Histories of the Circumpolar Norths: “The Last Imaginary Places”

This course examines the history of regions long imagined as Ultima Thule -- the circumpolar norths -- a huge swath of land, water and ice including but not limited to Alaska; the Yukon and Northwest Territories, provincial norths and Nunavut in Canada; Kalaallit Nunaat; Iceland, the Faroes, Svalbards; the Saami homelands of Scandinavia and Russia; and the taiga and polar reaches of Siberian Russia.

These northern regions are considered both from “south looking north” and “north as homeland” perspectives. For Indigenous or long-term “settler society”, the circumpolar north was home – a complex place of diverse peoples and cultures who nonetheless shared many characteristics. For the temporary sojourner from the south, the norths were “exotic” places offering resource wealth to be taken home.

Beginning with a brief examination of “imagined” and physical norths, this course then introduces Indigenous societies and impositions by more populated southern states. Southern approaches are examined, beginning with feeble, often fatal explorations followed by more influential economic, spiritual, judicial, political-administrative and environmental impacts. Southern culture, too, pushed north, although the norths also “pushed back,” with real and imagined norths serving as national symbols like the “True North Strong and Free.”

The course then considers more recent norths. While resource exploitation persisted, by the Second World War the Norths were deemed strategically important; increased foreign policy attention led to the persistent southern insistence on “our” norths, attitudes persisting in recent claims of the Arctic Ocean and even the North Pole! Such insistence contrasted with new attitudes toward Indigenous peoples that gradually challenged southern control: self-determination, land claims, and regional internationalism came into play.

In the end, then, students should better grasp the multilayered histories of the circumpolar norths, moving beyond imagined places to regions influenced by and influencing global history. These are large goals for a half-course -- the project relies heavily upon you and your classmates – I will expect student participation on a regular basis. Given the breadth of the coverage, that discussion should be informative, if at times challenging.

Contact Information:

Thursday 9:30-11:30 am            Location: tba
Instructor: Dr. Peter V. Krats     Office: STvH 2123
Telephone: 661-2111 (x84983)//Messages: 661-3645  e-mail: pkrats@uwo.ca

Office Hours / Contacting Me:

My Office Hours tba; feel free to speak with me about appointments. If you “catch” me at my office, I will gladly
Course Outcomes: Students should

- identify and develop understanding of these regions and their histories
- describe the diversity of northern cultures, societies and political systems
- assess the interrelation of human activity and the northern environment
- analyze the norths as part of the broad European/Western expansion around the globe
- apply historical analysis to better understand contemporary Northern Indigenous and environmental circumstances, including efforts aimed at sustainability and self-government
- improve their analytical and research skills
- synthesize analysis and research in a research paper
- enhance their verbal communications abilities

Potential Texts [likely not all of these will be texts; this is a sampling]


Other Key Works:

Yuri Slezkine. *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*. Cornell, 1994

Potential Course Evaluation:

- Participation: 20%
- Seminar “Lead”: 5%
- Comparing Northern Approaches Paper: 15%
- Essay Topic Proposal: 5%
- Essay: 35%
- Final: 20%

Potential Course Requirements:

- Participation: (20%) + “Lead” (5%)

Students should contribute regularly and in an informed manner. Most weeks, one or more students will “take the lead,” helping to promote discussion and reporting on “bonus” material. [online or provided in class]. Focus on ideas; you need not reiterate the work. You should hand in a page or two of notes on your Leads.
Participation is obviously a vital component of your overall grade.

Comparison of Southern Entries into the Norths (15 %): 

Students will compare an aspect of the “entries” by Southern forces (administrative, economic, “exploratory”, even imaginative) into the various Norths dealt with in the first 5 weeks of the course. What are the similarities and differences? Do you see parallel approaches, or are the various “northern approaches” essentially unique? Students need not do extensive additional research - the goal here is consider the various historical experiences and historical assessments of the Norths. Papers should be brief (3-5 pages). Due: tba.

Comparative Research Essay: (5 + 35 %) Considering Norths

Your essay should analyze some aspect of Circumpolar Northern history – that is to say, not “just” Canada’s or Russia’s or Finland’s north. Your Essay topic proposal must be submitted (1-2 pages). For the last class students will provide drafts of their paper for their peers to read/assess. We will provide constructive criticisms of the papers in class; this should result in better papers for all. Draft papers must be available for uploading online by the Friday before the “discussion” class. Good copies due tba. Final papers should meet high standards of research and presentation and (it really need not be said) be original work. Essays should be 15 pages

Final Examination: (20 %)

The Final will focus on broad themes that have shaped human elements of the Circumpolar North, not minutia from the various readings.

Tentative Schedule/Potential Readings

Section One: Introduction to the Circumpolar North

1. Introduction : North as Concept [in the South]
2. At Home in Northern Environments
   “Circumpolarity” – Where and whose “North” – Southern reconsiderations

Section Two: Norths in Evolution

3. Contacts from the South - Southern Incursions through the 18th Century
5. Seizing Fuller Control – Dealing with the Norths 1880-1945 [3 weeks]
   a) Taking “Formal” Control
   b) Taking Practical Control
   c) The Second World War and the Norths
Section Three: The Circumpolar Norths since 1945

6. Expanding Administration / Exploitation of the Norths [2 weeks]
   a) Cold War and Continuing Foreign Policy Struggles
   b) Continued Government Impositions, Public and Private Exploitation and Consequences

7. Toward New Norths?

8. Original Peoples & Modern Norths

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

Prerequisites and Antirequisites:

Unless you have either the requisites for this course, as described in the Academic Calendar description of the course, or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. The Academic Calendar description of each course also indicates which classes are considered antirequisites, i.e., to cover such similar material that students are not permitted to receive academic credit for both courses.

Academic Offences:

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and
indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer’s ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'At above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

Medical Issues:

The University recognizes that a student’s ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf to read about the University’s policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links the necessary forms. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

SUPPORT SERVICES:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Morgan Sheriff, Undergraduate Program Advisor, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84999 or msherif5@uwo.ca