

Bemidji State University

Course Number: INST 1107: Introduction to Turtle Island (Ziigwan/Spring 2026) Course

Credits: 3 credit hours

Version 1.3 (This syllabus is subject to change; I will let you know when it does!)

Contact Information:

Instructor: Dr. Niyokamigaabaw Deondre Smiles

Office: Office hours are offered via Zoom

Office Hours: MWF 11 AM-12 PM, TTh 3-4 PM, other times by appointment

E-mail: deondre.smiles@bemidjistate.edu

Course Modality: This is an **ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE course**. This means that we do not meet in-person or online at a specified time and date. Rather, I will post recorded lectures and other online activities for you to complete on your own time. This means you are free to complete activities on your own schedule, but it also means that there are fewer opportunities for direct accountability for course materials. **You must make sure that you are taking time to complete course activities.**

Course Description:

This course will provide students with an introduction to the field of Indigenous Studies. Topics covered include Indigenous histories, cultural expressions, 'Indian' stereotypes, treaty statuses and relevant issues facing Indigenous nations today. We will highlight research, education, and practical applications of knowledge, as well as ongoing Indigenous presence and relevance.

Prerequisites/Co-Requisites:

None

Textbooks/Materials:

There is no textbook for this course---instead, we will engage with a variety of readings and publications written by Indigenous community members, Indigenous scholars, and (selected) Indigenous allies who have been engaged with Indigenous topics and worldviews, historically and in the present. All materials will be available on D2L in advance, and it is your responsibility to have read them and be prepared to show your knowledge of them in course assignments

Grades:

This course will use an A-F grading scale, with shading based on percentage points. I will automatically round up if you are within .2 percent of the next highest shaded grade: (89.8% will be rounded up to a 90).

97-100: A+

93-96.9: A

90-92.9: A-

87-89.9: B+

83-86.9: B

80-82.9: B-

77-79.9: C+

73-76.9: C

70-72.9: C-

67-69.9: D+

63-66.9: D

60-62.9: D- 60

or below: F

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

1. identify the diverse histories, cultures, and experiences of Indigenous peoples.
2. describe how Indigenous peoples have shaped their communities, political movements, and arts to express their views and vision for change.
3. analyze the impact of settler-colonial laws, policies, and practices on Indigenous nations and peoples.
4. become cognizant of their relationship with Indigenous peoples as they continue their own work in the future
5. analyze contemporary issues of importance to Indigenous peoples.

Major Content Areas:

1. Indigenous Culture
2. Anishinaabe Culture
3. Indigenous History
4. Indigenous Representations: Media and the Arts
5. Indigenous Economic Systems
6. Indigenous Governance
7. American History
8. U.S. Government and Politics
9. Treaty Rights and Traditional Lands

Outline/Assignments (460 points in total in the course):

- **Weekly Quizzes (20 points each, 260 points in total)**

At the end of most weeks, you will be asked to take a short quiz to show your understanding and grasp of our weekly topic. This includes all lectures, readings, videos, podcasts, etc. These quizzes will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and short essay questions.

- **Midterm (60 points)**

At about the halfway point of the semester, you will be asked to take a longer quiz that will count as your midterm. This will assess your grasp and mastery of materials from the first half of the course. This will follow the same format as the weekly quizzes—multiple choice, true/false, and short essay-based questions can and will be present in this midterm.

- **Final Exam (80 points)**

During the finals period, you will take a final exam that will assess your grasp and mastery of all materials in the course. This exam will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and longer essay based questions. As long as you have been keeping up with course materials throughout the term, you will be in a good place to succeed on the final.

- **Discussion Activities (20 points each, 60 points in total)**

Since we are an asynchronous class, there are very few opportunities to have fruitful discussions of course topics, or for you to ask questions in real time about course materials, or other things you may be curious about related to course content. To try to combat this isolation, **I will ask you to submit one or more questions once a week, up to three times (meaning you only have to submit questions 3 times throughout the term) on things you're curious about related to course content.** I will then record sessions where I engage with your questions. This is a fun way for you to learn more about things that we may not cover in class, and allows for more opportunities for clarification!

Topics/Schedule:

Week:	Topic:	Assignment
Week 1 (January 12 th -18 th):	Introduction to the Course	Quiz 1
Week 2 (January 19 th -25 th):	Who are Indigenous Peoples?	Quiz 2
Week 3 (January 26 th -February 1 st):	An Indigenous History of the United States	Quiz 3
Week 4 (February 2 nd -February 8 th):	An Indigenous History of Minnesota	Quiz 4
Week 5 (February 9 th -February 15 th):	Indigenous Governance Systems, Reservations, and State-To-State Relations	Quiz 5
Week 6 (February 16 th -February 22 nd):	Indigenous Economic Systems	Quiz 6
Week 7 (February 23 rd -March 1 st):	Indigenous Cultural Systems	Quiz 7
Week 8 (March 2 nd -March 8 th):	Midterm Week!	Midterm (No quiz or questions due this week)
March 9 th -13 th :	Spring Break (No Classes)	None! ☺
Week 9 (March 16 th -March 22 nd):	Indigenous Geographies	Quiz 8
Week 10 (March 23 rd -March 29 th):	Indigenous Peoples and the ‘Climate Crisis’	Quiz 9
Week 11 (March 30 th -April 5 th):	Indigenous Science	Quiz 10
Week 12 (April 6 th -April 12 th):	Indigenous Arts and Media	Quiz 11
Week 13 (April 13 th -April 19 th):	“Land Back”	Quiz 12
Week 14 (April 20 th -April 26 th):	Indigenous Futurisms	Quiz 13
Week 15 (April 27 th -April 29 th):	Catch-up Week	(No quiz or questions due this week)
Final Exam period—	May 1st-7th	Final Exam (Due May 7th by 11:59 PM Central Time)

