

# COURSE SYLLABUS

## NESC 410: Native American Environmental Ethics

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**Winter quarter: 2010**  
**T/TH:** 2:00 to 4:30  
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“In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.”

Great Law of the Haudenosaunee

**Course Description:** Native American Environmental Ethics is a philosophy class. Specifically it is the study of the “moral philosophy” that is inherent in the traditional relationship between Native people and the natural world. In recent years much has been said and written in mainstream society regarding environmental ethics. This course provides a philosophical foundation for a Native American or Indigenous environmental ethics, then compares, contrasts, and applies this foundation of tribal values to past and present mainstream theory and practices. It is the contention of this course that a Native American environmental ethical foundation can be used not only to positively influence tribal land use and resource management, but also offers a better way for the larger society in general to view and relate to the natural world (5 credits).

**Warning!** A good definition of philosophy would be “A field of study that examines the most fundamental beliefs that serve to define us as human beings and which helps us understand our place in the universe.” The very nature of philosophy makes this class an *intellectual* forum to learn about and exchange new ideas – *there is no right or wrong in the field of philosophy ... just ideas*. Philosophy commonly focuses on matters of religion and spirituality – sensitive topics for some. *Leave your sensitivities at the door*. Northwest Indian College is an institution of higher learning that is dedicated to the free and open exchange of ideas and honest dialogue. You may not agree with the opinions expressed by your instructor and/or your classmates – you don’t have to. You are strongly encouraged to express your own ideas. Above all, be respectful to others.

**Prerequisites:** Junior level standing, Philosophy 140 or NES 310, and/or instructor’s approval.

### NWIC objectives:

As a result of this course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of a sense of place.

2. Demonstrate an understanding of what it is to be a people.

### **Course Objectives:**

As the result of this course students will be able to ...

1. Describe the importance of Native American environmental ethics as a means to perpetuate the cultural survival of tribes.
2. Describe the importance of Native American environmental ethics as a means of maintaining reciprocal and appropriate relationships with the natural world.
3. Describe the philosophical background to Native American environmental ethics using a model such as Vine Deloria, Jr's Power + Place = Personality.
4. Explain the role of Native American environmental ethics as a foundation to current trends in the mainstream environmental movement.
5. Explain the desirability of Native American environmental ethics as a foundation for modern tribal resource management.

**Required Readings:** No textbook has yet been written on the topic of Native American environmental ethics. Consequently, students will be required to read a collection of articles that have been compiled by the instructor.

**Class Attendance:** One of the best indicators of academic success is good attendance. You are expected to attend every class and be on time. You are also expected to remain in class for the duration of class (This includes getting up and walking out of the classroom – which I will interpret as a lack of interest on your part). I will take roll at the beginning of each class. It is your responsibility to see me after class if you have arrived late so that I can mark you as being present. If not, you are absent. Students arriving more than thirty minutes late will be credited with an absence. Rare exceptions may be granted for rare circumstances – “Acts of God” if you will. These exceptions will be solely at the discretion of the instructor.

Excessive failures will also result in your grade being automatically lowered. Students are allowed three unexcused absences without penalty. On the fourth unexcused absence – and with each subsequent unexcused absence – the student will be penalized by the loss of one letter grade. In other words, after seven unexcused absences, the student will receive a failing grade regardless of whatever point total he/he has accumulated.

Four tardies equal an absence.

**Special note to ITV students:** Taking a course over ITV requires a special commitment and sense of responsibility on the part of both the student and the instructor. Difficulties with the technical aspects of the ITV experience, and limitations in direct communication between the instructor and student are just two of the problems we face. Still, ITV can be a great learning experience if we both hold up our end of the bargain. Your good and on-time attendance is absolutely critical for success over ITV. Also important is the respect that we show for each other during class (Please, for example, do not get up and walk around or leave the room during class). My responsibility is to keep you engaged. Your responsibility is to remain engaged. This includes me asking you questions, and you contributing to the class discussion. I realize that this can be difficult, but we both need to make a special effort.

**A note on class work:** This is a 400 level course. Consequently, you will be expected to do 400 level work in terms of the amount and difficulty of the readings assigned to you, as well as the quality of your contribution to the class and to your own grade. In many cases this will be one of the last classes you will take before you earn your BS NES degree.

