

# HIS 323

## American Indians and Nature

Spring 2018  
T, TH 2:00-3:15, MHRA 1214

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Office Hours: T, TH 1:00-2:00 p.m., after class, & by appointment

**History Department Facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/>  
**History Department Website:** <https://his.uncg.edu/>

Description: This course examines the interaction of American Indians and nature from before European arrival to today. Oftentimes, popular conceptions of American Indians stereotype Indians as natural ecologists, “the first environmentalists” in tune with their environments. A more productive way to understand American Indians and the natural world is as people using, interacting with, and imbuing significance on the world around them, much like the rest of humanity. Their use, interactions with, and meaning of the natural world also changed over time in response to long-term changes in the environment as well as particular historical forces that impinged on their lives. Through a series of case studies about Indians across North America, this course examines these changing relationships with an eye toward understanding how American Indian groups, themselves, understood their relationships with the natural world.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

Linda Hogan, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* (W.W. Norton and Co., 2007)  
Joy Porter, *Native American Environmentalism: Land, Spirit, and the Idea of Wilderness* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014)  
Shepard Krech *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2000)  
Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (South End Press, 2016)  
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Knowledge, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Milkweed, 2013)  
Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (Penguin, 2010)

### FORMAT

We will discuss readings & films every week, usually on Thursdays, so you must keep up with readings as listed in the schedule below and every Thursday turn in a brief prompt (1 or 2 questions) to guide our discussion. We will see some documentary films and discuss them as outlined below. You will also write about some of your readings and the films, and you will complete a brief research project on a contemporary Native environmental issue. At times, I will lecture about particular topics to give you more background context for our readings or to share additional material not covered in your readings.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)**

Historical Perspectives (GHP) Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives.
2. Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally and/or in writing.

General Education Global Non-Western Perspectives Student Learning Outcomes (GN):

1. Find, interpret, and evaluate information on diverse cultures.
2. Describe interconnections among regions of the world. (Must include substantial focus on cultures, nations or sub-nationalities in the Caribbean, Latin America, Middle East/North Africa, Asia, Africa, Pacific Islands, or indigenous peoples around the world).
3. Use diverse cultural frames of reference and alternative perspectives to analyze issues.

Course Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Analyze and comprehend historical changes in American Indian interaction with nature from the pre-contact era to today. [Historical Comprehension]
2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view. [Historical Analysis]

**ASSIGNMENTS****Discussion Questions**

Every Thursday at the start of class during the first 10 of our meeting weeks turn in one or two prompts/questions to guide our discussion of that week's readings. These can be hand-written and only count for one point each towards your final grade. (GHP 2 / GN 1, 3 / Course 1)

**Think pieces**

You are required to write three "think pieces" throughout the semester. For each think piece, I will give you a question(s) based on the readings; you are to address the question in a 4-5 page essay. A good and thoughtful answer will require that you have read the assigned books closely, attended the seminar sessions, and thought carefully about the question and your answer. I do not expect you to do any outside readings in order to write these essays. Due dates are listed in the Course Schedule. (GHP 2 / GN 2, 3 / Course 1)

**Current Issue Case Study**

Based on the course readings, especially the LaDuke, *All Our Relations* book, research a current topic involving a specific American Indian tribe and the environment. Your topic must be approved by me ahead of time. See the additional handout for further information about completing this paper. (GHP, 1, 2 / GN 1, 2, 3 / Course 1, 2)

***There are no exams in this course!***

**GRADING SUMMARY**

Discussion Questions	10 x 1	= 10%
Think Pieces	3 x 20	= 60%
Current Issue Case Study		= <u>30%</u>
		<b>100%</b>

**Attendance and related issues:**

You are expected to attend every class. Roll will be taken and every absence above three (3) for the semester will result in a lowering of your course grade, unless pre-approved by me. All assignments must be completed and turned in on the date they are due, or earlier. **No late assignments are accepted without prior approval.**

**Electronic Devices Policy: Use of phones and tablets is strictly prohibited.** Use of these devices will result in your being asked to leave the class and being counted as absent. **Laptops may be used for notetaking only – IF you sit in the front row.** If at any time, however, I discover that you are using your laptop in class for anything else (checking your email, playing games, surfing the web, etc.), you will be asked to leave class and counted as absent and will no longer be able to use your laptop for the remainder of the semester. In addition, if it comes to my attention that your laptop use in class is distracting your fellow students in any way, you will no longer be able to use your laptop for the remainder of the semester.

