

Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies (BCS) 331: Contemporary Issues of the Circumpolar World, I

Course Outline

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to the important structures and forces affecting the sustainability of circumpolar communities. Students will deal with the population trends in the circumpolar region, natural resource use and the economies of these communities, and economic ownership.

This course will provide students with an appreciation of the main challenges confronting the peoples and communities of the world's northern regions. As such it will be beneficial to 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 I, students will have:

Acquired a basic appreciation of the most important contemporary issues relating to globalization, sustainable communities, and natural resource use 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 (modules and text). 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

Module 1: Introduction

A short introduction provides an overview of the course and of WebCT where delivered online.

Module 2: Basic Concepts of the Course

This module introduces students to the basic concepts used in the course. Following this, the module describes four of the most important concepts used in the course: circumpolar, region-building, sustainable development, and globalization. The module concludes with a brief discussion of three of the underlying principles of the course: interdisciplinarity, circumpolarity, and diversity.

Module 3: Changing Northern Economies and Globalization

This module will introduce you to the economies of northern regions, current changes in those economies, and the impact of globalization. It discusses traditional and new models of development, changing centre-periphery relations, fiscal transfers, transportation, infrastructure, information technology and resource markets.

Module 4: Population Trends in the Circumpolar Region

This module introduces you to current changes in the populations of Northern regions and the impact of globalization on population dynamics. It gives a background to the demographic history of the region and shows what the current trends in migration are. It identifies which areas of the circumpolar region are growing and discusses several reasons why.

Module 5: Resource Dependent Communities

In most areas of the Circumpolar World, there are two types of communities: Indigenous communities and the industrialized, resource-dependent communities populated mainly by non-Indigenous people. This module will

discuss northern, resource-dependent communities in the context of globalization and post-industrialism.

Module 6: The Changing Economies of Indigenous Communities

This module provides a framework for discussing the Indigenous community economies of the circumpolar region. These economies differ in a number of ways, but they have a similarity of structure that reflects their rural nature and their location within modern national economies. The module describes these economies as consisting of three sectors: the traditional economy, the market economy, and the transfer economy. The role of each of these in the sustainability of village economies is discussed.

Module 7: Tourism

This module will examine the nature of tourism in the Circumpolar World. The aim of this module is to enable students to understand the roles played by tourism in the north (and particularly their own northern communities) and to encourage an awareness of the potential benefits and problems associated with tourism. The module begins by defining tourism and describing its characteristics in the north.

Module 8: Reindeer Herding and Traditional Resource Use

This module will discuss reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*) husbandry as a system of northern adaptation and traditional circumpolar resource use, the ecological and historical roots of reindeer herding, and its ethnic and geographic diversity.

Module 9: The Impacts of Oil and Gas

The northern regions of the world hold colossal proven and potential reserves of oil and gas resources. These reserves are located on land, on the coastal shelf, and under the Arctic Ocean. The history of oil and gas development in the northern regions stretches over a century.

From a northern perspective, the fundamental economic issue of developing oil and gas resources is which level of government is responsible for collecting royalties from the development of resources and how these revenues are used to solve socio-economic problems in the resource producing regions. Although oil and gas development can bring substantial benefits to northern regions, such development can also have negative impacts on the environment and the lifestyles of northern people.

Module 10: Forestry

The most northerly inhabitants of planet Earth do not dwell in or near forests, but most of the rest of us do. For many people, forests are incredibly important ecosystems. They provide innumerable goods (e.g., wood, paper, furs, berries and other foods, medicines, etc.) and services (e.g., carbon uptake from the atmosphere, soil stabilization, flood control, sites for recreation, among others). For many Aboriginal people, forests are their material and spiritual homes. Forests are often seen as the most natural part of our surrounding landscapes, and many people get upset when forests are misused or mismanaged.

The northern forests are not only vigorously used; they are also under intense scrutiny as countries around the Circumpolar North grapple with how to secure the long-term sustainability of these great ecosystems. In this module, we will explore a variety of sustainability issues associated with boreal forests, and will probe into the ways people might act to secure sustainability.

Module 11: Mining in the North

The main purpose of this module is to give you a basic knowledge of the concepts and theories of mining in general and to apply this knowledge to Northern mining. You will gain knowledge of the basics of the industry concerning production, ownership and structure as well as of market and state relations. How does mining differ from other industries and from state market regulations in relation to other industries? This knowledge, along with the strategic perspectives of mining, and the profit condition will make it easier to understand mining in the North. The hinterland perception and the extreme market dependency and state strategic dependency found in the North will also be discussed.

Module 12: Land Claims, Ownership and Co-Management

Ever since Indigenous and newcomer societies have interacted, the question of use and ownership of land has been a central to the relations between these societies. Although the land of Indigenous peoples has, in many cases, been colonized for several centuries, many of these groups are now asserting their rights to control traditional territories. This module introduces basic land tenure rights, principles of Indigenous land tenure systems, and the conflicts and outcomes surrounding Indigenous people's claims to traditional lands, including discussions of key court decisions, legislation, and modern treaties.

Module 13: Concluding Observations- What About the Fisheries?

The objective of this module is to use what you have learned so far in the course to find out for yourself about the importance of the fisheries for certain communities and understand the challenges currently facing the use of this resource for the development of sustainable communities in the North.

We start out with a review of some of the essential concepts and themes that you may need to understand for a proper analysis of the fisheries in the Circumpolar World. We then review material on the Northern fisheries dealt with in earlier modules. We conclude with a brief discussion of possible places to look for information on circumpolar fisheries.