**Reading assignments and participation points:** This primary methodology for this course is the readings and the follow-up class discussion. Consequently, class attendance and participation will be factored into your final grade. This is a fourth year class and your own educated thoughts and viewpoints are strongly encouraged and welcomed. Students are expected to read – and be prepared to discuss – the assigned readings. *Do not fall behind on your readings!* I will distribute a list of *general discussion questions* at the beginning of the course. There will be three questions for each group of readings – for each topic. You will be expected to intelligently address any or all of these questions at the beginning of the first class in which we will be covering that topic. If it is clear to me that you have not read the assignments, can not address the general discussion questions, and otherwise are unable to contribute to the class discussions, you will lose participation points. You will also lose participation points each time you are absent – excused or unexcused.

**Reflection papers:** Every student is required to write a two to three page *reflection paper* on every assigned reading - those marked with an asterisk (\*) on this syllabus. These papers are to be typed (No handwritten papers will be accepted), double-spaced, using 12 point font. Your name and the title of the assigned reading should appear in the upper left-hand corner of your paper. There are *strict due dates* assigned to each reading (See checklist at the end of this syllabus). Papers can be handed in one week late without penalty. Papers handed in more than one week late will be worth 50% of their original value.

In addition to the reflection papers on the assigned readings, students are also required to submit two page handwritten reflection papers on all videos shown and on all guest speaker presentations. This will be counted as part of your attendance/participation points.

For those students on ITV, please submit all papers to me as email attachments.

**Special Project:** In lieu of a final exam, students will be required to complete a *special project*. This project will be for each student – or a team of two students – to develop a ten-point annotated “Code of Ethics” for a tribal natural resource program. By this I mean ten “statements of ethics” will be presented, each accompanied by a 2-3 paragraph explanation that provide a rationale for each ethical point. This Code of Ethics and rationale should include a “preamble” and reflect what you have learned and/or come to accept during the course. An early rough draft or progress report will be submitted as part of your mid-term grade. A final typed copy of this Code of Ethics will be due the last week of class and the student (s) will also be required to make an oral presentation of this Code of Ethics to the class

NOTE: I have included an example copy of a code of ethics (U.S. Forest Service) in your readings which you may use as a guide. In addition, I have a number of other examples on file in my office which you are welcome to look at.

**Grading procedure and grade scale:** The final grade will consist of the cumulative total of all points earned in the following three evaluative areas: (1) reflection papers – 70% of final grade, (2) attendance and class participation – 20% of final grade, and (3) special project – 10% of final grade.

The final point scale will then be applied:

100 to 90 % = A  
89 to 80 % = B  
79 to 70 % = C  
69 to 60 % = D

**Extra credit assignments:** Included in this reading collection is a number of unassigned essays. You are always encouraged to read these papers. In addition, you may read up to three of these essays and write a two-three page reflection paper on each, for the purpose of extra credit. This extra credit will be used only for the purpose of making up for any deficiencies in your class attendance/participation points. You may submit these extra credit assignments any time.

### **Class calendar:**

Week 1 (January 13/15): The Ethical Universe

Reading: “Introductory Essay: Cultural Worldview and Environmental Ethics” by J. Baird Callicott, *American Indian Environmental Ethics: An Ojibwa Case Study*. \*

Reading: “Traditional American Indian and Western

European Attitudes Toward Nature: An Overview” by J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. \*

Reading: “A Conservation Ethic and Environment: The Koyukon of Alaska,” by Richard K. Nelson, *Resource Managers: North American and Australian Hunter-Gathers*. \*  
Note: Read and write your reflective papers on any two of the three above essays. The third can be read and written on for extra credit.

Week 2 (January 19/21): The Seventh Generation: Defining Native American Environmental Ethics.

Readings: “Where Words Touch the Earth: Native American Oratory as a Philosophical Foundation to Indigenous Environmental Ethics,” by Steve Pavlik, Unpublished manuscript. \*

Reading: “Chief Seath’s (Seattle) Address at the Point Elliot Treaty,” \*

Reading: “American Indian Land Wisdom? Sorting Out the Issues” by J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*. \*

Video: *Oren Lyons: The Faithkeeper*.

Week 3 (January 26/28): Power + Place = Personality = Native American Environmental Ethics.

Readings: “American Indian Metaphysics,” “Power and Place Equal Personality,” “Knowing and Understanding,” and “Traditional Technology,” by Vine Deloria, Jr. in *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*. \*

Video: *Power and Place* (Dan Wildcat).

