

The Final report of the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies BCS 331 and 332

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Arto Willman, D.ED.

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Nordic Council of Ministers

Store Strandstræde 18

DK-1255 Copenhagen K

Phone (+45) 3396 0200

Fax (+45) 3396 0202

Nordic Council

Store Strandstræde 18

DK-1255 Copenhagen K

Phone (+45) 3396 0400

Fax (+45) 3311 1870

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Introduction

This paper is the report of the evaluation of Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies 331 and 332 (BCS 331 and 332) organized by the University of the Arctic. UArctic is a partnership of academic institutions, Indigenous peoples' organizations, the Arctic states, and other stakeholders. It is a co-operating network concerned with higher education and research, not an individual, degree-granting institution. UArctic members share resources, facilities and expertise to build post-secondary education that is relevant and accessible to northern students. The University is adopting an innovative approach to make northern education relevant and accessible to all northerners

The Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies (BCS) program was first proposed in 1998. It provides students with the opportunity to learn about the lands, peoples, and issues of the Circumpolar World and prepares them for advanced study or professional employment in fields such as community health, sustainable resource management, self-government, and tourism. Central to the BCS is the educational needs and aspirations of northern peoples and, by extension, the goals and values of the University. It promotes interdisciplinary study and relevant professional preparation. It embraces both Western and traditional knowledge systems. It fosters connections among northern neighbors and it encourages the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

Long-term evaluation is important for the continuous development of the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies Program. Professor Bill Johnston, Manchester Metropolitan University, carried out the first phase of evaluation procedures for the BCS 100 pilot delivery in spring 2002. The current evaluation of BCS 331 and 332 courses is based on the framework of the evaluation of BCS 100. The purpose of the evaluation is to ensure data is gathered to provide input for the long-term development of the BCS program and also to provide information for the creation of a generic evaluation tool for UArctic.

1. General framework of evaluation

The online version of BCS 331 started on Jan 15, 2003 with 17 students from four different countries and 7 institutions. The final exam for this course was held at the end of the April 2003. After the course, the BCS 331 students participated in a small evaluation questionnaire (see appendix 3). BCS 332 started in May 2003 with 10 students and the final exam was held at the end of the June 2003. Both courses consisted of thirteen modules and every module has its own discussion forum located online. Both the students and the instructor participated to final questionnaires at the end of the courses (see appendix 1 and 2).

This evaluation assignment was challenging in many ways.

UArctic has no official pedagogical strategy or ideology for the evaluation of courses, so there are various ways to interpret the information collected on student learning in the context of the BCS. I have tried in this report to open up some perspectives for the further development of BCS studies.

Many of the problems or criticisms that are discussed in this paper, are also common in international online courses (e-learning) pedagogy. Therefore the results of this evaluation are more like suggestions than judgements of these particular courses.

The role of the external evaluator is never easy, so I have used quite a low profile when monitoring the courses. These courses were so intensive and active, that I sometimes felt like an external member of virtual community.

2. Description of the evaluation material and data analysis

The evaluation data has been collected in various ways. The monitoring of the online discussions has been an important part of the formative evaluation of the courses. Various contacts between the participants (evaluators, instructor and site coordinator), have given valuable information about progress of the courses. Some of these discussions have been used as evaluation material in this report. The main data of this report was collected from different evaluation questionnaires: midterm evaluation after BCS 331, main evaluation after BCS 332 and some additional questions for the participants made by the main evaluator.

The assistant evaluator, Heather Myers, supported the evaluation work with her analysis of the course content and discussions. Her excellent comments were very helpful throughout the evaluation process. Her observation of the course content of 331 and 332 are added at the end of this report (see appendix 4). The instructor, Dr. Chris Southcott, was also very helpful, giving additional perspectives on the success of the course. Discussions with him have provided valuable background information about course learning and incidents.

This report is descriptive and therefore its aim is to find out the information that is most relevant for the further development of the BCS program, as well as assuring the quality of the program. The data has been analysed and interpreted and I have tried to find out the relevant themes and content of the learning in the BCS courses. I have also tried to indicate different voices inside of the one particular theme. I have mainly used students' comments as the examples of the themes. When any other information is used, it is mentioned in the text.

3. The online discussion

3.1 General comments of discussions

The pilot of Contemporary Issues of the Circumpolar World was successful in many ways. Discussion activity was really high and the BCS 331 especially, was very inspiring (862 messages or postings?). In BCS 332 the activity was a little bit slower than 331 (356 messages). There were many reasons for this: In the 331 there were 17 active students but in 332 there were only 8 active students left at the end of the course. With fewer students the course dialogue became less intense and in many cases slower. Some students also have other activities, such as extra study courses or part time jobs going on at the same time. In addition, BCS 332 took place during the summer term in North America, so fewer students were able to participate and were busy with summer employment opportunities.

Students really thought that these courses were important and a really good way to learn about the Arctic. I agree with the instructor who commented on the success of the courses:

“I found the online learning environment to be surprisingly productive. In many respects, students participate to a much greater degree than in traditional classroom environment. At the same time, the students also seem to crave more personal interaction.”

