The course focuses on how Indigenous rights work in environmental justice advocacy.

The rights of Indigenous peoples are powerful policy, legal, and movement-building instruments for enacting agendas in conservation, food security and food sovereignty, environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and sustainable development. At the same time, Indigenous peoples struggle against nations, institutions, and industries that willfully defy or strategically exploit Indigenous rights. Rights are among the major policy and legal instruments Indigenous peoples use in pursuit of environmental justice. Students of environmentalism, conservation, sustainable development and sustainable systems, and environmental justice ought to have practical knowledge of the history, current practices, and future innovations in the field of Indigenous rights. They must understand the contextual differences in rights law and policy in different places, and the institutions through which rights claims can be
articulated and enforced. The course will be taught as a legal, policy, and movement-building primer, including in depth study of the history of Indigenous rights, key rights laws and policies in use in different parts of the world, including through the United Nations, and innovations in rights methodology by Indigenous peoples, such as the rights of non-human entities. The Indigenous rights-based content of the course will be discussed in relation to rights traditions of other groups, including people of color and people of the global majority.

Prerequisites
There are no prerequisites required; the course is for students at all levels of background in Indigenous rights.

Course Strategy
The syllabus will have weeks on the major topics of Indigenous rights, with an emphasis on how organizers, lawyers, leaders, and others can take action to use rights instruments, policies, and concepts. In terms of types of Indigenous rights, we will cover inherent rights, treaty rights, constitutional and consultative rights, free prior and informed consent, and human rights (such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labor Organization’s Convention 169). We will cover in detail how rights are implemented through direct action and land guardianship/protectorship, courts, laws and policies, conflict mediation and peacebuilding, divestment strategies and philanthropy, reconciliation, regulation and permitting, and movement building, among other skill-areas. We will spend time discussing the historical origins of different systems of rights many centuries ago and how the histories ground and relate to current rights-based practices. There will be substantive attention given to Indigenous innovations in rights, including rights of nature, Indigenous legal orders, and responsibility-based protectorship and guardianship practices. Given the emphasis is on environmental justice, students will have opportunities to focus their learning on issues or situations that they have the most interest in and concern for.

Learning Goals
The course is focused wholly on learning how Indigenous rights work.

- Cultivate knowledge of (1) the history of Indigenous rights and (2) the relationship between that history and contemporary Indigenous rights practices and strategies.
- Develop usable knowledge for creating a personal toolkit for how to assess Indigenous rights issues in different parts of the world and plan Indigenous rights practices and strategies for taking action.
- Establish a clear understanding of how Indigenous rights are envisioned and operate within multi-cultural contexts.
- Gain experience collaborating in a professional environment with course staff through using commonly engaged project management software: Google Drive (and its suite of applications) and Slack.
Class Structure

First Three Weeks of Class (before January 23)
The first three weeks of class (before January 23) have a different arrangement than the rest of the weeks before the last day of the course. There’s no graded activity the first 3 weeks of the course. Students are not expected to have prepared in any particular way, though at a minimum students should review the reading guides for each day of the course. For the first three weeks, this is the protocol:

- Instructors begin the course session on time at 11:30 with welcoming and updates.
- Instructors review the syllabus and other important information (likely taking more time on the very first day of the course).
- Instructors will shift to discuss the major course topics for the day, appealing to the reading guide for that course session. Instructors will emphasize the basic building blocks for understanding initial definitions, concepts, and examples of Indigenous rights.

January 23 and Beyond: Detail on How the Course Works
Each student will be engaged in the following activities throughout the course, and that relate to the grading system. For all activities, the goal should be learning how Indigenous rights work. All students should keep working, inquiring, revising, engaging, and sharing until they have reached full clarity!

January 24 and Beyond, Protocols for Each Course Session

11:25am: Instructors arrive to the classroom.
11:30am: Instructors give any updates.
11:35am: Brief check in within circles to make sure they are in sync
11:40am: Instructors lecture based on course materials
12:50pm: Course session ends

[Mondays]

11:35am: Circles have a brief conversation about how they will approach the discussion, including questions to post on Slack or ask verbally.
11:55am: Instructors facilitate a discussion with students
12:50pm: Course session ends
Notes on Supporting a Learning Community

Be about a vibrant, safe, and restorative learning community.

