

## **Exploring the Latitude and Longitude of Teaching Environmental Politics**

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Many courses on environmental policy and politics are taught at either an international, national, or local level, with a focus on either policy or on environmental activism in the form of social movements or advocacy groups. Some may divide the focus between U.S. national environmental policy and U.S. environmental policy in the international context, *e.g.*, U.S. support of the Ozone Protocol, and rejection of the Kyoto Agreement. Discussion of environmental ethics more typically belongs to the study of environmental history or environmental philosophy, rather than the study of politics. The course described herein, taught at Long Island University's Brooklyn campus in New York City in the fall semester of 2004, sought to bring together those disparate aspects. Readings and discussions on American environmental policy and global environmental politics were juxtaposed with a discussion of American Indian environmental ethics, presented through a series of narratives by the Ojibwa tribes of Michigan's Lake Superior region of the United States. The succeeding paragraphs describe the readings and assignments for the course and offer examples of the students' work.<sup>1</sup> The paper concludes with an assessment of student response to the course and contemplations for teaching it in the future.

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<sup>1</sup>Except for correcting typographical errors, I have presented the students' narratives and where quoted, the journal entries and exam responses exactly as they wrote them.

### *Assigned Readings*

Three course texts were used: (1) J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, *American Indian Environmental Ethics: An Ojibwa Case Study*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall; (2) Zachary Smith's *Environmental Policy Paradox*; (3) and Janet Welsh Brown, Pamela Chasek, and Gareth Porter's *Global Environmental Politics*.<sup>2</sup>

Through a series of transcribed and translated Ojibwa oral narratives, Callicott and Nelson examine the traditional American Indian environmental world view that is biocentric, *i.e.*, earth-centered, rather than anthropocentric, or human-centered. American Indian linguist and anthropologist William Jones collected the stories in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century near the western end of Michigan's Lake Superior.

The authors contend:

Realizing that there are many, many cultural worldviews—most of which are mutually inconsistent—we confront the inevitable question: Which is true? We argue that none is true and none is false. Rather, different cultural worldviews are simply different ways of making sense out of human experience. On the other hand, we argue that to be 'tenable,' a worldview must meet criteria of consistency, comprehensiveness, practicality, sustainability, goodness, and beauty.<sup>3</sup>

They further point out that:

At bottom [some ecologists] the environmental crisis, they insisted, stemmed from a widespread belief within Western culture that the nonhuman natural world was but a pool of resources existing only to satisfy human needs and wants.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>See J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson (2004) *American Indian Environmental Ethics: An Ojibwa Case Study*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall; Zachary Smith ( ) *Environmental Policy Paradox*; and Janet Welsh Brown, Pamela Chasek, and Gareth Porter (2000) *Global Environmental Politics* (third edition) Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

<sup>3</sup> Callicott and Nelson, p. 2.

A key point the students identified early in the semester was that while the Ojibwa narratives often did not designate humans as either protagonists or centers of the universe, neither did they always portray either humans or non-humans as kind or compassionate. The authors note this as well, citing in their interpretive essay the narrative “The Orphans and the Mashos,” in which a husband kills his wife after he offends her and abandons their children.<sup>5</sup> Though Mashos, the man, is depicted as evil, the onus of his malevolence appears to fall more on his victims to overcome than on the perpetrator to mend his ways.<sup>6</sup> In general, the spectrum of personification of the inanimate, metamorphosis, and seemingly supernatural power all obfuscated the meaning of each the narrative for the students, and the authors reinforce this phenomenon as a natural part of exploring a world view so alien to one’s own, which conversely is deeply entrenched. That the students could use their reading and discussion of the narratives as a means to recognizing their own worldview as a culture not a catechism served an informative, valuable and entertaining purpose.

Smith explains his chosen title of the book as follows:

A paradox is an apparently contradictory combination of opposing ideas. The paradox of environmental policy is that we often understand what the best short- and long-term solutions to environmental problems are, yet the task of implementing these solutions is either left undone or is completed too late. Although this is a general characteristic of policy formation in the United States, it is particularly true of environmental policy. The explanation lies in the nature

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<sup>4</sup>Callicott and Nelson, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Callicott and Nelson, p. 117.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

of the policy-making process. A few broad examples will illustrate the nature of the environmental policy paradox.”<sup>7</sup>

He goes on to cite examples of this paradox with three scenarios. First is the paradox that despite strong evidence that a transition to organic farming would both augment farm-generated revenue and decrease soil erosion and accompanying nutrient depletion, adequately supply Americans with food, and reduce dependency on imported oil, the incentives offered to manufacturers of pesticides and other entrenched practices make change difficult. Second, despite widespread agreement that we need to effect a transition from fossil to renewable fuels, little is being done in this regard.<sup>8</sup>

The book provides basic understanding of why some environmental ideas shape policy and some do not. The book describes the formal institutional setting in which policy develops, major participants, and political and institutional incentives that motivate those attempting to influence policy formation.

