). (2004). *Tsamalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Western philosophy has long held scientific rationalism in a place of honour. Reason, that particularly exalted human quality, has become steadily distanced from the metaphysical aspects of existence, such as spirit, faith, and intuition. In *Tsamalk*, hereditary chief Umeek introduces us to an alternative indigenous worldview -- an ontology drawn from the Nuu-chah-nulth origin stories.

Johnston, Basil. (1990). *Ojibway Heritage*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Rarely accessible to the general public, Ojibway mythology is as rich in meaning, as broad, as deep, and as innately appealing as the mythologies of Greece, Rome, and other Western civilizations. In *Ojibway Heritage* Basil Johnston introduces his people's ceremonies, rituals, songs, dances, prayers, and legends. Conveying the sense of wonder and mystery at the heart of the Ojibway experience, Johnston describes the creation of the universe, followed by that of plants and animals and human beings, and the paths taken by the latter. These stories are to be read, enjoyed, and freely interpreted. Their authorship is perhaps most properly attributed to the tribal storytellers who have carried on the oral tradition that Johnston records and preserves in this book.

Thomas Peacock and Marlene Wisuri. *The Four Hills of Life: Ojibwe Wisdom*. Afton Historical Press.

The FOUR HILLS OF LIFE tells the wise and beautiful Ojibwe story about the path we walk through the seasons of life, from the springtime of youth through the winter of old age. The hills we climb along the way are the challenges we face and the responsibilities we accept. The path is not always easy; some of us lose our way. We question the meaning of life. But when we walk the Good Path—when we commit to values and fulfill our goals—the meaning of life finds us.

F. David Peat. *Blackfoot Physics*. Weiser Books.

One summer in the 1980s, theoretical physicist F. David Peat went to the Blackfoot Sun Dance ceremony in Alberta, Canada. Having spent all his life steeped in and influenced by linear Western science, he was entranced by the Native American worldview and, through dialogue circles between scientists and Native Elders, he began to explore it in greater depth. "Blackfoot Physics" is the account of his discoveries. In an edifying synthesis of anthropology, history, metaphysics, cosmology and quantum theory, Peat compares the medicines, the myths, the languages, indeed the entire perceptions of reality of the Western and indigenous peoples. What becomes apparent is the amazing resemblance between indigenous teachings and some of the insights that are emerging from modern science, a congruence that is as enlightening about the physical universe as it is about the circular evolution of humanity's understanding. Through Peat's insightful observations, he extends our understanding of ourselves, our understanding of the universe, and how the two intersect in a meaningful vision of human life in relation to a greater reality.

Tom Porter. *And Grandma said...Iroquois Teachings as passed down through the oral traditions*. Xlibris.

The Iroquois culture and traditional Longhouse spirituality has a universal appeal, a ring of truth to it that resonates not only with other indigenous people, but also with non-Native people searching for their own spiritual roots.

Raised in the home of a grandmother who spoke only Mohawk, Sakokweniónkwaw (Tom Porter) was asked from a young age, to translate for his elders. After such intensive exposure to his grandparents' generation, he is able to recall in vivid detail, the stories and ceremonies of a culture hovering on the brink of extinction. After devoting most of his adult life to revitalizing the culture and language of his people, Tom finally records here, the teachings of a generation of elders who have been gone for more than twenty years.

What it is to be Metis: The stories and recollections of the Elders of the Prince George Metis Elders Society. Edited, organized and compiled by Mike Evans, Marcelle Gareau, Lisa Krebs, Leona Neilson and Heidi Standeven. UNBC press.

[http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/ccgs/_shared/assets/What it is to be a Metis11265.pdf](http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/ccgs/_shared/assets/What_it_is_to_be_a_Metis11265.pdf)

Brian Rice. *Seeing the world with Aboriginal eyes.* University of Manitoba Press.

Seeing the World with Aboriginal Eyes: A Four Directional Perspective on Human and Non-Human Values, Cultures and Relationships on Turtle Island is a guide by Mohawk professor Brian Rice designed for beginners seeking to understand Aboriginal worldview and spirituality. Rice developed this manual through a process while teaching Aboriginal spirituality and worldview in the Department of Native Studies at the University of Sudbury. He draws on teachings provided by two influential Elders: Art Solomon and Chief Jacob Thomas. These two Elders provide the core understandings which are supplemented by the works and teachings of other spiritual advisors. The work of Jim Dumont provides the organizing formula for the book by detailing the four basic teachings of the four directions encompassing the circle of life. The first section is the Eastern Door which includes the cosmology, vision, beliefs and values of the Seeing Path. The Southern Door introduces Ways of Relating which include environment, interactions between Aboriginal Peoples and others, the cycle of life, time, mathematics, and numbers. The third section is the Western Door incorporating the Coming to Knowledge that includes the Elders, the learning path, and Aboriginal Knowledge. The final section is the Northern Door for the Ways of Doing that encompass the ceremonies, healing, prayer and life ways. Throughout the text the author describes creation stories, duality in cosmology, reciprocity, the story of the Peacemaker, the Seven Grandfathers, the vision quest, Elders and healers, and ethics. Examples from various First Nations' teachings are included as well as the teachings from the Rotinonshonni (Haudenosaunee/Iroquois) and Anishnawbe (Ojibwe). This is a valuable resource text for anyone interested in understanding First Nations Spirituality.

