

Course Syllabus

HIS 323: American Indians and Nature

Spring 2021

Online, asynchronous

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My UNCG webpage: <https://his.uncg.edu/faculty/obrien.html> (Links to an external site.)

Office Hours: I am available for Zoom meetings, just contact me via either email or the Canvas site to set up a day & time. You can also email me or send me a message via Canvas anytime and I will respond, though be aware that depending on what time of day you send it I may not see it until the next day, and there is likely to be a delay in replying to messages sent over a weekend.

History Department Facebook

page: <https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/> (Links to an external site.)

History Department Website: <https://his.uncg.edu/> (Links to an external site.)

I acknowledge that UNC Greensboro is located on the traditional lands of the Keyauwee, Catawba, Eno, Sappony, Shakori, and Saura Nations. See the full [UNCG Land Acknowledgement](#) (Links to an external site.).

Covid-19

If a student has COVID-19 symptoms they should contact [Student Health Services](#) at 336-334-5340 and self-report their health status here: <https://update.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 and because of particular historical forces that impinged on their lives. This course examines these changing relationships with an eye toward understanding how American Indian groups, themselves, understood and understand their relationships with the natural world. The result should be a more thorough understanding of the North American environment over time and how the actions of people have impacted the environment.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Linda Hogan (Chickasaw), *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* (W.W. Norton and Co., 2007)

Robin Wall Kimmerer (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Knowledge, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Milkweed, 2013)

Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Confederated Tribes), *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock* (Beacon Press, 2020)

Winona LaDuke (Mississippi Band of Anishinaabe Indians), *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (South End Press, 2016)

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]

Attendance and related issues: This is an asynchronous class, meaning that you are not required to meet as a class on certain days or times. However, you must complete all readings, and view lectures and/or videos each week. You will have a written assignment of some sort to turn in every week. All assignments must be completed and turned in on the date they are due, or earlier. **No late assignments are accepted without prior approval.**

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/> (Links to an external site.)), located in the Elliot University Center, #215. As an instructor, I 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/> (Links to an external site.)) 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. Please review UNCG's policy on plagiarism: <https://osrr.uncg.edu/academic-integrity/> (Links to an external site.)

ASSIGNMENTS

See the Course [Modules](#) for weekly readings and assignment details.

*All written assignments submitted via Canvas must be one of the following file types: .doc / .docx / or .pdf

I do not accept late assignments without prior approval from me.

1. Reflections on weekly readings, lectures, and/or videos

Most weeks you will submit a one paragraph response to my prompt about that week's materials.

Format: Each weekly reflection should be comprised of one paragraph, no more than one page, answers based entirely on the readings for this week. These weekly reflections are not being graded for grammar, though write as clearly and concisely as possible. They are being graded for how well they reflect the information and arguments found in the readings for this week and how well they answer the question(s). There are three possible grades when you turn in the weekly reflection: 100 / 70 / or 50 or a zero if you do not turn one in. (GHP 2 / GN 1, 3 / Course 1)

2. Analytical Essays

You are required to write two analytical essays this semester. For each essay, 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, PowerPoint presentations, and other readings closely, watched any videos, and thought carefully about the question and your answer. I do not expect you to do any additional research in order to write these essays, other than the assigned readings. (GHP 2 / GN 2, 3 / Course 1)

The instructions for Analytical essay #1 are in the [Week 5 Module](#) and under [Assignments](#), and the instructions for Analytical essay #2 are in the [Week 8 Module](#) and under [Assignments](#).

3. Current Issue Essay/Unessay

Using the LaDuke, *All Our Relations* and Gilio-Whitaker, *As Long as Grass Grows* books, and other materials presented in weeks 9-14, research one of the specific American Indian nations and the ongoing environmental issue described in those materials and update the story to inform me about the latest status of that issue for that Native nation. See the specific and more detailed instructions under [Assignments](#) or in the [Week 14 Module](#) 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

Weekly Reflections 10 x 2 = 20%

Analytical Essays 2 x 20 = 40%

Current Issue Essay/Unessay = 40%

100%

SCHEDULE

The detailed weekly schedule is found in the [Modules](#). However, I have organized the course around five major topics and we will spend at least two weeks on each one. The topics are: Pre-contact Native Environmentalism (Weeks 2-3); Environmental Consequences of the arrival of Europeans and Africans (Weeks 4-5); Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) & Science (Weeks 6-8); Food Sovereignty (Weeks 9-10); and Environmental Resource Battles (Weeks 11-14).