- Health comes first.
- Keep close to heart the goal of building a learning community.
- A learning community privileges collegiality, reciprocity, trust, consent, and mutual care. A learning community is safe, accountable, restorative, and forgiving.
- As best we can, organize our communications to support this goal of being in a learning community.
- In exchanges of constructive feedback with one another, we should commit to prefacing all constructive points with validating points first.
- All participants will take great care over their stewardship of their language and expression in communications. Communications can be harmful when they reference, connote, or implicate others’ appearance, gender, ability, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, indigeneity, and age.
- It’s important to remind ourselves that our discussions about the course content are with persons with diverse and complex life experiences. For some students and staff, the topics and issues raised in the course are experienced personally and daily. For some students and staff, they are learning about the topics and issues raised in the course for the first time or in greater depth or heightened vividness. Individuals may have different emotional and intellectual responses to the topics and issues of the course. Individuals’ immediate responses may change with further reflection.
- When we feel that someone else is calling us out, there’s no pressure to demonstrate to everyone that we “know better”. We’ll be appreciated by everyone when we demonstrate explicitly that we’re grateful for the call out and we’ll be accountable moving forward.
- We’ll do our best together as co-supporters in a learning community given the following realities: Awkwardness happens. Mistakes happen. Some days are just not our days. We’re not always prepared. We misinterpret what we’re supposed to do. We convey things we regret afterwards.

As a course on Indigenous rights, certain subject matters are common.

- Each week we will discuss the successes and innovations in Indigenous rights. At the same time, Indigenous peoples fight for their rights in contexts and situations where they are suffering from severe harm, violence, discrimination, and genocide. Topics, issues, and examples of harm, violence, discrimination, and genocide are likely to be brought up by instructors and students at any time across all course communications, including during course sessions, through email, in office hours meetings, and on Slack, Google Drive, and Canvas.
- Learning about how Indigenous rights work requires engaging some historic writings and historic documents. Often such documents use language that we would find problematic today in different respects, including discriminatory, demeaning, and offensive language.
How the Course Works

**Major Documents**
The course features links to 3 central organizing documents housed in Google Drive: (1) the syllabus document; (2) week by week units document (the schedule); and (3) the course materials folder (containing all reading guides and reading materials). These will be central, living documents that may be amended on minor points during the course. We request students work off of the live links that will be provided on Canvas and Slack, sent by email, and referenced at the top of the syllabus (these are all to the same documents and links). There are additional documents that are provided as well, including (4) a template of the toolkit creation project; (5) a Google sheet with circle memberships; (6) some voluntary documents. One voluntary document is a Google doc with a template for each student to put in biographical information for networking. Another voluntary document is a book club list in Google doc form with links to new and older books that are relevant to Indigenous rights. These voluntary documents are just for anyone who wishes to engage them.

**Readings**
Students should approach all dimensions of the course as opportunities to learn how Indigenous rights work. As a rule, the syllabus will include about 2 lengthy articles of preparation work per course week (or 3 to 5 shorter pieces). In some cases, there are readings that are brief samples of actual laws or policies. These readings could be just a sentence or two or a paragraph or another length. Student engagement with these readings could mainly involve students doing a word search for when and how terms relating to Indigenous peoples come up. Any exceptions to this rule will be flagged in advance. Each week has 1 to 2 reading guides. Students should read the reading guides before doing the readings. The reading guides serve as lecture-like material, which will enable the students and staff to devote their course session time to greater detail and to discussion, conversation, and exchange. When there are two course sessions in a week, Mondays will be devoted to lectures by Whyte and Castro; Wednesdays devoted to discussion. For weeks with one course session, the instructors will provide a combination of lecture and discussion. If the course hosts guest speakers, those speakers will be on Wednesdays, unless otherwise indicated by the instructors.