The assistant evaluator summed up the discussion process in the following way:

“I thought the students seemed engaged. There were the inevitable differences in quality of input, from thoughtful, substantive and organized, to wandering and verbose. But the comments about particular northern realities that each knew from personal experience were fascinating, and certainly a strength of this model of circumpolar education. ...And overall, the student engagement seemed good, right through to the end.”

At the beginning of BCS 331, the instructor decided to use a different pedagogical strategy than earlier in the BCS 100 courses.

“After reviewing the evaluation of the BCS100 pilot, and after discussions with Amanda Graham, I had made a decision to try and be less intrusive in the course discussions than had been the case with BCS100. BCS100 was an introductory course which required the active participation of the instructor. Since BCS331 and 332 were third year courses, it was fitting that students had to start to learn to be more proactive in the learning process and be less dependent on the instructor. I saw my role as being a passive reviewer of the discussion rather than a leader or even active participant”.

This kind of strategy allows students to bring their personal perspectives and experiences to the course discussions. In addition it also requires more responsibility and active participation for successful discussions. According the instructor this strategy worked very well:

“I was pleasantly surprised to find out that this worked quite well in both courses. Several of the students worked together to stimulate excellent discussion questions, which I rarely needed to participate in.”

Also students appreciated their personal freedom: *“Seems like we are quite independent and keep the discussions going without much prompting. :)) I Like the open-ended questions for each Module discussion”*

However students interpreted their personal freedom in different ways. Some of the students saw the freedom as an uncertainty and they expected instructor to be more active. *“Some of the students however seemed to want more direction from the instructor. In the words of one of the students “If there were more postings by the instructor, it would be more psychologically comfortable”. (INSTRUCTOR’S COMMENT) One student recognised this same problem: “As adults we are quite independent and responsible, but I think some may appreciate a little more involvement from the instructor. I think it depends on the class and their experience etc.”*

Some other students specified their expectations:

“I’d like to see more synthesis of our posts. You know at the end of a Module you could ask for a three sentence summary of main points or contradictions...something like that to get us thinking beyond the obvious”

“I would also appreciate more feedback from the instructor. I don't think at all that reading the feedback would distract students from posting answers. «

It is not easy to say how active the instructor should have in discussions. Like the instructor commented it: *“This is going to be an on-going question in the Core courses – to what extent should the instructor become involved in the discussions?”* The role of the instructor in higher education is very problematic, because on the one hand students expect him to be an expert who knows everything but on the other hand students like to be treated as a self-directive persons making their own decisions.

However I think the instructor’s pedagogical strategy worked very well. Most of the students really liked the discussions and their self-directed role in it. Higher education pedagogy emphasizes the active participation of students in their learning, so it is reasonable to consider student participation and activity in discussions are important elements of successful learning.

If the aim of the future BCS courses is to support different learning orientations or strategies, there will be a need to increase? student participation in discussions. One means to do this is to deliver a different kind of pedagogical support for the students (active feedback, tutoring, different kind of group work etc.) The instructor also mentioned this in his self evaluation after the courses: *“I am not satisfied that some students did not participate as much as I would have liked them to. I am also not satisfied that I was not able to use techniques of student interaction other than the discussion board. “*

3.2 Some special comments? on the discussion

The quality of discussions was good both in the practical and theoretical level. The students really thought that the discussions were an important part of their learning .

“The multicultural and different life-experience that each of the students brought to the course challenged the materials and increased the learning of the other students.”

“A brilliant way to bring minds together and exchange ideas regarding issues pertaining to all of us nonetheless. “

“I think it is so neat that I get to have discussions with people from all over the arctic and share what I am learning in my classes in Alaska.”.

Students' personal engagement was one notable aspect of the discussions. *"For both course it has been very educating to study about "our own" issues of matters in the arctic. One reason for this was strong experience of the personal growth and the possibility to explore their personal interests in the context of the current practice, theory and research in the Arctic. "Gosh I remember back in 1993 there was so little information about these issues. It is great that more work and research is being done.... I have considered it a privilege and enjoyed our discussions this past year. It has been a great learning experience".*

Though students appreciated the personal engagement in discussions it, was not always a positive experience. "People in the class have much to say and that is important. I know it is quite different expressing ones opinion in class as oppose to on the Internet. I am much more of a personal person and right now (this may change) prefer attending a course where I can converse with the instructor and fellow students. It is a matter of getting used to the new system »

This is the one thing, which was typical for the BCS studies. On one hand there is a world of theories and studies about the Arctic, but on the other hand, people live in the world of everyday practice in their communities. Student who can connect these two realities of the Arctic in discussions are very lucky ones, because they can communicate two different ways: in academic and personal. This is very important in the high quality online discussions. In general, most of the students succeeded in combining these two interests together.

3.2.1 Content

BCS 331/332 highlighted many important issues facing the Arctic, such as globalisation, sustainability of communities, environmental, social, political and cultural issues. In general, BCS 331 seems to have been a more fact-based course than BCS 332, which was more philosophically oriented course. This was a very good combination and allowed for the use of different discussion strategies. In 331 there was more need for the fact-based discussions, however in the 332 it was more important to encourage to students share their opinions and understanding.

