

INDIGENOUS ONTOLOGIES AND WAYS OF KNOWING

Fall 2020

Instructor: Dr. Vanessa Watts
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Lecture: Weekly
Room: Online

Office: KTH 637
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-2:30pm
TA: TBA
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Course Description

This course will examine the ways in which Indigenous peoples understand themselves as social beings and societies. Indigenous theories and ways of knowing will be drawn from various Indigenous societies throughout North America.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Identify foundational concepts of Indigenous ways of knowing
- Recognize the influence of settler colonialism in social theory on Indigenous peoples
- Distinguish between diverse Indigenous knowledge systems
- Apply Indigenous methodologies to the examination of social phenomena
- Explain myths and assumptions about Indigenous ways of knowing
- Discuss how Indigenous ways of knowing impact the social world
- Locate Indigenist-informed thinking in contemporary social theory

Required Materials and Texts

- Online, Module-based

Class Format

Online, Module-based

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Class Participation Activities – 12% (6 x 2%), Modules 1, 3, 4, 7, 9 and 10
2. Online Quizzes – 8% (4 x 2%), Modules 2, 5, 6 and 8
3. Critical Reflection of Article – 15%, November 22nd
4. Midterm test – 20%, October 22nd
5. Academic Poster – 25%, December 9th
6. Academic Poster Podcast – 10%, December 9th
7. Peer Feedback – 10%, December 18th

Course Evaluation – Details

Class Participation Activities (12%), Modules 1, 3, 4, 7, 9 and 10

Class participation activities (weekly class discussion with topic question prompt). 1 per week for 6 weeks @ 2% per week. Discussion and prompts will take place on A2L during Modules 1, 3, 4, 7, 9 and 10.

Online Quizzes (8%), Modules 2, 5, 6 and 8

The purpose of a quiz is to immediately assess your knowledge of the course topics. The questions included in a quiz relate to the course and the module learning outcomes. There are four quizzes to be completed. Each quiz contains 8 questions each at 0.5% per question for a total of 2% per quiz, and a total of 8% for the completed four quizzes. Online quizzes will take place during Modules 2, 5, 6 and 8.

Critical Reflection of Article (15%), November 22nd

You will select **one (1)** of the readings from a list provided, and read through it carefully. Then, write a critical reflection of approximately 750 words in length, according to the instructions indicated below. This assignment is graded out of 100 and is evaluated using a rubric. The rubric for this assignment can be found on A2L.

Midterm test (20%), October 22nd

The midterm test is worth 20% of your total course grade and contains 40 multiple choice questions. The test will be completed online using the Avenue to Learn “Quizzes” tool. It will be made available for a specific, time-limited period, as indicated in the **Detailed Course Schedule**. You *must* access and complete the test during this designated period, and there will be no additional times at which it can be written.

Academic Poster (25%), December 9th

In this assignment you will design and create an academic poster based on the content of one (1) Module from this course. Your selected module must be chosen from Modules 2 through 9 (i.e. you cannot select Modules 1, 10 or 11). When selecting a Module, make sure to choose one that is of interest to you. The academic poster you create should provide a visual representation of your learning from the selected module.

Academic Poster Podcast (10%), December 9th

In this assignment you will record an audio podcast to accompany the academic poster you have created. The podcast should provide a concise explanation of the content of your poster, touching on the key points and conveying them in a clear and compelling way. The podcast should **a minimum of three (3) minutes and a maximum of five (5) minutes long**.

Peer Feedback (10%), December 18th

You will review **four (4)** academic posters from your classmates, on which you will provide peer feedback. These four (4) posters will be those authored by the fellow

members of your assigned Discussion group. After reviewing the four posters and their corresponding podcasts, provide thoughtful written feedback of up to 250 words for each of them (for a total of up to 1000 words).

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Module 1 (September 8th – 13th)

Introduction to Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Readings:

- [Reconciliation Dialogue Workshop](#) (read the “Top Misconceptions About Aboriginal Peoples” section; 6 pages total)
- Denis, Jeffrey. [Contact Theory in a Small-Town Settler-Colonial Context: The Reproduction of Laissez-Faire Racism in Indigenous-White Canadian Relations](#) (read from start of the “Setting” section to the end of the “How Settler-Colonialism and Small-Town Dynamics Matter” section; approximately 13 pages total)
- [Canada’s Dark Side: Indigenous Peoples and Canada’s 150th Celebration](#) (15 pages)
- **Notes:** Class participation activities (Discussion), 2%

Module 2 (September 14th – 20th)

Locating the Histories of Indigenous Peoples in Scholarship

Readings:

- Parker, Arthur C. [The Social Elements of the Indian Problem](#) (16 pages).
- Smith, “Research Through Imperial Eyes,” from *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (in Courseware, 14 pages).
- Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (in Courseware, 17 pages).
- Tuck, Eve. [Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities](#) (read pp. 409 – 416).
- **Notes:** Quiz, 2%

Module 3 (September 21st – 27th)

The Emergence of Indigenous Theorizing in the Academy

Readings:

