




Anthropology (ANTH) 491

Ethnobiology: Traditional Biological Knowledge in Contemporary Global Context (Revision 6)

Status:

Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)
[↗](#) for the current revision 

Delivery mode:

Individualized study online [↗](#) with **Video component** [↗](#) (Overseas students, please contact the University Library before registering in a course that has an audio/visual component)

Credits:

3

Areas of study:

Arts or Social Science

Prerequisites:

ANTH 275 or equivalent, or introductory biology or consent of the instructor.

Precluded:

ANTH 591 (ANTH 491 may not be taken for credit if credit has already been obtained for ANTH 591)

Challenge:

ANTH 491 is not available for challenge.

Faculty:

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences [↗](#)

Overview

This course examines ethnobiology—cultural knowledge of plants, animals, and ecology—and the nature of traditional knowledge. The course consists of introduction to ethnobiology and the nature of traditional knowledge, followed by sections on cultural knowledge and use of plants (ethnobotany), animals (ethnozoology) and ecology (ethnoecology and traditional resource management), ending with an examination of contemporary issues (traditional versus commercial intellectual property rights to genetic and ecological diversity and medicinal plants, conservation and traditional societies, and sustainable development). ANTH 591 covers substantially the same material and can be taken as a graduate course in the **Master of Arts—Interdisciplinary Studies** [↗](#) program.

Outline

Part 1: Introduction and Classification

- Unit 1: Introduction to Ethnobiology
- Unit 2: Ethnobiological Classification

Part 2: Ethnobotany

- Unit 3: Ethnobotany and Plants as Foods
- Unit 4: Plants as Medicines
- Unit 5: Plants for Technology

Part 3: Ethnozoology

- Unit 6: Ethnozoology
- Unit 7: Animals and World View—Indigenous Peoples in Canada and Alaska

Part 4: Ecological Knowledge and Contemporary Issues

- Unit 8: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Traditional Environmental Management
- Unit 9: Contemporary Issues: Traditional Cultures, Resource Management and Conservation, and Traditional Knowledge and Intellectual Property

Learning outcomes

As they progress through the course, students will become familiar with the nature of ethnobiological knowledge and its similarities to and differences from scientific knowledge.

Students will gain an understanding of:

- the importance of plants for food, medicine, and technology in different cultures
- the significance of gendered plant knowledge
- the diversity of approaches to plant resources among human groups
- the types of cultural knowledge about animals
- the differences in attitude about non-human species of northern hunting groups, pastoral groups, and Euro-Canadian culture
- the relationships to the environment of different human groups, and how their cosmology shapes their perceptions and adaptations


Students will also be able to critically discuss contemporary issues of conservation of traditional resources, the effects of globalization, and the issues surrounding intellectual property of traditional and local peoples in the global market place.

Evaluation


To **receive credit** [↗](#) for ANTH 491, students must complete and submit **all** of the assignments. You must achieve a grade of at least 50 percent on the research paper or final essay, and **D (50 percent)** [↗](#) for the overall course mark.


Activity	Weight
Journal, Parts 1-4	20%
Assignment 1 Quiz	5%
Assignment 2 Short Paper	20%
Assignment 3 Short Paper	20%
Assignment 4 Research Paper or Final Essay	35%


Activity	Weight
Total	100%

To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's [online Calendar](#) .

Materials

Balick, Michael J., and Paul Alan Cox. 2021. *Plants, People, and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany*. 2nd ed. Boca Raton: CRC Press.  (Print)





Hunn, Eugene S., with James Selam and Family. 1990. *Nch'i-Wána "The Big River": Mid-Columbia Indians and Their Land*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.  (Print)

Nelson, Richard K. 1983. *Make Prayers to the Raven: A Koyukon View of the Northern Forest*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  (Print)

Other Materials

All other texts and videos are available online and can be accessed through the Digital Reading Room.

Important links

- › [Academic advising](#) 
- › [Program planning](#) 
- › [Request assistance](#) 
- › [Support services](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Opened in Revision 6, November 10, 2022

Updated October 31, 2024

View **previous revision** 
