

## INDIG ST 4A03 Storytelling and Environmental Conservation

Fall 2020: Monday 11:30-2:20, online via Zoom

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Office hours: by appointment only

### Course Description:

This course studies contemporary Indigenous storytelling, focusing both on continuing oral and literary traditions, and on how Indigenous storytellers make use of visual and digital media. Especial focus will be given to intersections between Indigenous storytelling, ecology, and ethical ways of being in the world. In this course we will explore themes such as: the false dichotomy between human and nature; European diffusionism and hierarchies of being; how story shapes land and land shapes story; ancestral, storied place as evidence of Indigenous land rights; and, how digital media offers new modes of conserving Indigenous histories, stories, and landed relationships, while also opening pathways for Indigenous land and water protection.

### Evaluation:

Participation	15%
Keywords Assignment	15%
Reading the Land Recording	20%
Final Project	
ESRI Story Map	25%
PBL Paper	25%

### Assignments:

#### Participation (15%)

- Every week will have assigned discussion questions that go along with the readings
- In small groups students will work together on a google doc to answer the discussion question for the week (all groups will do this; outside of seminar time)
- Each class one group will be assigned to present their response to the discussion questions and one group will be assigned to respond and to ask questions.
- Google docs will then be handed in to me for mark-up
- Participation in the last two seminars of the semester:
  - o PBL papers; students will share their solutions to environmental issues
  - o Listening Part; students will listen to the “reading the land” audio recordings of their peers

#### Keywords Assignment (15%) **Due Monday September 21<sup>st</sup>**

- This assignment asks you to consider the weight and significance of the vocabularies, words, and languages we use. Students will write a paper of 800–1000 words tracing the significance of words that are particularly noteworthy and/or controversial in the fields of Indigenous Studies, Literature, and Ecology. Areas of discussion that may prove fertile

sites for keywords are environmentalism, conservation, human vs. nature, history, myth, and oral vs. literate. Words whose meanings have undergone significant changes over time, or whose current usages are ambivalent/under contestation are particularly fruitful sites of analysis.

- Your task is to produce a genealogy of the word(s), highlighting their present usage and historical development. Citing specific instances of the word's usage wherever possible, each entry must address the following questions: • What are the genealogies of this word and how do these genealogies shape its contemporary use? • In what contexts (texts, occasions of speaking, other constellations of words) does this word appear? • What ways of thinking are enabled or occluded by the use of this word? Remember that your task is not to defend accurate vs. inaccurate uses of a term, or to argue for or against particular usages. Rather, the goal is to show the often invisible historical paths by which words have come to acquire particular senses and, in the process, to emphasize the material and symbolic networks through which certain things and ideas become meaningful. Assessment: Grading for this assignment will be based on the detail, accuracy and insight of your description, which should convey both the historical development of your word(s) and the tensions and discontinuities it embodies.

#### Reading the Land Exercise (20%) **Due Monday October 5<sup>th</sup>**

- 1) Students will listen to a guided walk recording on “reading the land” as they walk through an ecological zone of their choosing. This recording will help them develop the skills to be in place, to slow their temporalities, and to apply a practice of cultural empiricism in interpreting their experience of place.
- 2) Students will return once more to that same place and place focus on how the place may be storied. Who is around you? Water, trees, rocks, animals etc. Taking note of the beings sharing space, students will then conduct research on an Indigenous story of that being. For example, maybe I find a story about how chipmunk got her stripes (Bruchac).
- 3) Students will then return one final time to their place and reflect on how the story they now carry with them might change their relationship, their experience, interpretation, or understanding of the place. In a 10-minute audio or audio/visual recording students will explain how learning about the story influenced their relationship or experience of being in place and how being in place might influence their understanding of story. A key research question to consider will be: how might stories change human relationships to place, land, and nonhumans, and in what kinds of ways might such a changing relationship inform motivations for conservation. Students will post this audio or audio/visual recording on A2L for their peers to watch/listen to.

#### Final Project (50%)

- 1) Choose an environmental issue (e.g., clearcutting, green house gases, nuclear waste, loss of animal life, dams and locks, water injustice, etc.). You will work with a small group to research this issue or controversy (i.e., provide background, context, an overview of the pertinent issues, the relevant policies affecting the issue). Students will use ESRI Story Map program to do cultural mapping of where this issue is unfolding and who the

peoples are who live in relation to this place and are being affected. (25%) **Due Monday November 2<sup>nd</sup>**.

- 2) In your small groups devise solutions to the assigned problem. These groups are responsible for conducting research on the problem, and ultimately presenting their findings and recommendations back to the larger class. PBL group response papers are to be 2pgs in length. (25%) **Due Monday November 23<sup>rd</sup>**.