One example of the effectiveness of the discussions was how the students' awareness of Arctic issues changed. Feeling that others shared the same interests gave the students the impression that their lives and experiences in the Arctic are both locally and globally shared: other students can recognise what they are talking about. In this sense the BCS program has helped the students find commonalities between their regions and the regions of other northerners:

"I like that this course takes a generalist perspective allowing the different members of the class to share knowledge from their disciplines."

"I find the course very enjoyable, because I got a lot of input for the awareness about the Arctic which I didn't know before. «

"I am so amazed at the similar challenges we face. As well I am concerned about some of the direct situations some regions are experiencing."

"I did see the information from a new perspective and could generalize her perspective to others. For me the open discussion is where I truly learn the material and internalize other's perspectives."

3.2.2 Length of the messages

One typical concrete issue in the students' comments was their opinions about the length of the messages. While some of the students wanted greater specificity and less descriptive postings, the others like to have more personal creative space to express their opinions.

I would like more words... 200 is like a short-short. I find that the questions you pose are so timely that they can be debated on different levels, could be developed into masters thesis.

"Only critical thing is, and I hate to sound like a broken record, but I would like to see us stick to the word limits in all of our postings. It would make reading that much more manageable "

"I do not see the need to "discuss" each and every point made in the readings. I think that this fact alone elevates the course to the level where one can read, digest ,research further, internalize and then opt to discuss."

"The reading amount is definitely reasonable and the postings are enjoyable. If anything it is the hardest to keep the postings around 200 words :)"

"I found the 200 word limit to be very restrictive for thoughtful responses on some issues...I realize the need to not have people rambling on for pages, but still... "

The instructor stressed on many occasions during the courses, the importance of the word limit. He also tried to direct the discussions: "...try and keep the posting between 100 and 150 words – no more than 200 at the most Try and get them in earlier than the deadline – this gets other students, and me, a chance to comment on your posting. Try and comment on other student's postings – if you have further questions, send a message to the author of the posting.

Word limits were problematic for students who have a lot of personal experiences, which they like to share with others. But in the long postings there is always danger of losing the point of discussion. In addition it is time consuming for the students to read a lot of long messages. However students had some good solutions for the problem of the long postings:

"It would be fun to do one thing different such as a mini-group discussion on a topic and then share results."

"Imbalances in participation could be moderated by encouraging the development of active listening skills and making space for the expression of the other's position through dialogue using strategies such as teamwork and student-to-student directed interaction: small group work on a topic; shared reaction to a specific prompt; work in pairs; introduction of variety of writing components such as journals/diary entries to express one's views to a nation or society. Sharing writings could motivate and provide an interesting way to direct analytic attention to diverse interpretations."

"Any other little comments, thank yous, requests for more information from people, etc. should be sent privately to people via the course email. It just seemed the discussion board was getting somewhat clogged up with little comments back & forth, that would have been better served via email."

The frequency of long postings is common when people have a lot of personal engagement for the studies. The instructor tried to encourage people to express their personal opinions, while also providing some boundaries by supervising the discussions. Some students felt this quite problematic, so in the future it is important to find positive solutions where the individual activity and academic interests are connected successfully.

The students quoted above presented good ideas for the further development of the BCS online courses. Different kinds of small groups give active students more space their expressions and at the same time, the instructor can organised group work by themes.

3.2.3 Quality of thinking and learning

The personal and active communication has many positive consequences to learning. One very important aspect is the changes in learners' perceptions of the arctic. One student reflected on the meaning of the course in this way:

“...Our goal and purpose are to save the genuine, sovereign, independent Circumpolar community with the unique and wonderful culture. But do the reindeer-herders and fishermen of the Indigenous think about all we are discussing now? I am spoilt and influenced by the Western civilization but I am still a Northerner. We are doing the right thing – because this is the only way out. We cannot erase this or that from our minds. Education is our weapon, denying everything may lead us to a total defeat to the Western conquerors.”

The second example shows how students have found the complexity of the Arctic world.

“Regarding content, the courses gave a good introduction to many of the political, social, and economic issues that present obstacles to continued healthy existence of northern communities, but because the focus was on the sustainability of these communities the primary focus seemed to be economic.”

The third example illustrates the growth of the northern identity:

“I am aware that many of the issues are similar. When I place myself within the context of the circumpolar community, this idea of identity raises questions for me. For example when we look at larger issues and greater populations, it is difficult to talk about the groups who are statistically insignificant in terms of numbers such as those in the NWT. Sometimes I am in a dilemma about how to address identity –national and local. I ask myself how can I include the other without making either seem insignificant. To express that both are important is easy using simple words, but providing evidence for decisions that affect large populations or small populations seems harder to come by. This course has certainly made me think about these things.”

According to many educators, critical thinking is the one key character of successful learning. It is clear that this kind of thinking cannot exist without personal engagement and good course design and organisation. These types of comments are a very positive indicator of the relevance and need for the BCS courses, and also demonstrate the effectiveness of the program's design.

3.2.4 Language

The question of appropriate language has its own role in participants' comments:

“It would be nice to be able to edit a post after it has been submitted. Sometimes the odd grammatical error slips by or a sentence can be misinterpreted.