Furthermore, Smith presents and examines what he identifies as the “dominant social paradigm” (DSP) which he defines as “those clusters of Western cultural beliefs, values, and ideals that influence our thinking about society, government, and individual responsibility.” He traces the DSP through a history of the evolution of the environmental movement and public opinion about environmental issues.

The book also contains chapters on the U.S. government’s environmental regulatory framework, and the institutional context of policy-making, and the emergence of environment-based litigation in the United States, including a discussion of legal

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<sup>7</sup> Smith, Preface, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

processes that come into play when citizens pursue environmental policy goals in the courts.

Smith's book thus provided both a natural transition and an intellectual jolt. The transition was the segue discussion of environmental values presented in both works—the Ojibwa values in Baird and Callicott and the Western values in Smith. The jolt occurred in the transition from one to another.

Finally, Brown, *et al.* present a comprehensive examination of key issues facing the global environment and steps taken toward environmental protection at the international level. Of particular use are the case studies of eleven international environmental regimes, with summaries of political context, relevant institutions, key stakeholders, and scientific components. The last two chapters of the Smith book which, respectively focus on international environmental politics and international environmental management, together provided an excellent transition to *Global Environmental Politics*. As was the case with Smith's book, Brown, *et al.*, introduced the students to certain fundamental concepts of international environmental issues, such as regimes and institutions. These combined elements afforded the students the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the fundamentals of US environmental policy and politics while concurrently exploring the concept that these fundamentals are not sacrosanct but rather are expressions of a paradigm that (a) has evolved through Western culture and (b) is not necessarily shared outside the Western world.

Moreover, *Global Environmental Politics* brought the course to a full circle by juxtaposing the early discussions of the earth as envisioned and experienced by the

Ojibwas with the world as we know it today, divided into states, each with its own environmental institutions and legal and political frameworks, yet bound by one global ecology of interdependence.

### *Course Assignments*

In addition to the required readings described above, course assignments consisted of a journal, a narrative written in the style of the Ojibwa, an in-class midterm, and a take-home final.

In keeping the journal, the students were asked to write at least three times a week answers to the following questions:

What resources did you use in the course of the day? Choose one of the resources you have entered. If you had had to do without the resource, how would it have affected what you did that day? How would your life be affected if you had to do without these resources for a week, a month, or a year?

The decision to hold one exam in class and assign the other as a final was done to allow students the opportunity to utilize a broader spectrum of test-taking skills, ranging from memorization and synthesis of material without access to material while taking the exam to working with materials under time constraint (open-book) to writing more in-depth essays (take home) In this case, utilizing creativity in writing narratives in the style of the Ojibwa.

The closed-book portion of the midterm examination included basic questions drawn from Smith's book, such as defining an ecosystem, explaining Barry Commoner's four laws of ecology, explaining approaches to addressing common pool problems, and identifying and explaining the significance of key elements of the National

Environmental Policy Act. The students were also responsible for understanding the definition and components of an Environmental Impact Study. These questions were presented in addition to questions about Smith's environmental policy paradox and the dominant social paradigm (DSP).

For the open-book portion of the midterm examination, the students were asked to select one story from *American Indian Environmental Ethics* and answer the following: Why did you choose this story? Did reading this story change your thinking about the environment? The students were also asked in this portion if writing their own narratives changed their thinking about the environment. Finally, the students were asked to write a brief narrative that explained to members of the Ojibwa Tribe our DSP, and to include one example from an issue area addressed in *Environmental Policy Paradox*.

The final exam was entirely take-home in format; questions were as follows:

1. What is meant by the earth's carrying capacity? Which argument(s) presented regarding the limits of the earth's carrying capacity do you support and why? What is the relationship between international environmental problems and national and international security?
2. According to Smith, do different political systems yield different environmental protection results? Why or why not? What does Smith argue is necessary for international environmental agreements to be successful? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- 3 Summarize the main argument in each chapter of *Global Environmental Politics*. What is the significance of each of these arguments to you in your own understanding of the global environment, use of resources, and efforts to protect it? What did you learn from this book that you did not know before, and how does this new knowledge affect your thinking about the global environment?