- [“Ethnoscience and Indian Realities”](#) (chapter 5 in *Spirit & Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr. Reader*, 6 pages)
 - [“Indians, Archaeologists, and the Future”](#) (chapter 6 in *Spirit & Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr. Reader*, 5 pages)
 - LaDuke, W., “Imperial Anthropology: The Ethics of Collecting” in *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (in Coursepack, 14 pages).
 - [‘A Direct Act of Resurgence, A Direct Act of Sovereignty’: Reflections On Idle No More, Indigenous Activism, And Canadian Settler Colonialism](#) (read from the start of the “Winter of Discontent: The Events and Contexts of Idle No More” section to the end of the “Settler Canadian Politics and Idle No More” section; 9 pages total).
- **Notes:** Class participation activities (Discussion), 2%

Module 4 (September 28th – October 4th)

Straddling Two Worlds: Colliding Epistemologies

Readings:

- Mohawk, J., “Part I: Earth Spirit” in *Thinking in Indian: Collected essays of John Mohawk*. (in Courseware, 23 pages)
 - [Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept](#) (5 pages)
 - [Bear, L.L., “Jagged Worldviews Colliding”](#) in Battiste, M. (ed.) *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, pp. 77 – 85.
- **Notes:** Class participation activities (Discussion), 2%

Module 5 (October 5th – 11th)

Understanding Indigenous Methodologies

Readings:

- Kovach, M. “Chapter 4: Applying a Decolonizing Lens within Indigenous Research Frameworks,” in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (in Courseware, 19 pages)
- Wilson, S. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (in Courseware, read pp. 69 – 79).
- [The First Nations Principles of OCAP](#) (4 pages)

- Kovach, M. “Chapter Five: Story as Indigenous Methodology” in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (in Courseware, 20 pages)

- **Notes:** Quiz, 2%

October 12th – 18th

Reading Week (no course content scheduled)

October 19th – 25th

Mid-term Test

Module 6 (October 26th – November 8th, 2-week module)

The Social: Indigenous Cosmologies through Story

Readings:

- [It Sometimes Speaks to Us: Decolonizing Education](#) Read from the “Content Area: Spiritual Knowledge” section heading to the end of the paper (pp. 110 – 121).
- [Bridging Native and Western Science](#) Read from the “Introduction” section heading to the end of the “Can the West Benefit from Native Science?” section (pp. 1 – 14)
- Simpson, L. “Niimtoowaad Mikinaag Gijiyig Bakonaan (Dancing on our Turtle’s Back): Aandisokaanan and Resurgence” in *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*. (in Courseware, 19 pages).
- Cajete, G. *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (in Courseware, 18 pages). Read from the beginning of the “Animals in Native Myth and Reality” section to the end of the “Animals and Spirituality” section (pp: 149 – 167.)

- **Notes:** Quiz, 2%

Module 7 (November 9th – 15th)

The Social: The Importance of Land

Readings:

- Deloria, *et al.* (2001). “Power and Place – Equal Personality” in *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (in Courseware, 7 pages)

- Watts, V. (2017). "What is Indigenous Sovereignty?" in G. Pavlich and M. Hird (eds.) *Questioning Sociology* (in Courseware)
- [Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity](#) (7 pages)
- **Notes:** Class participation activities (Discussion), 2%

Module 8 (November 16th – 22nd)

The Social: Governance

Readings:

- [With or Without You: First Nations Law \(in Canada\)](#) Read Section II, "First Nations Law: Traditions, the Trickster, and Transformations" (pp. 646 – 657)
- Napoleon, V. "Thinking About Indigenous Legal Orders" in R. Provost and C. Sheppard (eds.), *Dialogues on Human Rights and Legal Pluralism* (in Courseware, 16 pages)
- Johnston, B. "The Nature of Animals" in *Ojibway Heritage* (in Courseware, 12 pages)
- **Notes:** Quiz, 2%; Critical Reflection Due (November 22nd)

Module 9 (November 23rd – 29th)

The Social: Gender and Colonialism

Readings:

- Sunseri, L. "A History of the Oneida Nation: From Creation Story to the Present" in *Being Again of One Mind: Oneida Women and the Struggle for Decolonization*. (in Courseware)
- [Volume 4: Perspectives and Realities – Women's Perspectives](#) (read pages 17 - 26)
- [Volume 4: Perspectives and Realities – Women's Perspectives](#) (read pages 26 – 36).
- **Notes:** Class participation activities (Discussion), 2%

Module 10 (November 30th – December 9th)

Conclusion

Readings:

- [Indigenization as Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Decolonization: Navigating The Different Visions for Indigenizing the Canadian Academy](#) (9 pages)

- [Visual Cultures of Indigenous Futurisms](#) (9 pages)
- **Notes:** Class participation activities (Discussion), 2%; Academic Poster Due; Academic Poster Podcast Due

Module 11 (December 10th – December 18th)

Peer Feedback

Readings:

- There are no additional readings or study materials for this module. However, before you get started on reviewing your classmates' work, please read through the **Peer Feedback Assignment** page found in the *Evaluations* module carefully and make sure to follow the instructions.
- **Notes:** Peer Feedback Due, 10%

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Please see instructions for individual assignments listed on Avenue to Learn as submission requirements may vary.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be subject to a 5% per day late penalty (includes weekends and holidays) for up to seven (7) days. After this date, no assignments will be accepted and a grade of zero (0) will be applied. Extensions for course work must be approved by the instructor before the due date (see Academic Regulations), and will be granted for illness or emergencies only. Students may be asked to submit supporting documentation for an extension request.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, usernames for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a [RISO](#) accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster

account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F