“I have enforced my English skill to use it more in this case, which is very limited here in xxxx. I hope I have understandable language of English.”

“Complex issues in a foreign language”

This same question also arose when students were working with their course materials:

“I think some participants might have more difficulty with their interpretation. It would be good if they could be translated so that all participants have a fair access to information contained therein.

The instructor also commented on the role of the English: “There was extremely good communication between some of the students. Other students did not participate as much. I am not sure how one could increase the participation of some of the students – one way would be to ensure that the discussions did not get too lengthy. I think it is very difficult for some students, especially non-anglophones, to catch up with the discussions if there are too many postings. This would necessitate that the numbers of students in the course be limited.”

I think that in one way or another this question should be addressed in the future development of BCS studies or UArctic. There are many reasons for using English as the main language of communication in international discussions, but there are also many reasons to strengthen local interests by using the student’s local language in instruction. I think that these two interests can be connected.

3.2.5 Form of the knowledge

The form of the material in the online format of the BCS courses was mainly written material. In online discussions students unconsciously tried to find the same kind of information that they would get in classrooms, such as a map, and other visual teaching aids..

“The only improvement i can think of is maybe having a map we can click on and see where everyone is from. Also sometimes when i read other peoples postings i can not remember where they are from and have to go back to the introductions and see again.”

“Maybe some pictures of the various industries in different countries could be introduced for comparison purposes.”

The instructor also noticed the need for the different types of learning materials and techniques in future development of BCS courses.

Tools of interaction other than discussion postings should be used – even if to introduce more variety. This would require more training in WebCT given to the instructor. The use of multimedia in exchanges between students would improve interaction even more. Perhaps use of “Chat” rooms would be good for the students but this also seemed to be achieved using the discussions.”

4. The overall evaluation

The students' comments about the courses were quite similar. Students in general were very satisfied in the courses. One reason for this was the course material.

"I enjoy reading the information presented in the packet and the readings posted by fellow students."

"I like this format. I would like to complete the entire set of core courses

"Readings are timely, many exploring new research. I found them extremely helpful (I even quoted a few in a couple of other classes)."

"The material is accurate, up to date and relevant to the issues arising globally."

"Some of the readings are really specific but they bring up good points and get the message across."

One important sign of the success of the courses was the change in students' perceptions and identities:

"I am experiencing a change in my perceptions and understanding about who makes up the North..... When I am speaking about Canada, I have to locate myself in a specific northern area where northerners can be members of ethnic groups, First Nations, (Inuit, Metis) and others and all can have a different understanding of identity. "

The instructor commented on the meaning of the courses in following way:

"The most positive experience was to see that the course worked well and that the students seemed to like it. The next most positive experience was to see the students start to create a true circumpolar identity during the course".

"On an international level, I am aware that many of the issues are similar. When I place myself within the context of the circumpolar community, this idea of identity raises questions for me. For example when we look at larger issues and greater populations, it is difficult to talk about the groups who are statistically insignificant in terms of numbers such as those in the NWT. Sometimes I am in a dilemma about how to address identity –national and local. I ask myself how can I include the other without making either seem insignificant. To express that both are important is easy using simple words, but providing evidence for decisions that affect large populations or small populations seems harder to come by. This course has certainly made me think about these things."

The online version of BCS 331/332 serves possibilities to use a variety of resources and networks, which are available through the Internet. I noticed that students throughout the discussions created some kind of virtual Arctic community, where both commonalities and differences of their local Arctic regions could be shared:

I found the online learning environment to be surprisingly productive. In many respects, students participate to a much greater degree than in traditional classroom environment. At the same time, the students also seem to crave more personal interaction....I was pleasantly surprised to find out that this worked quite well in both courses. Several of the students worked together to stimulate excellent discussion questions which I rarely needed to participate in.

The BCS courses were generally a rewarding experience, but some found the process somewhat intensive.

“Well, it requires some work. But I'd rather say that it takes more time than efforts (to read the materials, etc.) The content is more specialized than it was last year, respectively, one have to find more precise answers in different fields, what is challenging.”

The reason for the increased workload was not always the BCS course itself but the total amount of the courses together.

“...study at my University also take a lot of time, I think my matter of planning of being student at both universities should be improved in order for accomplish satisfactory «

“The main reason that I am upset is just that I am not getting as much out of the course as I could... not that it's too demanding for most people, But I am finding it tough to do all of the readings and still do my full course load here at the College. (not enough hours in the day)”

“However, because of the distraction of being in Norway along with taking two other courses. Personally I find it too time consuming to read and respond to many of the postings by fellow students.”

Also participation in very intensive discussions took a lot of students' time

“The readings do take a fair amount of time, and in order to really be able to participate fully I haven't been able to do that yet. “:“When someone disappears without notice then posts all the discussion points in a 24 hour period. There were over 800 total discussion posts. Out of respect for other students thoughts and work (especially the posts where people are struggling to express complex issues in a foreign language) timely responses are required. I know people have competing time constraints but it is important to the class dynamics and “region building” on the part of students that people post frequently and interact.”

