

## **CCS/RD 612**

### **Traditional Ecological Knowledge**

CCS F612 DD1 (CRN: 39188) audio-conference; CCS F612 FE1 (CRN: 34094) classroom;  
RD F612 DD1 (CRN: 39214) audio-conference; RD 697 FO1 (CRN: 39850) individual study

Irving II building (on Westridge), room 138A

**Spring 2011**

**Instructor:** Michael Koskey (please call me Mike)

**Office:** Brooks 311

**Office Telephone:** 474-5405

**Office Fax:** 474-6325

**Office Hours:** Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 2 pm – 4 pm, or by appointment

**E-mail:** [mike.koskey@alaska.edu](mailto:mike.koskey@alaska.edu) or [mskoskey@alaska.edu](mailto:mskoskey@alaska.edu)

**Audio conference:** 1-800-570-3591

PIN: 2290227

Wednesdays 5:15 - 8:15 pm

1/26 – 5/11

**Pre-requisite:** Graduate standing or approval of the instructor.

### **Course Description**

This course examines the acquisition and utilization of knowledge associated with the long-term habitation of particular ecological systems and the adaptations that arise from the accumulation of such knowledge. Attention will be given to the contemporary significance of traditional ecological knowledge as a complement to academic disciplinary fields of study. Intimate knowledge of place—culturally, spiritually, nutritionally, and economically for viability—is traditional ecological knowledge.

Being in part a research methods-oriented course, we will explore traditional ecological knowledge studies of the past and evaluate their effectiveness and problems. We will also consider the ethical and legal implications of traditional ecological knowledge in particular, and of traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge in general. Students will be expected to create a project or a related research paper that incorporates understanding of the role of traditional knowledge in developing respectful, culturally informed, cooperative research.

*“You have noticed that everything a Native does is in a circle, and that is because the power of the world always works in circles and everything tries to be round. Everything the power of the world does is done in a circle. The sky is round and so are the stars. The wind, in its greatest power whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a circle in their changing, and always come back to where they were. The life of a man is a circle, from childhood to childhood and so it is everything where power moves.”*

—Black Elk, Oglala Lakota

### **Course objectives**

1. to explore another process(es) of knowing and teaching about place
2. to begin an understanding of the interrelationships of animals, plants, humans and habitats
3. to begin to appreciate the numerous variables impinging on individual species in a complex and synergistic ecosystem which is continually changing
4. to see that Alaska Native gathering models are process-oriented rather than goal-oriented
5. to see the need for Alaska Native people to develop specific strategies for self-empowerment, synergistic action, and resource management
6. to seek ways for bridging the traditional ecological knowledge with Eurocentric ways for ongoing cross-cultural communications and cooperation
7. to experience the transition from a “Mother Earth” providing for all needs for everything, and change emanating from late “Western Civilization”

Within the objectives stated above will be a constant consideration of the practical collection and application of traditional knowledge, and how to use such knowledge in a respectful, non-intrusive way. These methods include:

1. Interviewing “key respondents” or people who are especially knowledgeable about a topic. For some topics, there might be just one acknowledged expert, while in other cases, several people might offer various ideas and observations on the subject.
2. Conducting a systematic survey to get a range of information and responses, using either a set of open-ended questions (a “protocol”) for discussion, or a more formal written set of questions with more directed responses (a “questionnaire”). These methods are appropriate when you need to talk to a “sample” or selection of people or households.
3. Holding meetings in which a number of experts are present and discuss a topic in depth. This is a good way to explore the range of knowledge and experience in a community, identify different points of view, and if appropriate, reach consensus.
4. Investigating archives, databases, and other written materials. If a topic has been studied by someone else, it is a good idea to study their material before-hand. This may give you insights on questions to ask. It also provides time-depth.
5. Observing during field visits to communities, participating in subsistence and other activities, and visiting sites with knowledgeable people.

### **Disability Services**

If you have any condition such as a physical or sensory disability, which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as I have outlined it, or which will require extra time on examinations, please notify me in the first two weeks of the course so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

If medical situations arise during the semester, whether physical or emotional, you can contact the Center for Health and Counseling at 474-5655.

### Course textbooks

Kassam, Karim-Aly S. 2009. *Biocultural Diversity and Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Human Ecology in the Arctic*. University of Calgary Press. ISBN: 978-1-55238-253-0

Sahtouris, Elisabet. 1999. *EarthDance: Living systems in evolution*. iUniverse.

ISBN: 0595130674

(Available on-line at: <http://www.ratical.org/LifeWeb/Erthdnce/>)

Napoleon, Harold. 1996. *Yuyaraq: The Way of the Human Being*. Fairbanks, Alaska: Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, Alaska Native Knowledge Network. ISBN: 1-877962-21-X

(Available on-line at: <http://ankn.uaf.edu/publications/>, or purchase from ANKN)

Various articles on “Moodle” at <http://ankn.uaf.edu/CXCS/>

### Other sources

Alaska Native Knowledge Network: <http://ankn.uaf.edu>

Alaska Native Science Commission: <http://www.nativescience.org>

Alaskool: <http://www.alaskool.org>

Division of Subsistence Technical Papers:

<http://www.subsistence.adfg.state.ak.us/geninfo/publctns/techpap.cfm>

### Assignments

This is a summary of assignments for this course. This class is reading-intensive, but there is flexibility concerning the articles for this class, of which each student will lead one short discussion throughout the semester. Two additional short discussions derived from the two texts—Kassam and Satouris—will be led by each student.