Student Response to Reading the Narratives:

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One student (Dia Victory) chose “The Birth of Nanabushu because the story reminded her of the biblical story of the Virgin Mary’s giving birth to Christ, and also suggested powerfully the impact of nature on human life. She reported that the story changed her thinking about the environment because it presented the environment as something alive and constantly influencing and being influenced by what we do. She further reported that writing her own story changed her thinking about the environment because it

“forces you to think of the purpose of things in nature and interrelated reason for things as they exist. There are so many deeper things within nature than where the money is going to come from to generate the car or to pay the light bill. “ The question that is never asked is how much is this costing the earth and environment and how long did it take the earth to invest into making these natural resources that we use for your personal wealth. I think the answer would total up to much more than our \$50 a month light bill, especially when the time considered, i.e., thousands of years that it takes to make natural gas.”<sup>9</sup>

Ms. Victory’s explicative narrative is as follows:

Once long ago there lived a family who worked the land and lived on a secluded plot of land. The family consisted of a father, a mother and two boys. The father was the head of the house because he was the strongest and could yield the most food from the land in a day’s work. There were girls born but they were killed because they could not work the land as well and used too many resources. The couple had worked the land for 30 years and every day, spring, summer, fall winter they toiled on the land. One day while the family was out working in the fields a man in funny apparel came in and said that this land was government property and that they would have to move into a new housing project. The father immediately took his shovel and killed the man and the family continued to do the day’s work. Eventually the father and mother could not work the land so they too were killed and the strongest brother took over. This family’s generations continue to live on the same plot today.

This narrative explains the idea that our nation was founded on; whoever cultivates the land or fights for it gets the land. That land is to be owned and harnessed to yield profit not to be left as it is or to be interacted with as in the Indian narratives. Ownership and personal wealth is what drives our Dominant Social Paradigm and this crude example serves as a blunt insight or interpretation of that. Slave labor and brutal war have shaped the face of our nation today and depletion of our resources will happen as well because of our selfish drive to yield the most personal profit without regard to the environment.

Three of the students' stories, written in the style of the Ojibwa narratives, follow:

### **“Animal Ally”**

**by Yawne Robinson**

I was tired and really couldn't move. My head had hurt as if I was hit by a hunter. I must move slow and try to see where I am, said the tigress to herself. She stared cautiously from both eyes and slowly moved her hind legs. I'm so sore. The lioness rose up to her feet and searched the scenery for recollection. This tree, it looks familiar but I can't think of how I remember it. That pond looks familiar too. That tree. That shed. That dam. UHHH It angers me that I know this place but can't think of how I know this place. I will walk over to the pond. I can't believe how thirsty I am. The lioness walked over to the pond, and then fell into a deep trance. There was something going on in the water that she just didn't understand. When she tried to move her feet and pull back from the pond, she couldn't. She was stuck. My dear, why can't I move? What strengths pull me towards the pond? After five minutes of tugging and pulling, she leaned into the pond. She began to see images of human faces. She knew these faces. After seeing fast

glimpses of about ten faces, she started hearing voices. These voices sound familiar, but I don't understand how I know them. The voices trailed on in her head. As the lioness contemplated over the sounds, a frog leaped onto a lily pad in the pond. The silence bothered him; he had to say something. He what are you staring at? The lioness didn't reply. Hey what are you staring at? Why are you acting as if you can't hear me? The lioness still didn't reply. The frog continued on asking until he screamed loud enough to draw a small current in the pond. The small current disrupted the lioness trance. Who are you asked the lioness? I'm the King of the pond, the frog said jokingly. Who are you, repeated the lioness. I have no name, replied the frog. How do you not have a name, asked the lioness. Very easily, the frog answered. The same way I have no home, no friends, and no destination. Well then you're very lonely said the lioness. Well not at all. I know some who would call me free, answered the frog.

The lioness looked at him with one eye. She was unsure about him. His voice also sounded familiar, but like everything else she couldn't remember where she knew it from. After all who was he, and where did he come from? How did he find her? Had he been there long? What was his purpose? All these questions ran rampant in her head. Well what were you looking at, asked the frog. I was looking at humans that I know but don't know. I was listening to their voices, but I can't identify them. Wow and you look at me like I'm crazy, and as if I told you that I hear strange voices, joked the frog. Anyone ever told you that you're not funny, froggy, screeched the lioness. She began to growl. Listen, and wait one minute. I am here to baffle you and cause harm. I just haven't seen another one of us here in a long long time, said the frog. What are you