“I know people have competing time constraints but it is important to the class dynamics and “region building” on the part of students that people post frequently and interact.”

In addition, changes in the study times caused some troubles.

“The one big difference with BCS 331 is that, instead of a week devoted to each module, we will only be devoting 4 days. The course is being presented as a more intensive spring or summer course. As a result, I will be posting discussion topics every 4 days instead of every week.”(INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENT IN THE BEGINNING OF THE 332)

Students also had an opinion about suitable lecture schedules in the courses:

“I also preferred the 7 day cycle for the modules as opposed to the 4 day cycle, but that may just have been because of my exceptional hectic spring. A 4 day cycle may work fine in the winter months when we are spending more times inside.” When there was less time per module left students messages started to delay: « There is also sometimes some trouble in following the flow of the posts as people are responding to other students at various times.”

In future courses it would be useful to look for alternative working models for the study.

” For example we could work on a group project, such as looking at one issue from three points of view. We could be put into small groups and asked to post present our thoughts on a particular point. This does not have too take up additional time. It would be fun to have included options to a paper such as doing a power point, or designing a

poster to represent an issue, or translating an issue into a story that would appeal to Elders.”

“I would want it to be more practical, perhaps modeled on participatory research.”

5. Some conclusions and suggestions for UArctic

Overall, these courses have been very successful. Learning and communication during the courses has been intensive and the quality of those discussions was very good. I have attached in the end of this report some suggestions and points from Heather Myers, who has also evaluated the BCS 331/332 course content and material. As a result of the evaluation process there are a few things that may be useful in the development of the BCS courses in the future.

Timing seems to be one important thing in successful learning. Time in one is general theme, which is in many cases connected to other things. There are several critical points, which can help students to organize their studies more appropriate way.

I suggest that different courses would be better to split in different semester. For instance BCS 331 would be placed in the fall semester (September to December) and the BCS 332 can be placed in the spring (January to April/May). Students will be more motivated to study BCS 332 if there is a little break between the courses, and the last course is not placed in the summer term. Another thing is that some of the students require guidance when they are planning their timetables. For some students, it is difficult to estimate how much time and effort are required to study successfully in the BCS. The member university will have to take some responsibility to guide students in their course selections to ensure they are not overloaded. One solution to the time problem is to see it as a learning skill:

“I made up my own schedule – I tried to follow the schedule, but I had to follow my own according to my needs as dictated by time available. I did not follow a schedule”.

Some pedagogical points are useful for the further development of BCS studies. It is important to think what kind of pedagogical strategies might be useful in the BCS. This implies examining how these studies are organized and what kinds of learning resources are used. One good example of this is to organize people in discussion groups around one particular theme. After the intensive, virtual, small group work, different groups can explain their conclusions to the other groups in public discussion forum. Another possibility is to give students different roles in the discussions. For instance students can prepare presentations or research assignments, the results of which can be discussed or commented in the discussion forums. Different kind of roles like commentator of discussions, looking for the relevant points from the discussion, drawing conclusions, etc. can bring students into the activity. In this way students get more opportunity to organize and direct the discussions. I hope that in this way they gain a richer experience in the course.

The question of language is also interesting. When we communicate internationally it is common to use English. But why this is also natural in the Arctic context? Some students experienced problems with their English, so it would be useful to determine alternatives for those students who prefer their own native language. Materials or some of

the discussions can be carried out with students' own language. This is important if we want to people really understand what they are studying.

Students often require different types knowledge or learning resources and aids. This is an important aspect when we think about a good online learning environment. The growth of technology provides a lot of new such as multimedia productions, video clips, animations etc. The assistant evaluator also noted the same need from other perspectives: *"Another suggestion was that more local knowledge, in various forms such as narratives, biographies, and autobiographies could be used, via audio and video component."* Usually higher education is based on written or spoken information and it is common to forget that there are other means to convey information to students.

In future evaluations, it would be useful to develop self-evaluation activities inside of the courses. Many of my development ideas come from the students. The final module (13) in BCS 332 was good example of this kind of discussions. Students have clever ideas about the course. For instance, from the self-evaluation questions, the instructor can help students to investigate their role or activity in the discussion and how they can improve their learning.

Finally, some of the students are already waiting for the next course in the BCS program, so I have to say that this BCS 331/332 pilot has been a success. There are a lot things to improve and build upon if we are willing to see and do that work. I am very pleased that UArctic is prepared and ready to do this kind of evaluation work. I hope that in the future this kind of evaluation work can ensure the continuous development of the Arctic studies.

Appendix 1

Student Version

Section A – Interactivity

- Did you feel that there was adequate communication and discussion between you and the other members of the class? How might this have been improved?
- Did you feel that there was adequate communication and discussion between you and the instructor? How might this have been improved?
- How did you find using the online learning environment?
- If you experienced technical problems using the environment were you able to get prompt and useful assistance?

Section B – Learning Outcomes

- How has this course changed your knowledge or attitudes towards the North and northern issues?
- Of the topics covered by the course – sustainability, subsistence living, community well-being, self-government, and so on – which were for you the most important or interesting – and why?
- What topics, if any, would you like to see added to the course? Subtracted from it?
- Which parts of the course did you find most difficult/easy? Tell us why.