Week 4 (February 2/4): The Spiritual Dimensions of the Native American Environmental Ethic.

Reading: “Living with the Land: Deloria, Landscape, and Religion,” by Lee Schweninger in *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape*. \*

Week 5 (February 9/11): From Thoreau to Leopold to Carson: The Indigenous Roots of

Modern Environmentalism.

Reading: "Thinking Like a Mountain" and Selected Readings by Aldo Leopold, from *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches From Here and There*. \*

Reading: "Silent Spring," by Rachel Carson in *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application* edited by Louis and Paul Pojman (Hereafter, *Environmental Ethics*). \*

Week 6 (February 16/18): Dominion: Judeo-Christianity and Environmental Ethics

Reading: "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" by Lynn White in *Environmental Ethics*. \*

Reading: "The Judeo-Christian Stewardship Attitude Toward Nature" by Patrick Dobell in *Environmental Ethics*. \*

Video: *Thomas Berry: The Great Story*.

Week 7 (February 23/25): The Sins of Descartes: Western Science and Environmental Ethics.

Reading: "The Role of Science in Environmental Ethics," by Keith Douglass Warner, *Short Course in Environmental Ethics*. \*

Reading: "Code of Scientific Ethics," U.S. Forest Service.

Week 8 (March 2/4): Animal Rights.

Reading: "A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation" by Peter Singer in *Environmental Ethics*. \*

Reading: "The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights" by Tom Regan in *Environmental Ethics*. \*

Week 9 (March 9/11): Animal Rights, Continued.

Reading: "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair," by J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*.

Reading: "Animal Nations Right to Survive," by John Mohawk, *Daybreak*. \*

Reading: “Macho B Died for Your Sins: Western v. Indigenous Perspectives on the Killing of the Last Borderlands Jaguar, by Steve Pavlik, *Red Ink* (In press). \*

Week 10 (March 16/18): Should Trees Have Standing? Law and Environmental Ethics.

Reading: “Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects,” by Christopher D. Stone in *Environmental Ethics*. \*

Reading: “Recognizing the Rights and Legal Standing of the Natural World: Revisiting Christopher D. Stone’s *Trees From An Indigenous Perspective*,” by Steve Pavlik, Unpublished manuscript. \*

Week 11 (March 23/25): The Land Ethic

Reading: “Ecocentrism: The Land Ethic” by Aldo Leopold, in *Environmental Ethics*. \*

Reading: “The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic,” by J. Baird Callicott, in *Environmental Ethics*.

Reading: “An American Land Ethic,” by N. Scott Momaday. *The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, Passages*. \*

Reading: “Death of an Eco Warrior,” by Michael Kiefer. *Phoenix New Times*. \*

### **Selected bibliography**

J. Baird Callicott. 1989. *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

J. Baird Callicott. 1999. *Beyond the Land Ethic: More Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson. 2004. *American Indian Environmental Ethics: An Ojibwa Case Study*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Vine Deloria, Jr. 1973/1994. *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Press.

Vine Deloria, Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat. 2001. *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Press.

Roy C. Dudgeon. 2008. *Common Ground: Eco-Holism & Native American Philosophy*. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Pitch Black Publications.

Richard F. Fleck. 1985. *Henry Thoreau and John Muir Among the Indians*. Hamden, CT: Archon Press.

Kiefer, Michael. 1994. "Death of an Eco Warrior," *Phoenix New Times*. January 6.

Shepard Krech, III. 1999. *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Aldo Leopold. 1949. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lisa Mighetto. 1991. *Wild Animals and American Environmental Ethics*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

N. Scott Momaday. 1997. *The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, Passages*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Louis P. and Paul Pojman. 2001/2008. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Holmes Rolston, III. 1988. *Environmental Ethics: Duties and Values in the Natural World*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Lee Schweninger. 2008. *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Nancy M. Williams and Eugene S. Hunn. 1982. *Resource Managers: North American and Australian Hunter-Gatherers*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

**Final comment:** This syllabus is meant to be a basic guide and outline to this class. It is not carved in stone and the instructor reserves the right to make changes as the course progresses. Every effort will be made to notify students in a timely manner as to these changes.