Time expectations:

You should expect to dedicate **about 6 hours of work a week** to watching the online lectures, doing the readings, and working on the assignments for this course. This is an estimate and will vary based on your time management strategy, and other commitments you may have. My goal is to not overload you with work, as I recognize you have lives outside of this class, so if there are other commitments or events that affect your ability to complete course work, please contact me as soon as possible and we will work on accommodations.

Academic Integrity:

BSU students are expected to practice the highest standards of ethics, honesty and integrity in all of their academic work. Any form of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating and misrepresentation) may result in disciplinary action. Possible disciplinary actions may include failure for part or an entire course as well as suspension from the University. It is suggested that students review BSU's statement on academic integrity found within the Student Code of Conduct.

I also highly do not recommend using AI for this course. It will not do you very much good for the course, I will be able to tell you're using AI, and you run the risk of being referred for disciplinary action, which also means a lot of paperwork for me. **Do us both a favor and use your own work.** 😊

Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom:

We at Bemidji State University believe the classroom is an environment where civility, human dignity and respect is maintained. Although we do not meet in a physical classroom in this course, any variation from this for example yelling or saying profanity at an instructor or another person via course activities, or any other loud, lewd, belligerent or obnoxious behavior resulting in a disruption from teaching, and learning are violations of the Code of Conduct and will not be tolerated. If this occurs, you will be asked not to engage with the course and cannot return until you meet with the University Conduct Officer. In serious cases, you could be subject to a judicial hearing.

As this course is Indigenous focused, there is absolutely zero tolerance for bigoted/racist/anti-Indigenous behavior. I support debate and discourse in the class, and feel it can be a learning opportunity, but I do not consider bigotry to be a valid currency for debate. **This includes anti-LGBT, ableist, transphobic, xenophobic, sexist, and racist behavior.**

Extended Leave Procedure:

If a student must be away from class from an extended period (more than one- or two-weeks' worth of class) for medical emergencies or a funeral, you are asked to contact the Student Life and Success Office where a leave notice will be given to your faculty. This notice informs the faculty of your departure and return date back to campus. This leave does not absolve you from any assignment you have due during your leave. You are to decide with your instructors of when to complete any assignments due during the leave period. You can complete a leave form as this website <https://www.bemidjistate.edu/offices/student-lifesuccess/extended-absence/>

Students with Special Needs:

BSU is committed to making all educational programs, course materials, services and activities sponsored by the University accessible to individuals with disabilities. Students requesting accommodations due to a disability or other need for access should contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible. Accessibility Services is located at Decker Hall 202. PH: 218.755.3883 or email: accessibility@bemidjistate.edu. This information is also available through Minnesota Relay Services at 800.627.3529.

Tutoring:

BSU's Student Success Center is your first stop if you are wishing to improve your academic skills and excel in your classes. Services include academic advising and tutoring, peer tutoring, and additional resources. The center is located at Decker Hall 202.

Tutor.com:

The Minnesota State system has updated the online tutoring service available to our students. We are now partnering with Tutor.com to offer 24/7 online tutoring, which will connect students with an expert tutor for extra assistance one-on-one. Online tutoring services can be accessed through the main page in D2L and your course page, by clicking on the tutor.com link, located in the "HelpLinks" menu.

All students will receive 15 hours of tutoring at no cost. Tutoring services cover a variety of subject areas including math, writing, accounting, economics, biology, languages and nursing. Additional time may be purchased by students directly through tutor.com.

Mental Health and Counseling:

Students may experience mental health concerns or stressful events that may lead to diminished academic performance. The Student Center for Health & Counseling is available to assist you with concerns and can include stress relief services. They can be reached in Cedar Hall, First Floor. Phone: (218) 755-2053.

Campus Safety Statement:

It is the right of every student to feel safe in their classes and on campus. If someone is preventing you from feeling safe at BSU, and/ or if you have been a victim of harassment and/ or sexual violence, affirmative action measures are available for you. If you are in an emergency, call 911. If you are in a non-emergency situation, contact Public Safety and/ or the Office of Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action by phone or email. At BSU, student safety is a top priority, and all harassment and discrimination complaints will be handled promptly at your discretion.

- Discrimination/Harassment Complaint Form:
<https://www.bemidjistate.edu/offices/affirmativeaction/wp-content/uploads/sites/49/2017/03/Discrimination-Harassment-Complaint-form.pdf>
- Sexual Misconduct/ Violence Form:
https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?BemidjiStateUniv&layout_id=7
- Public Safety: 218-755-3888
- Office of Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action: By e-mail at affirmativeaction@bemidjistate.edu or 218-755-4121

Accessibility statement:

Upon request this document can be made available in alternate formats. Please contact Accessibility Services at 7553883.