Section C – General Issues

- How would you evaluate the success of this course for you?
- If you could have changed one thing about the course, what would it have been?
- What did you like or dislike about the way the course was organized?
- How would you rate the accessibility of supplemental online course materials? Did you experience any problems accessing any of the materials?
- Would you recommend this course to others who expressed an interest in knowing more about the North, its peoples, and the issues they face?
- Would you consider taking more courses developed by the University of the Arctic? Why or why not?
- If you were to try to describe what the University of the Arctic has been set up to achieve, what would you say?

Appendix 2

Section A – Interactivity

- Did you feel that there was adequate communication and discussion between all the members of the class? How might this have been improved?
- Did you feel that there was adequate communication and discussion between you and the students? How might this have been improved?
- How did you find using the online learning environment?
- If you experienced technical problems using the environment were you able to get prompt and useful assistance?

Section B – Learning Outcomes

- How has this course has changed your students' knowledge or attitudes towards the North and northern issues?
- Of all the topics covered by the course – sustainability, subsistence living, community well-being, self-government, and so on – which were for you the most important – and why?
- What topics, if any, would you like to see added to the course? Subtracted from it?
- Which parts of the course did you find most difficult/easy? Tell us why.

Section C – General Issues

- How would you evaluate the success of this course for you?
- If you could have changed one thing about the course, what would it have been?
- What did you like or dislike about the way the course was organized?
- How would you rate the accessibility of online supplemental course materials for your students? Did they experience any problems accessing any of the materials?
- If you were to try to describe what the University of the Arctic has been set up to achieve, what would you say?

Appendix 3

Mid term questionnaire

Course Evaluation Questionnaire

Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies 331 Contemporary Issues in the Circumpolar World

Date:

The Student Manual

1. What features of the *Student Manual* did you find most helpful?
2. Is there any additional information you would have liked included in the *Student Manual*?

☐ yes

☐ no

If so, please indicate what that information would be.

3. Did you follow the study schedule provided in the *Student Manual*?

☐ yes

☐ I made up my own schedule

☐ I did not follow a schedule

Assigned Reading

4. How useful did you find the assigned readings from the *Reading File*? Did they provide you with adequate information on the topics covered in the course?
5. Please list any assigned readings from the *Reading File* that you found particularly difficult or inappropriate.
6. Did you use any other sources of information for this course? If so, please list your sources and indicate whether you found them useful.

Written Assignments and Final Examination

7. Did you find the course assignments interesting and useful?

☐ yes

☐ somewhat

☐ no

Comments

8. Were you helped by your instructor's comments on your written assignments?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ somewhat
- ☐ no

9. Did you find that there was enough information available to enable you to do the written assignments?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no
- ☐ undecided

Please specify any topics for which you could have used more information.

Approximately how much time on average did you spend completing each of the weekly assignments?

10. Please indicate what changes, if any, you might like to see in the assignment structure.

11. What comments can you make to improve the final examination?

Instructor Support

12. Were you reasonably satisfied with the support you received from your instructor?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no
- ☐ undecided

If not, please explain.

13. Do you have any suggestions about how your instructor might have been more helpful?

General

14. Have you experienced any difficulty in registration, contacting your instructor, receiving your course materials, sending in and receiving assignments, or arranging for and completing the examination?

15. How would you rate your overall experience in this course?

- ☐ positive (way more than that I learned so much from other students)
- ☐ adequate
- ☐ negative

Comments

16. Would you enrol in another course of this type at the University of the Arctic?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

If yes, please indicate what you would want the course to be like. If not, please explain.

Appendix 4

Comments on BCS 331 from Heather Myers, UNBC, Prince George, Canada

General points:

Well laid out introduction to web-ct and course lay-out. Good technology and set-up for the quizzes.

I suggest that a more logical order for the modules would put traditional economy before tourism, and forestry/mining before oil and gas, since they have occurred in somewhat that order in the north.

Specific comments on each module:

Each module is, in general, very interesting and well-done. The comments below are just reflecting possible additions, from my perspective, except in a few cases where I have noted what I consider a major gap.

Modules 3 and 6:

- changing economies - is there some repetition here? I didn't notice it in my first reading, but did in my final overview....

Population dynamics:

- table implies environmental ethic doesn't exist in Canada - this is wrong. Though some of the population may be mobile, there are many communities where an incoming population has taken root, and takes pride in their new home.

Reindeer herding module:

- avoid the idea of stages of evolution in different economic forms, hunting being the most primitive.
- were teepees really covered with reindeer skin? I don't think so. Maybe bison, deer or moose hide.
- some of the wording in this module is rather obscure/indirect/ awkward, but otherwise, it is a very interesting module.

Oil and gas module:

- industry/govt terms for the different phases of oil and gas development are exploration, (discovery) development, production; the pre-maturity etc. terms are new to me.
- you could explain/use the table information more fully, ie oligarchy - how does it fit into the argument?
- there is no consideration of local inputs/demands - education, traditional economy, socioeconomic needs, employment. The description has left out local concerns re: employment, royalties etc. I think this is a major gap.