saying Frog? What do you know? yelled the lioness. Well my name is Mocou. I have been here for so long, that I can't even think of how long it's been. Do you know why you are here? Do you know how long you have been here, asked the frog. I have no idea, the lioness said sadly. Well maybe if I tell you how and why I am here, then you can have an idea of why you're here. The frog hesitated to go on. Well it's like this. I am from Quicetu, where everything is peaceful and everyone is known throughout the area. When I was attending my daily activities of helping out on the land, these strange people picked me up. Their skin was different. Their words were different as well as the way they dressed. I didn't know what they wanted and I couldn't understand what they were saying. There were three of these strange men. One was thin, pale faced, and walked with a limp. The second man was heavier and balding at the top. He too was a little pale, but not as much as the first man. The third man was different. He was medium built, bright red wavy hair and low toned voice. I had kept on doing my work as if I didn't see them. It always gets to me how I only glanced at them, yet if I wanted to, I know I could tell you what each person had on. The lioness just stared at him. Well, the frog continued, I was always told by the elders that you are never to talk to them. If you talk to them, then your soul would be banished into the forgotten lands, and your body would become part of the sacrificial giving to the gods. Well they approached me, and spoke to me. I had no idea at the first encounter with them, what exactly they were saying. Every week that came to talk to me. I guess the slim one must have learned some of the Quiceten language, because he told me that he could reach me to talk like him. I agreed and followed him back one day to their town. It was so strange because I

remember the elders telling me that these people were bad, and that they would put a curse on my life. I never asked how, but I did find out how. Well go on, eagerly said the lioness. I studied their language and learned how to read their language. One day when I was visiting the slim man, an elder saw me. Well she must have told the others because the next day I was being dragged into a private room at the Main Circle. There I was condemned, slightly tortured, and ashamed. I apologized, but they did not care. I have been here ever since. Every now and then I think back to that day. Every now and then I hear voices from the past. I have learned those memories, and you will too. You too will think back to that day. You will remember those images you saw. You will remember those voices soon enough. You too will feel like me. The lonely, as you say, will soon make you no longer have a home, no friends, and no destination. What will you do? What can you do? The answer to these questions is nothing. They saw you and now you must pay. However you are lucky. How can I be lucky, the lioness screeched. She had tears rolling down her cheek. A tear of hers fell into the pond. The three men he described had appeared. You are lucky because you are a lioness. You could have become any other animal here. Lioness you are strong and a fighter. You could have been an ant. There may be hope for you in the future, but you must work on dealing with the past before you can move on to your future. You must know your images and your voices. The lioness just took steps back and replayed the frog's story over and over in her head.

## **“The Creatures from the Darkened Skies”**

**by Fritzroy Sterling**

One by one they awoke, still lingering in the stupor that usually accompanies fitful sleep. They immediately knew that they had been asleep for a long time. The space they occupied was so dense and dark; they could hardly see each other’s prostrate silhouettes. As they remembered the events leading up to their awakening, they became frightened. Some screamed, others cried, a few sat motionless, and a child upon seeing the monstrous green eyes that peered down at him screamed a piercing scream that sliced through their frightful souls. Each believed he was the target of the eyes, and some cowardly hunkered down. Some clasped their hands over their faces to hide from the hideous hypnotizing stare, yet others felt it was their fate to gape at the green gaze of death. All around them, anxiety ensued.

But before they could even muster another sound of fear, the green eyes began to rise, and a magnificent flapping of wings accompanied the ascent. And those whose eyes trailed it, saw how high the bird-like creature flew before its green eyes faded away and the magnificent flapping ceased. And when it disappeared from their sight, they slowly became aware of their surroundings. One by one the adults among them soon surmised that they were in a cave, perhaps at the unfathomable bottom. And soon thereafter they remembered the events that brought them there. They became more afraid, even those who had resorted to prayer knew they prayed in vain.

They remembered the day of the attack; mankind had embarked on his most ambitious world war. Almost everywhere, in every nation, death, destruction and devastation became the norm. Swarms of missiles filled with deadly chemicals and toxins congested the sky, making their way across great oceans, wreaking havoc wherever they landed. It seemed as though the end of the humanity and the world was nigh. Everywhere, doom settled upon the spirits of living beings, and death became as common as falling debris and soot that permanently blackened the deadly skies. So blackened the skies had become, that even the spectacular explosions that once reddened the skies were now reduced mere flashes that temporarily turned the skies grey. As the populations of once great nations dwindled to tens of thousands, the fighting gradually ceased. But hunger and famine reigned after that Great War, and as subjects to their brutal rule, humanity and all life forms experienced a decimation rivaling that of the Great War.