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Reaction Papers       | 8 (due each class except first)                      |
| 2. Reading Presentations | 2 (presented according to schedule devised in class) |
| 3. Paper & Presentation  | 1 (due at end of semester); 1 presentation           |

Reaction Papers: Each student will turn in a minimum of 8 reaction papers (2-4 pages double-spaced) throughout the semester. Reaction papers will be based on one of three topics: information discussed in class, the week’s readings, or special events relevant to the subject matter of this class.

Reading Presentations: Each student will lead two group discussions based on the readings—one from the textbooks, and one from the class’s articles. The essay presentations will include a 2 to 4-page summary sheet e-mailed to all the students and a summary presentation in class (~10 minutes) followed by a class discussion (~10 minutes).

Paper & Presentation: Each student will write a project paper that incorporates understanding of the role of traditional knowledge in developing respectful, culturally informed, cooperative research. This paper should ideally cover a topic that is related/helpful to your MA/MS/PhD

project. Each student will present in class a summary of their research near the end of the semester. The 20-25 minute presentation will be followed by a 10-20 minute discussion.

## **Grading**

First, if the class decides on a mainstream grading policy, then I will do it. Otherwise, in the following alternate grading scenario you'll be expected to do all the work for each grade to obtain that grade. For instance, to receive a grade of "B," you must do all the work for grade "C" as well as that for "B." All work must be of high quality—the very best that you can produce.

Below are detailed grade-requirements, from “C” to “A,” explaining the tasks required to receive that grade. Remember that to achieve a grade higher than “C” requires the fulfillment of all lower grade-requirements, in addition to those for the target-grade. Thanks to Dr. Oscar Kawagley, creator of this course, for the ideas and format below!

### GRADE C—ALL students must complete the assignments below

1. You must submit to me on paper, by fax, e-mail, or mail a 2 to 4-page reaction paper on information discussed in class, the week's readings, special events relevant to the subject matter of this class, an observation of nature, or something that you find interesting or want to expand upon during the following week. There should be 8 of these total.

•*10 Reaction papers are due throughout the semester*

2. Each student will be required to pick one chapter from *Biocultural Diversity and Indigenous Ways of Knowing* or from *EarthDance*. Additionally, each student will present one article or interview, either chosen from the course's article list or an article/interview of the student's own choosing and made available to each class participant. Each student will be required to give a 10-minute (approximately) summary to the class on each of the readings. As well, each student will provide a 2 to 4-page outline or narrative summary of the chapter/article/interview for the other class participants.

•*We will determine which students will review which chapters and assign presentation dates during the first few classes.*

3. GENERIC PAPER EXAMPLE: In your readings, attending school, potlatch, and experiencing good and bad happenings in these activities, and lack of respect for most anything shown by people, is there “evil” involved? Why or why not? As a way to answer the question, read from ancient spiritual texts (for example, Genesis 1 & 2), glean from the readings what constitutes or engenders evil. Similarly, you may read about the concept of evil in any other religious text. When might evil be good for the individual or community? Or is it ever good? Attach these considerations to a practical idea that could be applied to real-life situations.

Alternatively, you may devise your own research paper topic that is relevant to the class and has instructor approval. This C paper must be 5+ pages long, double-spaced, at 10 to 12-point font.

GRADE B—longer paper (in addition to work outlined in “GRADE C” above)

GENERIC PAPER EXAMPLE: Earth, air, fire, water and, even, spirit seem to be in crisis today. Natural disasters seem to be happening more often taking more and more human lives, as well as the lives of others. Contrast the Native ways of knowing and doing—to make a life and a living successfully for many thousand of years—to that of the modern materialistic and technomechanistic worldview which has been in existence for *at least* 500 years, depending on when we set the beginning of the industrial revolution. Write using, perhaps, the four values of harmonious living, cooperation, teamwork, and adaptation. Attach these considerations to a practical idea that could be applied to real-life situations.

Alternatively, you may devise your own research paper topic that is relevant to the class and has instructor approval. This **B** paper must be 10+ pages long, double-spaced, at 10 to 12-point font.

GRADE A—in-depth paper (in addition to work outlined in “GRADE C” above)

GENERIC PAPER EXAMPLE: The readings depict important ways of learning and knowing, and certainly include the idea of "cultures of habitat." Does this change your idea of education, which includes schooling as well as all facets of life? Should the Native language become the language of instruction in school, home and community? Why or why not? Should the Alaska Native student learn the English language? Give reasons for your answer. Does the monolanguage and monoculture goal of the world make sense? Can the Native ways of knowing and making sense of this world be applicable today? Can they make contributions to this modern world to produce soft technology and living in harmony? How? Your readings and class discussions should give you a lot of ideas. In all these considerations, there is no one right answer although the inclination of modern thought would give you the impression that a monolanguage and monoculture is the way to go (i.e., globalization).