Forestry module:

- I found this rather biased, though it claimed not to be - against forestry. I couldn't teach this module as is in Prince George, or in any community where forestry is important. It seems to be a rather southern/urban perspective, and a set-up for the coming anti-harvest campaign against boreal forest use.
- it also ignores the fact that many aboriginal peoples want to pursue forestry themselves. There are many active aboriginal forestry companies and joint ventures.
- in the Russian section, what is "final cutting"?
- in this section, there is no mention of the significant multinational corporation interest in the Russian boreal forest.
- there's also no mention of the significant difference between Europe and North America re: forests, which is the tradition of individual access and harvest rights in European forests – for mushrooms, berries etc. vs. a different kind of assumed access in N. America.

Mining module:

- this seems to leave out the major new diamond rush in the NWT.

It could also look more at local impacts of mines.

Land claims module:

- this benefits from being linked to the resource uses described in previous modules - this is done to some extent - either the text, or the instructor can make the links more clear/tight.
- a positive example of "disposition rights" (instead of the negative example used in the text) could be the disposition of fishing rights or trapping rights in certain areas, granted by territory holders in Gwich'in or Cree areas respectively.
- the Canadian section of this repeats pretty well what was in the BCS100 section on land claims.
- this claims that the Nisga'a claim is the most significant in Canada. I think this is debatable. At the very least, the section should acknowledge the Nunavut claim, which resulted in a whole new territory, and the same and then more rights as involved in the Nisga'a claim.
- there should be some inclusion of co-management and development of non-renewable resources as well.
- the module ignores the fact that aboriginal peoples are now also interested in developing the non-renewable resources of their territories - Inuvialuit and oil/gas; Nunavut and mines; Nisga'a and forestry; etc.
- the Beverly-Qaminuriaq Caribou Management Board is one of the first and most important examples of co-management, and if mentioned/described, could be linked to their web-site.

Final module:

- excellent wrap-up idea in the final module - using previous modules' lessons to examine fisheries. I think the text could draw out more concise, crystallized lessons, though, rather than providing so much repetition of previous content.
- the Golovnev info. is here represented as relating to fisheries, but in the original module where it appears, I thought it was more about herding/harvesting...? A bit confusing.
- there seems to be an implied critique of the oil and gas module in this final module.

Minor points:

- some spelling mistakes:
 - phenomena instead of phenomenon
 - tepee instead of teepee
 - locals instead of "locales"
 - inter and intra are confused (reversed) in their interpretation in module 3
 - forth several times instead of "fourth"
 - environmental "ethnic" should be ethic (module 4 table)
- some of the Scandinavian typography seems to be lost or garbled - is this a vestige of different software?

Comments on BCS332

Module 1:

Mainwaring reference missing - text says "reference?"

Quotes re: values of northern economies are a bit long-winded and non-direct; point about taxes paid [as indicator of higher income?] is not clear. Could also use the recent BC report showing the relative (massive) contribution of northern/rural regions to the BC economy.

Module 2:

re: political autonomy section - is Nunavut not also an example within Canada of Public Self-government?

Module 3:

Might mention the interesting "Western Constitutional Forums" in the NWT, which tried to develop a new NWT constitution - unsuccessfully. Yet, the also unsuccessful attempt to find a new name for the territory (including "Bob") - a sign of shared/persisting, or a chronically divided identity?

Many Inuit did not favour the division into Nunavut. And their success is debatable at this point, given low levels of Inuit (retained) employment in Government of Nunavut, very high turn-over rates, and disorganization within the government.

Discussion questions should focus on other parts of the North – seem to emphasize North America.

Module 7 Women

I found this module rather strident – the instructor needs to make room for alternative views – I wondered if it would make the students clam up.

Some surprising and questionable generalized statements – certainly not borne out by my experience/observations in Canada:

- "Birth control and abortions are still not safe and economically available..."; in Canada, anyway, and certainly for any northerners (and I suspect all Scandinavians and Russians), they are free and available.

- "hegemonic male power is evidenced in the fact that the rules are often changed when the better education of women becomes an advantage over men". ???

I wonder if womens' issues for non-natives are perhaps not the same as for aboriginal women? Again, strident generalizations that obscure rather than help explain.

This module was full of gender-based generalizations, which I find as sexist as the sexism they pretend to criticize. While this makes for an interesting perspective, the instructor needs to be sure to allow for student debate, disagreement or re"vision"ing. One student's comments hit on this as well – in new industrial development areas, it is often the women who get better jobs, because they have education – then it leads to abuse....!

Module 8 Health

Hard to make out chart 1 – all lines on chart are in black and white – can it be put in colour?

Fig 3 - is Nunavut part of NWT stats there?

An important question that arises (to me): with transfer of authority for health to indigenous authorities, have their practices/foci changed?

Isn't a key health issue "food" ? It has important implications for development, attention spans of children in schools, energy levels and aggressiveness, illness... and that's not even considering the impacts of contaminants in food and their potential health effects.

Good exercise for this module.