**Academic Support & Disability Accommodations** The University of North Carolina at Greensboro seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Should you have any needs or questions related to disability issues, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS - <https://ods.uncg.edu/>), located in the Elliot University Center, #215. As an instructor, I am committed to making this course accessible to all of the students in it, and will work with OARS to accommodate students' requests. You do not need to disclose details about your disability to the instructor in order to receive accommodations, but you do need to have documentation from OARS for whatever accommodation you have been approved for.

**The Writing Center** You pay for the Writing Center via student fees, therefore you should take advantage of it to improve your writing. No one is born a good writer – it takes practice and revisions to become a good writer, a skill that will serve you well the rest of your life in everything you do. Visit the Writing Center (<https://writingcenter.uncg.edu/>) to learn more.

**Plagiarism** (to take the ideas, writings, etc. of another and present them as your own) is strictly forbidden and will be punished to the fullest extent possible, including failure of the course and/or expulsion from the university. Please review UNCG's policy on plagiarism: <https://osrr.uncg.edu/academic-integrity/>

## CALENDAR

- WEEK 1 Introduction & Immersion  
1/9 – 1/11 Reading: Hogan, *Dwellings* pp. 11-41  
**Due 1/11:** Discussion Question
- WEEK 2 Spirituality & Nature  
1/16 – 1/18 Reading: Hogan, *Dwellings* pp. 42-end  
**Due 1/18:** Discussion Question  
Film: *Earth Speaks: Native Americans Speak about the Earth* (2015)
- WEEK 3 Scholarly Approaches to Native Environmentalism  
1/23 – 1/25 Reading: Porter, *Native American Environmentalism* pp.1-53  
**Due 1/25:** Discussion Question  
Film: excerpt of *America Before Columbus* (National Geographic, 2009)
- WEEK 4 Scholarly Approaches to Native Environmentalism  
1/30 – 2/1 Reading: Porter, *Native American Environmentalism* pp.55-116  
**Due 2/1:** Discussion Question
- WEEK 5 Scholarly Approaches to Native Environmentalism & European Arrival  
2/6 – 2/8 Reading: Porter, *Native American Environmentalism* pp.117-end  
**Due 2/8:** Discussion Question & Think Piece #1  
Film: excerpt of *America Before Columbus* (National Geographic, 2009) on the Columbian Exchange
- WEEK 6 Key Native-Environmental Interactions  
2/13 – 2/15 Reading: Krech, *The Ecological Indian* pp. 15-122  
**Due 2/15:** Discussion Question  
Film: *Cahokia: America's Lost Metropolis* (BBC, 2000)
- WEEK 7 Key Native-Environmental Interactions  
2/20 – 2/22 Reading: Krech, *The Ecological Indian* pp. 123-end  
**Due 2/22:** Discussion Question
- WEEK 8 Native Knowledge & Scientific Knowledge  
2/27 – 3/1 Reading: Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, pp. 1-117  
**Due 2/27:** Think Piece #2  
**Due 3/1:** Discussion Question  
Film: *Traditional Knowledge and the Environment* (2017)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5eSAOoj7p8>

**March 5-9 = UNCG Spring Break**

- WEEK 9 Native Knowledge & Scientific Knowledge  
3/13 – 3/15 Reading: Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, pp. 119-222  
**Due 3/15:** Discussion Question  
Film: *Winona LaDuke - Seeds The Creator Gave Us* (2013)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEVg\\_KMPCmg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEVg_KMPCmg)
- WEEK 10 Native Knowledge & Scientific Knowledge  
3/20 – 3/22 Reading: Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, pp. 223-end  
**Due 3/22:** Discussion Question  
Film: *Tom B.K. Goldtooth – Stopping the Privatization of Nature* (2014)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQwwTwpOi3I>
- WEEK 11 Environmental Crises in Indian Country  
3/27 – 3/29 Reading: LaDuke, *All Our Relations* pp. 1-92  
Film: *Homeland* (Bullfrog Films, 2005)  
**Due 3/27:** Think Piece #3
- WEEK 12 Environmental Crises in Indian Country  
4/3 – 4/5 Reading: LaDuke, *All Our Relations* pp. 96-end  
Film: *Rise! Apache Stronghold* (VICE, 2016)
- WEEK 13 Lakotas & Sacred Land  
4/10 – 4/12 Reading: Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills* pp. Introduction-103  
Film: *Red Power Energy* (Vision Maker Media, 2016)
- WEEK 14 Standing Rock Lakota & #NoDAPL  
4/17 – 4/19 Reading: Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills* pp. 107-end  
Film: *Rise! Red Power: Standing Rock Part II* (2017)  
See also: *BLACK SNAKE KILLAZ: A #NODAPL STORY* (2017)  
<https://www.unicornriot.ninja/black-snake-killaz-2017/>
- WEEK 15 **Due: Current Issue Case Study**  
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