*OR*

GENERIC PAPER EXAMPLE: Among the elderly, adults, young adults, and the young, many have no idea of who they are, little or no idea of where they are, no ties to geography or landscape, and rituals and ceremonies are missing from their lives. There are many Native people who are well grounded in their worldview and culture. For all Native people, what elements (values, traditions, rituals and so forth) will be needed for them to formulate a new identity and place in the fast-changing world due to global warming and other forces? What are the odds of being successful in this all important effort? You might even look up William Oquilluk's book *People of Kauwerak* in [www.alaskool.org](http://www.alaskool.org) to see how the survivors of disasters survived. The morphic fields that Rupert Sheldrake wrote about become very important sources of power for survival.

Alternatively, you may devise your own research paper topic that is relevant to the class and has instructor approval. This **A** paper must be 15+ pages long, double-spaced, at 10 to 12-point font.

## Reading Schedule

The following is the chapter-by-chapter listing of readings for the class for the listed date. These texts need to be read *before* coming to class, since they will constitute the primary focus of in-class discussion. Most classes require three readings on three different topics, intended to provide for a more diverse array of subjects for each three-hour class.

Most classes will include the presentation of information by the instructor, followed by in-depth discussions of the readings. Guest speakers or in-town guest events will be inserted into the schedule as they become available. This will require both the instructor and students to be flexible concerning scheduling. *Class attendance is required, and repeated absences will result in a lower final grade.*

### Date    Readings

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 1/26 | Introductions, Basics of TEK (TK, IK, LK, LEK, ecoliteracy, etc.)<br>Establish Reading Presentation Schedule   |
| 2/2  | Kassam: Chapter 1 Introduction<br>Sahtouris: A Twice-told Tale; The Cosmic Beginnings<br>Kawagley, "Alaska Native Holotropic Mind and Science"   |
| 2/9  | Kassam: Chapter 2 Relations between Culture and Nature: A Critical Consideration<br>Sahtouris: The Young Earth; Problems for Earthlife<br>Merculieff, "Western Society's Linear Systems and Aboriginal Cultures"   |
| 2/16 | Kassam: Chapter 3 Human Ecology Reconceptualized: A Lens for Relations between<br>Biological and Cultural Diversity<br>Sahtouris: The Dance of Life; A Great Leap<br>Kizzia, "Identity search"   |
| 2/23 | Napoleon: <i>Yuuyaraq: The Way of the Human Being</i>  |
| 3/2  | Kassam: Chapter 4 "Man and his Friends"—An Illustrative Case of Human Ecology in<br>Ulukhatok, Northwest Territories, Canada<br>Sahtouris: Evidence of Evolution; From Protists to Polyps<br>Nelson, "Understanding Eskimo Science"                              |
| 3/9  | Kassam: Chapter 5 "The Weather is Going Under"—Human Ecology, <i>Phronesis</i> , and<br>Climate Change in Wainright, Alaska, USA<br>Sahtouris: From Polyps to Possums; From Possums to People<br>Klein, "Wilderness: A Western Concept Alien to Arctic Cultures" |
| 3/16 | No class. Spring break—have fun!   |
| 3/23 | Kassam: Chapter 6 Mapping Human Ecology: A Transformative Act<br>Sahtouris: The Big Bang Experiment; What the Play is All About<br>Clayton, "A productive, but taxed, Earth"   |

<u>Date</u>	<u>Readings</u>
3/30	Kassam: Chapter 7 Implications of a Human Ecological Outlook Sahtouris: Worldviews from the Pleistocene to Plato; Worldviews from Plato to the Present Whitty, "The Fate of the Ocean"
4/6	Sahtouris: Less than Perfect, More than Machine; The Body of Humanity Miller, "The Midas Touch"
4/13	FIRST STUDENT PRESENTATIONS Sahtouris: A Matter of Maturation; Ecological Ethics Johnson, "Dene Traditional Knowledge"
4/20	SECOND STUDENT PRESENTATIONS Sahtouris: The Indigenous Way; Sustainable Society Teicher, "A school built on Navajo values"
4/27	THIRD STUDENT PRESENTATIONS Sahtouris: Cosmic Continuation Kawagley, "Why Should Yupiaq Literacy Slow Student Progress?"
5/4	FOURTH STUDENT PRESENTATIONS Readings to be provided by instructor on 4/7 for 5/4 class.
5/11	FIFTH STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

### **Respect**

The rules for respect are simple: anyone may talk about anything that they wish to; the speaker is not to be interrupted, questioned or judged; one may pass on the privilege of speaking if uncomfortable to another; any personal or otherwise sensitive information given and heard never goes beyond the class.

### **Support Services**

Academic Advising Center 907-474-6396 [www.uaf.edu/advising](http://www.uaf.edu/advising)

UAF Writing Center 907-474-5314, FAX: 1-800-478-5246 [www.uaf.edu/english/writingcenter](http://www.uaf.edu/english/writingcenter)

Rasmuson Library Off-Campus Service 1-800-478-5348 [www.uaf.edu/library/offcampus](http://www.uaf.edu/library/offcampus)