Module 9 Environmental change

Leeched should be leached

Module 10 External political structures

Key terms/Concepts listed at beginning aren't necessarily clearly defined or used. They should be defined explicitly so that non-specialists can pick up on them and their use/implications. The learning objectives do not all seem to be fulfilled.

This module could be more focused/tight. It needs to make distinctions/definitions clearer. There seem to be a lot of embedded assumptions and unexplained details or statements, for instance:

- Why isn't BEAC a real IGO?
- The international activity of the Saami has not been easy for the unified states, as the protection of the Arctic environment in the Rovaniemi Process has shown.
- Not clear: The Saami Council is acting in the WCIP, in the Arctic Council, toward the European Union, and within the European North.

The module seems to be talking about the circumpolar North, but examples and discussion are primarily focused on the European north – it talks only about vertical integration as being EU to the European North.

Again, in terms of cooperation, there is no mention of the International Polar Bear Agreement and related cooperation, nor of other modes of cooperation between Alaska/US/Canada/Greenland...

The module seems to be rather selective in its choice of events to analyze/include. For instance, there is an amazing skip over the past history of ENGOs in North – it starts with cooperation in 1980s, ignoring their anti-use campaigns in the 1970s and the profoundly damaging effects they had. Cooperation, if it occurred after that time, has to be seen in that context.

Were northern indigenous groups really involved in the first Ministerial meeting of the Arctic Eight? I didn't think they came in until later. A minor point, perhaps.

Was the IGY really the beginning of scientific cooperation/activity in the North???

There are some spelling/grammar mistakes.

There should be more detailed discussion of case study(s); they are one to two paragraphs long, but should include analysis of the implications they hold, and the relationship to factors discussed in the module.

Study questions could ask something more analytical – strengths and weaknesses of different models, or why such processes are occurring....

Module 11 Security

Again, definition of terms would be helpful, unless I missed it somewhere. For instance, what's the difference between a risk and a threat? What are Phare and Phare-CBC programs?

Wrong or imprecise information, perhaps just a feature of English usage/translation:

We know that radioactivity from nuclear tests done in the atmosphere is forming even today (emphasis mine) and is the greatest source of radioactive contamination of the oceans. Radioactivity from these tests is found in the sediments of the ocean bottom. There is also some evidence of radioactive contamination from underground nuclear tests because of earthquakes.

Pretty simplistic, and/or not true re: PCBs from DEW line sites:

Finally, the ability to clean up pollution and environmental catastrophes exists. For example, in the early 1990s, based on an environmental assessment, the DEW Line Clean Up Protocol was signed and carried out (Poland 2001).

A more focused, relevant reference on this issue might be:

Myers H & Munton D, 2000, Cold war, frozen wastes: cleaning up the DEW line, *Environment and Security*, no. 4: 119-138.

Many statements have no explanation of how/why/implications – ie:

The forces of continuity support arms technology, and particularly quality of technology over quantity of arms (one of the basic reasons why the military is present in the Arctic).

Quite a confusing feature of the discussion has been the exclusion of other problems military activity is causing in the Kola Peninsula. WHAT???

WHICH indigenous groups support NATO and other military activities?

Another interesting link of the North to current security concerns is the implications of post-cold war “loss” or “misplacement” of nuclear materials – possibly to terrorist or extortionist organizations.

The two cases on traditional power are good – good level of detail.

“Proceeded” should be “Preceded”.

In general, Modules 10 & 11 are very self-referential.

Module 12 Monoculture and diversity

This was an interesting module, exposing an important alternative perspective. Like Module 7, it tended to be strident and dogmatic, and includes lots of sexist generalizations – I can think of exceptions for most of them – many Inuit women political leaders, etc. But if students are allowed “room” to discuss, debate and disagree freely, then it’s not necessarily a problem.

In quite a few cases, I think the author’s dogmatic position interferes with credible analysis of the northern situation. For example, there is a statement that in northern Russia “Unemployment is directly related to relaxing of labour and union laws, diminishing workers’ rights, and the profit-focussed greed of multinational corporations.” I think this ignores some other well-recognized contributors to unemployment!

I wonder if there is an accidental reversed order in this point?:

...“the unconditional gift giving paradigm (*gift economy*), which seeks to satisfy needs and consolidate communal life, and the *exchange paradigm*, based on shortsighted and divisive self-interest.... The former is essentially connected with elite white men; the other with women and indigenous cultures based on traditional gift economies. Shouldn’t this be reversed?”

One quote refers to “Take No Photos, Leave No Footprints” – the saying is actually “Take ONLY Photos, Leave ONLY footprints”... It’s not the author’s mistake, but questions the credibility of the quote she used.

A good study / discussion question would be: (from the text)

“... capitalist, non-local investors who are finding new ways of harnessing the people, animals, and ecosystems of the North for short-sighted commercial and political goals; Scholars and eco-activists in search of exotic or victimized cultures that need new modes of salvation. Find and discuss some examples in your part of the North, and how they illustrate complementary and contradictory trends, traditions and cultures in the North.”

OR:

Do you agree with the author’s analysis?

Module 13 – wrap-up

Good wrap-up, though a bit heavy on some modules – it helped put the course in perspective.