**Flexible preparation**
Each course session has a folder associated with it that has (1) a reading guide; (2) PDF files to engage with; (3) an “additional materials/readings” folder. Check out the reading guide first, which will serve as a mini-lecture into the materials, and will define key concepts and reading strategies. From there, engage the materials in the way that best suits your learning style and schedule. You are not expected to review anything in the “additional” folder. It is mainly a folder with primary and secondary documents that are helpful if you seek to dig deeper into the materials for your toolkit creation project or any other purpose. If you ever want to recommend that documents you know of should be put there, please let us know. The folder also contains different slides, graphics, or other items that we’ve designed. **Given the way we are doing Monday lectures and Wednesday discussions, we recommend finding a way to schedule**
study time to involve a week’s worth of preparation. However, we will orient Monday’s lectures to be accessible to different levels of preparation.

**Assignments**
The major assignment for this course will see students develop their own *Indigenous rights toolkit*. Creating this toolkit is broken up into four prompts that students will complete over the course of the semester. Students have broad discretion in how they fulfill each prompt. The goal will be for students to practice and receive feedback on the skills they are learning about Indigenous rights in a way that is directly relevant to their experiences and future goals. To supplement creating the Indigenous rights toolkit, students will complete two additional activities over the course of the semester - *toolkit feedback* and *course reflections*. When you complete a prompt for your toolkit, give feedback, or complete a reflection, go into your [Winter 2023 assignment checklist](#) and check that you’ve done so. That will prompt the instructors to give feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toolkit Creation</th>
<th>Toolkit Feedback</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will develop a personal toolkit that can guide them in their careers to better practice and understand Indigenous rights advocacy. <strong>Four</strong> prompts are provided to guide the development of the toolkit.</td>
<td>Students will provide feedback and lessons learned on creating an Indigenous rights toolkit. This feedback will take on two forms:</td>
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<td><strong>Individual</strong> - On <strong>two</strong> occasions students will provide feedback to all circle members who turned in Toolkit submissions by the listed due date.</td>
<td>Students will submit <strong>two</strong> reflections on the course and their experiences in it. A reflection prompt will be in the personal Google file. These reflections can be written or recorded.</td>
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<td><strong>Circle</strong> - On <strong>two</strong> occasions, circles will discuss what lessons they have learned from working on their toolkits and share out with the class via a Slack post. Students who miss class on these days will be expected to submit follow up posts to their circles’.</td>
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</table>

**Hive Learning**
The course learning community benefits greatly from the experiences, perspectives, and wisdom of all students and instructors - hive learning. Fostering a collaborative learning
community should be our major procedural goal for attaining the course goal of learning how Indigenous rights work. The three hive learning processes below are ones students should expect to engage in weekly.

**Google Drive** [Stay tuned for a Google drive invitation sent to your email]
Each student will have their own Google Drive file that the course staff also have access to. While we understand that most courses operate on CANVAS it is important to us that you become exceptionally familiar with working on the most common types of software we see in the field, like the Google suite of software. In the Google Drive file, students can:
1. Add their updates to their Indigenous rights toolkit.
2. Write reflections on the course content.
3. Update their assignment checklist.

**Slack** [Stay tuned for a Slack invitation by email]
The course will have a Slack workspace that is actively used. Students will have opportunities (some of which are graded) for making posts and responding to posts on Slack. The Slack will have channels for students to post any helpful information for others outside of class hours. The Slack will also have a channel that is used for in class discussions, especially on Wednesdays. Instructions will be given about how to use Slack on Wednesdays (or other discussion days) during the 3rd week of the course.

**Circles**
The course intends to include opportunities for dialogue and mutual learning about the course materials. Students will be part of a 3-4 person circle with other students during the semester. The circles are opportunities for additional feedback for your toolkit assignment. Typically on Wednesdays, unless otherwise indicated, students will sit in their circles. A seating chart will be produced. The circles will touch base about how they are going to approach the discussion for the session, including the discussion and selection of potential questions to post on Slack or ask verbally. In addition to this role in discussion, each member of a circle will primarily provide written feedback in the form of comments on other circle members’ toolkits. We will produce, in the third week of the course, a rubric for how the feedback will work, consistent with the learning community the course seeks to achieve. Circles will also be required to post some brief tips for the whole class that will be helpful for others’ toolkits.