David Suzuki and Peter Knudtson. *Wisdom of the elders: Native and Scientific ways of knowing about Nature.* Greystone Books.

A meticulous gathering of both scientific insight and Native knowledge, *Wisdom of the Elders* offers a way to reconcile our place in nature, by listening to our elders.

From the foundations of time, the big bang, and the creation of the cosmos, to the fate of the earth as predicted by leading scientists and the sacred stories and traditions of Native peoples, this acclaimed collection of the world's wisdom shows that the future of the planet lies in listening to both these worldviews.

Oscar Kawagley. *A yupiaq worldview: A pathway to ecology and spirit.* Waveland Press.

Oscar Kawagley is a man of two worlds, walking the sometimes bewildering line between traditional Yupiaq culture and the Westernized Yupiaq life of today. In this study, Kawagley follows both memories of his Yupiaq grandmother, who raised him with the stories of the Bear Woman and respectful knowledge of the reciprocity of nature, and his own education in science as it is taught in Western schools. Kawagley is a man who hears the elders' voices in Alaska, knows how to look for the weather, and to use the land and its creatures with the most delicate care. In a call to unite the two parts of his own and modern Yupiaq history, Kawagley proposes a way of teaching that incorporates all ways of knowing available in Yupiaq and Western science. He has traveled a long journey, but it ends where it began, in a fishing camp in southwestern Alaska, a home for his heart and spirit. The second edition examines changes that have impacted the Yupiaq and other Alaska native communities over the last ten years, including implementation of cultural standards in indigenous education and the emergence of a holistic approach in the sciences.

Cajete, Gregory. (2000). *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence.* Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers.

Cajete examines the multiple levels of meaning that inform Native astronomy, cosmology, psychology, agriculture, and the healing arts. Unlike the western scientific method, native thinking does not isolate an object or phenomenon in order to understand it, but perceives it in terms of relationship. An understanding of the relationships that bind together natural forces and all forms of life has been fundamental to the ability of indigenous peoples to live for millennia in spiritual and physical harmony with the land. It is clear that the first peoples offer perspectives that can help us work toward solutions at this time of global environmental crisis.

Neil McLeod. *Cree Narrative Memory: From treaties to contemporary times*. Purich Press.

Neal McLeod examines the history of the nêhiyawak (Cree People) of western Canada from the massive upheavals of the 1870s and the reserve period to the vibrant cultural and political rebirth of contemporary times. Central to the text are the narratives of McLeod's family, which give first hand examples of the tenacity and resiliency of the human spirit while providing a rubric for reinterpreting the history of Indigenous people, drawing on Cree worldviews and Cree narrative structures.

In a readable style augmented with extensive use of the Cree language throughout, McLeod draws heavily on original research, the methodology of which could serve as a template for those doing similar work. While the book is based on the Cree experience of the Canadian prairies, its message and methodology are applicable to all Indigenous societies.

Joyce Green (Ed.). *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. Fernwood Books.

The majority of scholarly and activist opinion by and about Aboriginal women claims that feminism is irrelevant for them. Yet, there is also an articulate, theoretically informed and activist constituency that identifies as feminist. By and about Aboriginal feminists, this book provides a powerful and original intellectual and political contribution demonstrating that feminism has much to offer Aboriginal women in their struggles against oppression. The contributors are from Canada, the USA, Sami (Samiland) and Aotearoa/New Zealand. The chapters include theoretical contributions, stories of political activism and deeply personal accounts of developing political consciousness.

Wade Davis. *The Wayfinders: Why ancient wisdom matters in the modern world*. House of Anansi Press.

Every culture is a unique answer to a fundamental question: What does it mean to be human and alive? Anthropologist and National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Wade Davis leads us on a thrilling journey to celebrate the wisdom of the world's indigenous cultures. In Polynesia we set sail with navigators whose ancestors settled the Pacific ten centuries before Christ. In the Amazon we meet the descendants of a true Lost Civilization, the people of the Anaconda. In the Andes we discover that the Earth really is alive, while in the far reaches of Australia we experience Dreamtime, the all-embracing philosophy of the first humans to walk out of Africa. We then travel to Nepal, where we encounter a wisdom hero, a Bodhisattva, who emerges from forty-five years of Buddhist retreat and solitude. And finally we settle in Borneo, where the last rainforest nomads struggle to survive. Understanding the lessons of this journey will be our mission for the next century. For at risk is the human legacy — a vast archive of knowledge and expertise, a catalogue of the imagination. Rediscovering a new appreciation for the diversity of the human spirit, as expressed by culture, is among the central challenges of our time.