

## **Circumpolar Studies (BCS) 332: Contemporary Issues of the Circumpolar World, II**

### **Course Outline**

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course students will deal with questions relating to governance and politics in the North, social issues, education and knowledge systems, and global issues.

This course will provide students with an appreciation of the main challenges confronting the peoples and communities of the world's northern regions. It will be beneficial to those students attempting to better understand the current questions facing the north as well as to those planning to pursue advanced studies about the region.

#### **COURSE OUTCOMES**

Upon successful completion of Contemporary Issues II, students will have:

- Acquired a basic appreciation of the most important contemporary challenges surrounding governance and politics, social issues, education and knowledge systems, and global issues in the circumpolar regions of the world.
- Attained an awareness of the relationship between the unique and diverse aspects of Northern societies and the common concerns facing the region.
- Gained further insight into the complexity and inter-relatedness of human activity and the northern environment.
- Critically examined various proposed explanations of the key challenges facing the North.
- Recognized the cultural and gender-related diversity of approaches and ways of approaching the Circumpolar world.

#### **COURSE FORMAT**

This course has been designed for web-based delivery. It consists of at least twelve modules, each comprised of a "lecture" or module text, required and suggested readings, and study questions. Students will discuss the module text in online fora. Alternatively, the course may be offered consisting of in-class lectures and discussions of readings.

#### **ASSESSMENT**

The model of student activities and assessment is as follows:

Module and reading questions (40%) Each week, integrative questions will

accompany the readings. Students will select from these questions and write a thoughtful essay answer to four of these over the term.

Research Paper (30%) 10-15 pages, with citations, on a subject related to the course. To be assigned by the instructor after Week 5.

Final Exam (30%) Comprehensive test of general knowledge and understanding and integration of key themes and ideas, through both multiple choice and short-answer questions.

Students must receive at least 50% in the final exam to pass the course.

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

### **Section One: Governance and Politics**

#### **Module 1: Introduction and Democracy and Citizenship in the North**

This module examines the issue of political equality in the North focusing on the issues of citizenship, democracy, and regionalism. It then examines three cases in the Circumpolar North and the issues different regions confront in addressing these questions.

#### **Module 2: Indigenous Rights, Governance, and Self-Determination**

The module begins with a discussion of rights and considers the different types of arguments used to expand and limit Aboriginal rights, including both legal and moral rights. It then examines how these different Aboriginal rights are realized as polyethnic, special representation, and self-government rights in existing institutional arrangements.

#### **Module 3: New Internal Political Structures**

This module examines the growth of new political structures in the Circumpolar North, with an emphasis on the last two decades of the twentieth century and entry into the twenty-first. It begins with a definition of central terms and concepts, such as self-government and new politics. Then we take a tour to seven nation-states of the North, and describe some of the important political changes occurring at sub-national levels.

### **Section Two: Education and Knowledge Systems**

#### **Module 4: Traditional Knowledge**

This particular module will help students explore traditional knowledge and understand what it is. As indigenous peoples worldwide struggle for survival and political recognition, they are also working feverishly to avoid losing the wealth of knowledge and experience held by elders and traditional teachers in their communities. Issues to be discussed include indigenous lifestyles and modernity, the problems of preserving and protecting traditional skills, environmental issues and knowledge regimes, and the relationship between scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge.

## **Module 5: Education in the North**

The aim of this module is to promote understanding of education and some of its current key issues in the Circumpolar World. After a short introduction, the key terms of the module will be introduced and explained with the context and the nature and role of the module in mind. The third part of the module discusses the educational and curricular policies particularly in the context of Finland. The fourth part deals with the solutions to the problem of long distances in the Far North, more particularly the use of boarding schools and information technology. The conclusions will be drawn in the fifth and final part of the module.

## **Module 6: Post-Secondary Education**

This module discusses the evolution, nature, and importance of post-secondary education in the Circumpolar North. It introduces the unique challenges and opportunities facing colleges and universities in the region. The first part is a description of the evolution of the post-secondary education after the Second World War. The second part discusses the general patterns in the post-secondary experience of Northern peoples. Following this, the module reviews the development, activities and contributions of colleges and universities in the Circumpolar World. The final section describes the impact and possibilities of post-secondary education in the Circumpolar World.

## **Section Three: Social Issues**

### **Module 7: Women and Gender Relations**

The aim of this module is to promote awareness regarding women's life and some major current issues in the North Circumpolar World. We begin by taking an introductory glance at the Circumpolar World from the perspective of women. Then the key terms and concepts of the module will be introduced and explained keeping the context as well as the nature and role of the module in mind. The students are introduced to the terms and concepts in light of this particular module. The second part of the module consists of the key issues characterizing the life of women in the Circumpolar world. The third and final part presents some conclusions and final remarks.

### **Module 8: Health and Health Care**

This module is designed to provide an understanding of the core issues on the health status, health determinants, and health care of circumpolar populations, with an emphasis on Indigenous peoples. Because of their presence in four countries, the Eskimo/Inuit will be used as a case study. The key concepts, however, can be applied to other populations of more direct personal interest to individual students.

## **Section Four: Global Issues**

### **Module 9: Environmental Issues**

This module introduces the nature and extent of environmental change in the Circumpolar North. It highlights the historical and contemporary threats to the environmental integrity of the region. The first part discusses the vulnerability of the Northern eco-system and the relationship of Indigenous peoples with environmental sustainability. The second part outlines the history of the relationship between capitalism and Euro-American demand for Northern resources. Following this, the module notes the emergence of contemporary critiques of Northern resource developments and highlights contemporary issues and challenges.

### **Module 10: New External Political Structures**

This module gives the basic information on the contemporary international system from the point of view of the North. First, it presents a theoretical framework in which two main contexts of international relations are described and lists briefly the different categories and the main international actors of the Circumpolar North; Second, it gives a brief overview of international co-operation and external political structures of the Cold War period and discusses the rapid change of the international system from the Cold War period into the transition period of the 1990s; Third, the module describes briefly the main external political structures. Fourth, it notes the importance of inter-regional co-operation in the Circumpolar North in general and especially in the European North.

### **Module 11: Security**

This module introduces different concepts of security and gives an overview of military presence, especially that of the nuclear weapons systems in the Circumpolar North in the beginning of the twenty-first century. First, the module defines security, discusses the different concepts of security, and describes nuclear involvement. Second, it describes and explains both the current state of security and the military-political situation of the Circumpolar North and the change that has taken place since the early 1990s. Third, the module describes and recognizes the so-called "forces of continuity" and those of change from the point of view of the different concepts of security. Fourth, it describes the relationship between the military and the environment in the North and lists the elements of the nuclear problem via the Barents Sea region. Fifth, the module lists and describes the main challenges to security in the North.

### **Module 12: The Politics of Monoculture and Diversity in the North**

This module promotes understanding of the global processes of monoculture and the importance of ethnocultural, gender, and ecological diversity from the northern perspective. The module elaborates on minority-majority relations. First, the module introduces the specific ethnocultural issues that create the tensions of monoculture and diversity in the North. It then takes a more thorough look at the key concepts that allow one to identify undemocratic processes based on asymmetrical power relations. The module concludes with

a discussion about the value of biological, cultural, and gendered diversity from the point of view of the subsistence perspective and of the gift economy.

**Module 13: Concluding Observations**

The concluding module will be a review of the main points of the course as they were first introduced in *BCS 331*. These points will be used to review the main points of the modules in *BCS 332* in preparation for the final exam.