Here is a link to where students can find out about what circles and channels they are in. The link does not have any circles or channels set yet. That will happen in the fourth week of the course.

**Grading**
As long as students turn in all of their required assignments they will receive full credit. **HOWEVER**, students who turn in work after the listed due date will not receive feedback on their assignments from the instructors. Because a major part of this course is peer feedback and engagement, it is strongly recommended that students submit work by the due date.
The teaching philosophy of Whyte and Castro is that students learn best in communities that abolish punitive pressure. Instead, respecting the needs and capacities of those in a learning community is the greatest tool in fostering engagement and developing trusting relationships between community members. Students should feel free to plan how they want to complete their required actions based on their needs. However, because the amount of instruction time for Whyte and Castro is limited, they must protect their time by asking students to turn their actions in by specific deadlines if they would like feedback. It is the hope of Whyte and Castro that students will want to receive thorough feedback on their work, but they understand students’ lives and schedules are dynamic and subject to unexpected changes. We hope that you will develop a level of trust and respect among your circle members that will allow you to submit work, even if it is not ‘finished’, and instead see these assignments as low pressure opportunities to guide your own learning and reflect on the course content with your peers.

All activities will be reviewed for feedback based on the general rubric below:

- The improvement of the impacts of student actions on the community of learners
- The intentions of the makers of course materials
- The facts of the course content.
- Best practices for working in multi-cultural exchanges.
- Informed interpretations of the course materials presented in the course by course staff.
- Good faith first interpretations that indicate careful early review and attendance in the course sessions.
- The full extent - as judged by course staff - of a student’s potential to engage meaningfully in communication, including clarity, precision, patience, and rigor.

Final Grades
The numbers below refer to the final number of turned in assignments.

- 4.0: 10
- 3.5: 9
- 3.0: 8
- 2.5: 7
- 2.0: 6
- 1.5: 5
- 1.0: 4

Each student will have a checklist that they maintain, and that the instructors have access to through the students’ file.

Attendance
Attendance is encouraged in the course. Students will have access to lecture capture unless the instructors have decided against sharing certain sessions. Students who miss
course sessions need not let the course staff know in advance. However, should a student begin to miss more than 2 course sessions, course staff will reach out directly to check in on the student.

**Critical Policies and Resources**

**Rackham Academic and Professional Integrity Policy**
[https://rackham.umich.edu/academic-policies/section8/](https://rackham.umich.edu/academic-policies/section8/)

**Course Recordings: Instructor Wishing to Record Course Activity**
Course lectures may be audio/video recorded and made available to other students in this course. As part of your participation in this course, you may be recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, please contact kwhyte@umich.edu the first week of class (or as soon as you enroll in the course, whichever is latest) to discuss alternative arrangements.

**Course Recordings: Instructor Wishing to Prohibit Student Recordings**
Students are prohibited from recording/distributing any class activity without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student’s own private use.

Additional information regarding course recordings and privacy concerns can be found on the UM ITS Recording and Privacy Concerns webpage.

**Disability Statement**
The University of Michigan is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all classes, programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Office located at G664 Haven Hall. The SSD phone number is 734-763-3000. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (VISA) form. Please present this form to me at the beginning of the term, or at least two weeks prior to the need for the accommodation (test, project, etc…).

**Mental Health and Well-Being**
Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressures and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. If the source of your stressors is academic, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. For personal concerns, U-M offers a variety of resources, many which are listed on the Resources for Student Well-being webpage. You can also search for additional well-being resources here.

**Sexual Misconduct Policy**
Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We
understand that sexual violence can undermine students’ academic success and we encourage anyone dealing with sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need. Confidential support and academic advocacy can be found with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC) on their 24-hour crisis line, 734.936.3333 and at sapac.umich.edu. Alleged violations can be non-confidentially reported to the Office for Institutional Equity (OIE) at institutional.equity@umich.edu.