ARCTIC 200: Indigenous Diplomacies and International Relations in the Arctic
Instructor: Jason Young

This course introduces students to international relations in the Arctic, with an emphasis on understanding them from the perspective of the region’s Indigenous Peoples. The Arctic provides an important case study for understanding international relations, both because of the complexity of geopolitical issues and because of the strong international presence of Indigenous peoples. First, the Arctic is undergoing dramatic environmental, economic, and social transformation, with global implications. These transformations are giving rise to new forms of geopolitics between a range of actors, including international organizations, nation-states, and subnational groups. The course will introduce students to these emerging geopolitical issues, including an overview of key international actors, governing bodies, and contemporary issues.

Second, the Arctic is unique in that Indigenous peoples are strong international actors in the region. Indigenous knowledge systems not only serve as the basis for Indigenous diplomacies, but can offer a powerful counternarrative to the logics that are driving many of the harmful environmental and social changes in the Arctic. Students will be introduced to Indigenous peoples, language, and ways of thinking, and they will be challenged to understand international frameworks through the lens of Indigenous knowledge systems. This will provide students with distinct theoretical perspectives for understanding international relations.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1 (6 October): Introduction to the Arctic

Week 2 (13 October): Introduction to Indigenous Geopolitics

Week 3 (20 October): Inuit Case Study I

Week 4 (27 October): Inuit Case Study II

Week 5 (3 November): Saami Case Study I

Week 6 (10 November): Saami Case Study II

Week 7 (17 November): Aleut Case Study

Week 8 (24 November): RAIPON Case Study

Week 9 (1 December): Arctic Geopolitics: Contemporary Issues

Week 10 (8 December): Course Wrap-Up and Final Exam

Week 11 (15 December): Final Paper Due