### **University Policies:**

- In the event of class cancellations, students will be notified on Avenue to Learn and via email. It is your responsibility to check these sites regularly for any such announcements.
- Email Policy: It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

### **Policies for this course:**

- Late assignment policy: do your best to keep up with the readings and written work. Shit does happen, however; sometimes your brain and body aren't able to get you where you need to be in the time allotted. If so, please get in touch so we can make a plan: in most cases it will be possible to arrange for a new timeframe that will enable you to complete your work to the best of your ability. There are no penalties for late assignments; however, assignments handed in after the due date will be graded without comment.
- Accessibility Statement: we may all need some form of accommodation in this class, because we all learn differently, and we are all subject to emergencies of various kinds and degree. Your ability to engage and participate fully in this course is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your ability to meet certain requirements as assigned in the course and/or if you have had specific accommodations approved by Student Accessibility Services, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, resources exist on campus to support your learning; please let me know how I can help direct you to them.
- Covid-19 & The Online Classroom: the pandemic has hit us all in varying ways. I recognize that covid-19 may be causing undue hardship for many of us in ways that may be visible or invisible. I want you to know that I am here to support you in whatever ways that I am able. Part of the difficulty of this moment in history is that we will be learning together how to do coursework virtually. I hope we can develop and maintain open communication around our needs in order to mitigate the negative impact of these changes. If the technology used for this class pose any barriers to your education – for example, if you have unstable internet, or limited access to a computer – I would ask you to please let me know and we will make alternate arrangements.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

*At certain points in the course it may make good sense to modify the schedule outlined below. The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of the course and will notify students accordingly. Please ensure you have completed the assigned readings before each class.*

Monday September 14<sup>th</sup>

### **Human- animal divide**

- Vanessa Watts-Powless. “Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go On a European World Tour!).” *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2.1 (2013).
- Kim Tallbear. “Why Interspecies Thinking Needs Indigenous Standpoints.” *Theorizing the Contemporary: Cultural Anthropology* (2011).

Monday September 21<sup>st</sup>

- **Keywords Assignment Due**

### **Untouched wilderness**

- William Cronon. “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.” *Environmental History*, 1.1 (1996): 7-28.
- Watson, A., Lilian, A., Glaspell, B. “The relationship between traditional ecological knowledge, evolving cultures, and wilderness protection in the Circumpolar North.” *Ecology and Society* 8.1 (2004).

Monday September 28<sup>th</sup>

### **Conservationism vs IK and TEK**

- Nadasdy, P. “The Anti-Politics of TEK: The Institutionalization of Co-Management Discourse and Practice.” *Anthropologica* 47.2 (2005): 215-232.
- Richmond, L., Middleton, BR., Gilmer, R., Grossman, Z., Janis, T., et al. “Indigenous Studies Speaks to Environmental Management.” *Environmental Management* 52.5 (2013): 1041-5.

### **Indigenous-led Ecological Stewardship**

- McGregor, D. “Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations and sustainable forest management in Canada: The influence of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.” *Journal of Environmental Management* 92.2 (2011): 300-310.
- Mcmillan, JL., Prosper, K. “Remobilizing netukulimk: indigenous cultural and spiritual connections with resource stewardship and fisheries management in Atlantic Canada.” *Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries*. 26.4 (2016): 629-647.

Monday October 5<sup>th</sup>

- **Reading the Land A/V Assignment Due**

### **Environmentalism vs. Indigeneity**

- Elizabeth Rule. “Seals, Selfies, and the Settler State: Indigenous Motherhood and Gendered Violence in Canada.” *American Quarterly* 70.4 (2018): 741-754.

- Giles, A., Fanning, L., Denny, S., Tyson, P. “Improving the American Eel Fishery Through the Incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge into Policy Level Decision Making in Canada.” *Human Ecology* 44.2 (2016):167-183.

#### Monday October 19<sup>th</sup>

- **Storied land**
  - La Paperson. “A ghetto land pedagogy: an antidote for settler environmentalism.” *Environmental Education Research* 20:1 (2014): 115-130.
- **Reading the Land**
  - Leanne Simpson. “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation.” *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3.3 (2014): 1-25.

#### Monday October 26<sup>th</sup>

- **Story as methodology**
  - S Styres, C Haig-Brown, M Blimkie. “Towards a Pedagogy of Land: The Urban Context.” *Canadian Journal of Education* 36.2 (2013): 34-67.
  - Bishop, R. “Freeing ourselves from neo-colonial domination in research: a Maori approach to creating knowledge.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11.2 (1998): 199-219.

#### Monday November 2<sup>nd</sup>

- **ESRI Story Map Due**
- **Story as evidence of land rights**
  - *Delgamuukw v British Columbia*
  - Higgins, N. “Songlines and Land Claims; Space and Place.” *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* (2020).

#### Monday November 9<sup>th</sup>

- **Digital storytelling and conservation**
  - LS Clark, A Hinzo. “Digital Survivance: Mediatization and the sacred in the tribal digital activism of the# NoDAPL movement.” *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 8.1 (2019): 76-104.
  - Cunsolo Willox, Ashlee; Harper, Sherilee L; Edge, Victoria L. “Storytelling in a digital age: digital storytelling as an emerging narrative method for preserving and promoting indigenous oral wisdom.” *Qualitative Research* 13.2 (2013):127-147.

#### Monday November 16<sup>th</sup>

- **Land and water protection**
  - *Lament for the Land* – film

- Willow, Anna J. “Clear-Cutting and Colonialism: The Ethnopolitical Dynamics of Indigenous Environmental Activism in Northwestern Ontario.” *Ethnohistory* 56.1 (2009): 35-67.

Monday November 23<sup>rd</sup>

- **PBL Response Papers Due**
- **Giving personhood rights to Land**
  - Video – *The River is Me*
- **Protests & Social Justice**
  - Leanne Simpson. “Aambe! Maajaadaa! (What #IdleNoMore Means to Me).”
  - Leanne Simpson – *Leaks* music video

Monday November 30<sup>th</sup>

- Listening Party

Monday December 7<sup>th</sup>

- Student presentations

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