## Due Dates for Reflection Papers

- \_\_\_\_\_ “Introduction.” 1/15.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Indian/Western Attitudes: Overview.” 1/15.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Where Words Touch the Earth.” 1/21.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “The Koyukon of Alaska.” 1/21.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Seattle’s Speech.” 1/21.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “American Indian Land Wisdom?” 1/21.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Power and Place.” 1/28.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Living with the Land.” 2/4.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Thinking Like a Mountain.” 2/11.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Silent Spring.” 2/11.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Historical Roots.” 2/18.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Judeo-Christian Stewardship.” 2/18.
- \_\_\_\_\_ ”The Role of Science.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Utilitarian Defense.” 2/25.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Egalitarian Rights.” ¾
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Animal Nations Right to Survive.” 3/11.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Macho B.” 3/11.

\_\_\_\_\_ “Should Trees Have Standing?” 3/18.

\_\_\_\_\_ “Revisiting Trees.” 3/18.

\_\_\_\_\_ “The Land Ethic.” 3/25.

\_\_\_\_\_ “The American Land Ethic.” 3/25.

\_\_\_\_\_ “Death of an Eco Warrior.” 3/25.

### **Discussion Questions**

Based on the readings – not your prior knowledge, beliefs, or opinions, be prepared to answer each of the following questions listed below on the dates given:

January 19: Foundations of Native American Environmental Ethics.

1. Give three characteristics of what might be described as Native American “Environmental ethics.”
2. In your own words, what is meant by the concept of planning for the “Seventh Generation?”
3. We know that the most popular version of Sealth’s (Chief Seattle’s) famous speech is in part comprised of words that were not his own: In your opinion, is this important? Why or why not?

January 26: Power and Place.

1. What does Deloria mean when he talks about the Native American concept of “power?”
2. What does Deloria mean when he talks about the Native American concept of “place?”
3. In what ways does Deloria’s equation of Power + Place = Personality relate to the concept of ethics?

February 2: The spiritual dimensions of Native environmental ethics.

February 9: Aldo Leopold and the Early Environmental Movement.

1. Why do you think that Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* is considered to be the "Bible" of modern mainstream environmentalism?
2. In what ways do the writings of Aldo Leopold reflect Native American values and beliefs? In what ways do they differ?
3. What were the ethical issues involved in Carson's *Silent Spring* ?

February 16: Judeo-Christianity and the Environment.

1. In what ways does the Christian concept of creation differ from that of the Native American concept of creation?
2. Why do you think that Lynn White's essay on Christianity and the environment was so controversial when it was first published?
3. In what ways does Cobell's appraisal of Christianity's teachings on environmental responsibility differ from that of White's?

February 23: Western Science and the Environment.

1. What is the relationship between Judeo-Christian beliefs and Western science?
2. List three areas in which Native American values and beliefs – and ethics – might find common ground with the values, beliefs, and ethics of western science. In your opinion are there areas where common ground does not and might never exist? If so, what are these areas?
3. Consider the following statement by Daniel R. Wildcat: "We do not need more American Indian scientists; we need more American Indians who are scientists." What does this statement mean to you?

March 2: Animal Rights.

1. In what way does Singer's view of "Animal Rights" differ from that of Regan?

2. What is meant by the term “utilitarianism” as it applies to animal rights? What is meant by the term “egalitarian” as it applies to animal rights?
3. In your opinion, is it ethical to experiment on animals – even if it causes these animals to experience great pain and suffering – if the result of such experimentation is to save the lives of humans? Perhaps find the ultimate cure for cancer?

March 9: Animal rights, Continued.

1. For what reasons does Mohawk believe that we should recognize the rights of animals?
2. From a Native American perspective, how can the activities of hunting, fishing and gathering – the taking of life – be ethically justified?
3. Review Pavlik’s list of tribal knowledge regarding the Animal People. Which of the items would Singer most likely agree with? Disagree with? Which of the items would Regan most likely agree with? Disagree with?

March 16: Law and Environmental Justice.

1. What was the basic argument made by Stone in *Trees*?
2. Vine Deloria, Jr. in his book *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* wrote favorably of Stone’s arguments in *Trees*. On what specific points do you believe Deloria might have agreed with Stone?
3. What reasons might a tribe give to reject Pavlik’s suggestion that they re-write their constitutions to recognize the rights of nature?

March 16: The Land Ethic.

1. In what ways – if any – does the “Land Ethic” of Leopold differ from that of Momaday?
2. In your opinion, what would be the single most important component of a Native American land ethic?
3. What are the similarities between the contributions made by Rachel Carson and those of Leroy Jackson?

