Introduction to Indigenous Knowledge for Environmental Studies Students

**Instructors:** Peter Schuler, Anishinaabe Elder  
Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation

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**Meeting Time/Location:** Wednesdays 2:30-5:20pm

**Overview:**

This unique course, co-taught with Traditional Knowledge Holder/Elder Peter Schuler from the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, will provide students in the Faculty of Environment an introduction to First Nations issues in Canada and to Traditional Knowledge and Practice. The course introduces students to academic literature that documents historic and current Indigenous issues in Canada as well as decolonizing and critical Indigenous methodologies but more importantly, the course gives students the opportunity to learn directly from a Traditional Knowledge Holder in both classroom and experiential contexts. Small group discussions will address themes such as Traditional Medicine, understanding our relations, invasive species, different conceptions of time as well as the nature of knowledge.

**Course Objectives:**

1) Through Traditional Teachings and discussions with Peter Schuler:
   (i) Introduce students to First Nations issues in Canada;
   (ii) Introduce students to an understanding of the world through a Traditional Knowledge lens, and;
   (ii) Be able to learn directly from and discuss critically these issues with a Traditional Knowledge Holder.

2) Through weekly readings and discussions:
   (i) Introduce students to some relevant academic literature on First Nations issues in Canada and appropriate/respectful research approaches such as critical Indigenous methodologies and decolonizing methodologies, and;
   (ii) Discuss these in a small group setting with insights from Peter and Dan
Course Structure:

Lecture/seminar discussions: Each class will be losing broken down into two components:

1. Traditional teaching and discussion led by Peter Schuler
2. Discussion of readings and cross cutting themes led by Dan McCarthy

Resources:

Course Texts:

LEARN:
All course communications and course materials (lecture notes, weekly readings) will be provided through LEARN. Please sign in to LEARN as soon as possible and ensure you are on the course roster and that your e-mail address is correct. Course schedule and weekly readings will be provided through LEARN under “Lessons”. Supplemental course readings are posted under “Readings”, under weekly “Lessons”, as links or specific references are provided and students are expected to find these using the University of Waterloo’s E-Journals Collection available at: (http://sfx.scholarsportal.info/waterloo/az). Please allow at least 24 hours for responses to e-mail inquires from the teaching team and do not expect e-mail responses from the teaching team over the weekend.

Course Requirements:

Assignment #1: Weekly Reflections - 20%
- Each week students will be required to do a critical reflection on their learning throughout the course. A synthesis of this personal critical reflection (no more than 1-page) will be submitted to the instructors.
- **Due Date: Every Friday before the class on Wednesday**

Assignment #2: Learning Artifact - 10%
- Students will create an “artifact” that represents their learning throughout the course. Peter will explain the significance of this artifact during class and it will provide part of the basis for the student presentation and final reflective paper.
- **Due Date: Ready for student presentations**

Assignment #3: Presentations - 20%
- Students will provide a 20-minute presentation and foster 10-15 minutes of discussion in the last two weeks of class. The presentations will synthesize their learning throughout the course based on Peter’s teachings, the course readings and will integrate a discussion of their learning artifact.
- **Due Date: Weeks 10-12 – March 16th, 23rd and 30th**
Assignment #4: Final Reflective Paper - 50%

- This final reflective paper will be an opportunity for students to synthesize their learning throughout the term based on an integration of Peter’s teachings, weekly readings and discussions, weekly critical reflections and on their learning artifact. An abstract of the final paper (for discussion purposes only) should be submitted to the instructors via email before the reading break (Friday February 12th before midnight).
- **Due Date:** April 1st by midnight.

Course Schedule and Readings:

NOTE: Please refer to LEARN site regularly for changes to this tentative Schedule and for Weekly Readings

Week #1 – January 6th – Introduction to the course

**Readings:** Braiding Sweetgrass, Planting Sweetgrass


Week #2 – January 13th – What is Medicine?

**Readings:** Braiding Sweetgrass, Planting Sweetgrass


Week #3 – January 20th – What is the Sweat Lodge?

**Readings:**

Braiding Sweetgrass, Tending Sweetgrass


Week #4 – January 27th – What are our relatives doing? Understanding your relatives.

**Readings:**

Braiding Sweetgrass, Picking Sweetgrass


Week #5 – February 3rd – Invasive Species

**Readings:**

Braiding Sweetgrass, Braiding Sweetgrass 1
Week #6 – February 10th – Different Notions of Time – “Indian Time”
Readings:
Braiding Sweetgrass, Braiding Sweetgrass 2

READING WEEK February 17th

Week #7 – February 24th – Women’s Teachings
Readings:
TBD

Week #8 – March 2nd – On the Nature of Knowledge – Traditional Knowledge
Readings:
Braiding Sweetgrass, Burning Sweetgrass 1
Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision. UBC Press: Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Week #9 – March 9th – 8th Fire Prophecy and Synthesis Discussion
Readings:
Braiding Sweetgrass, Burning Sweetgrass 2 + Epilogue
Corntassel, J. (2012). Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization
and sustainable self-determination. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education &
Steinhauer, E. (2002). Thoughts on an indigenous research methodology. Canadian

Week #10 – March 16th – Student Presentations
Readings:
Student-recommended readings

Week #11 – March 23rd – Student Presentations
Readings:
Student-recommended readings

Week #12 – March 30th – Student Presentations
Readings:
Student-recommended readings
**Academic Integrity:**

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/). Students who are unsure what constitutes an academic offence are requested to visit the on-line tutorial at: [http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait/](http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait/)

**Research Ethics:** Please also note that the University of Waterloo requires all research conducted by its students, staff, and faculty which involves humans as participants to undergo prior ethics review and clearance through the Director, Office of Human Research and Animal Care (Office). The ethics review and clearance processes are intended to ensure that projects comply with the Office’s Guidelines for Research with Human Participants (Guidelines) as well as those of provincial and federal agencies, and that the safety, rights and welfare of participants are adequately protected. The Guidelines inform researchers about ethical issues and procedures which are of concern when conducting research with humans (e.g. confidentiality, risks and benefits, informed consent process, etc.). If the development of your research proposal consists of research that involves humans as participants, the please contact the course instructor for guidance and see: [www.research.uwaterloo.ca/ethics/human/](http://www.research.uwaterloo.ca/ethics/human/)

**Note for students with disabilities:** The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

**Religious Observances:** Please inform the instructor at the beginning of term if special accommodation needs to be made for religious observances that are not otherwise accounted for in the scheduling of classes and assignments.

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm). When in doubt, please contact your Undergraduate Advisor for details.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm). For typical penalties, check Guidelines for Assessment of Penalties, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm)
**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 – (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals). See: [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm)

**Consequences of Academic Offences:**
ENV students are strongly encouraged to review the material provided by the university’s Academic Integrity office (see: [http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/Students/index.html](http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/Students/index.html)).

**Turnitin:**
Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments on this course. This is being done to verify use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. In the first lecture of the Term, details will be provided about the arrangements for the use of Turnitin.

**NOTE:** Students may request an alternative to Turnitin, which is to prepare an annotated bibliography for each assignment. For advice on how to prepare an annotated bibliography, see: [http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/annotated-bibliography](http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/annotated-bibliography)