Soon, the human population of the world had been reduced to about nine hundred. And even they existed in the harshest conditions with hunger and famine looming menacingly over them. All the vegetation of the world had been affected by the war; rain forests were reduced to shrubs; lakes reduced to mud; and where the Nile and the Mississippi once flowed existed wide cracks that swallowed unsuspecting victims.

Perhaps the most puzzling effect of that gruesome Great War was the absence of animals on all continents. The humans who survived were temporarily baffled by the phenomenon, but as rational humans, they surmised that they were after all superior to all other animals and that men had outlived the lesser animals because of that fact. But all

those superior, rational beings could not rationalize how to survive without the other members of the food chain, or without any means of propagating what little vegetation remained. They resorted to cannibalism with those lacking basic survival skills, and the will to live succumbing to the stronger predators among them.

Everywhere in every country humanity succumbed to famine or to his fellow man, and eventually, with all the resources seemingly depleted humanity inched closer to extinction. The last surviving human on the continent of America died fighting a bird-like creature with stark green eyes that appeared from the dark clouds to snatch the dying woman's infant in one effective swoop. The creature flew away into the black clouds with the infant carefully tucked in its powerful claws. The dying woman believed she was hearing the requiem of death, but the sound was in fact the magnificent flapping of the creature's gigantic wings.

A similar incident ensued in Jamaica in which the creature, perhaps sensing that the child's mother would soon become too weak to ward it off, waited patiently until the mother was fully enveloped in death's chilling embrace before snatching her baby and flying off into the blackened sky. She was perhaps the first human to see the creature in its full form, but she was suffering from delusions and hence did not notice how large the creature was. She did not hear the magnificent flapping; she died before the creature took flight.

The human population of the world dwindled to about twenty and the numbers were split evenly between male and female. They were mostly children, they all came from different continents and they were all brought to a remote area in Central Africa.

They had no idea where they were, how long they had been there or how they had gotten to their darkened, dampened haven. The bird-like creatures descended upon them on a daily basis, but with the exception of the creatures' barely visible silhouettes and the palpable, magnificent flapping of their wings, the people could only see the green and red and yellow eyes that scrutinized them.

The humans consoled themselves, they spoke in hushed whispers and wondered whether they were being kept as food for the creatures. When one of the older humans died, the creatures descended upon him with loud, screeching cries and then disappeared into the darkness, thus elevating the fears of the humans who by now had accepted their fate as permanent captives. Still, the creatures came daily, bearing leaves and fruits that they had dropped from their mighty claws. The creatures would then perch atop of rocks high above the humans and stare at them with intense green, red and yellow eyes. The other creatures would frequently retreat from the cave, and return later with provisions for the humans to eat, but two always remained as though they were permanent guards who scrutinized everything.

The older humans could not bear the scrutiny—the idea of being observed by lesser beings—and they could not fathom the idea of being reared for food. Some soon became deranged, crying and yelling inscrutable words. Soon thereafter, the guards would summon the others and they would descend upon the deranged humans and disappear into the darkness accompanied by the magnificent flapping of wings and the deranged cries of a deranged human. The other adults willed themselves death, and were removed accordingly. When the creatures observed that the children could survive

without an adult, they descended upon the last adult and disappeared with him into the darkness.

The children grew into adults speaking the limited language that they retained and developed. They were not aware of that a world existed outside the cave. In the process of adapting to the darkness around them, their pupils had enlarged as though to stare back at the creatures as intensely as the creatures stared at them. Unlike the adults who had lived among them, they did not fear the creatures, nor did they perceive the creatures' presence or mannerisms as unnatural. To a large extent, the cave had forever been their habitat; they learned to drink the water that spewed through rocks; they explored different regions of the cave; and they settled in different areas as they grew older. But with each move, the eyes always followed, and when the humans had finally made permanent habitats in different areas of the cave, there was a creature at each location. However, the time and location where the humans were fed remained the same.

About three generations had passed, and with each one, the new generation though having the same physical features of their parents differed in how they related to the environment. They were born with enlarged pupils and more body hair than their parents. They were more adept at moving around on the slippery surfaces than were their parents. And when the temperature lowered, they relied on their body hairs for extra warmth while their parents huddled to share each other's body heat. No sooner had the children become dependent of parental care than many creatures descended from the darkness and carried away the parents accompanied by the magnificent flapping of many wings. Of the young humans who remained, none was more than five years old.

The creatures had stopped descending upon the unsuspecting adults after the sixth generation. The new breed of humans—for it was indeed a new breed—had starkly different characteristics from the humans that first lived in the cave. The new generation seemed to live longer, they had stronger limbs that they used to climb up to higher altitudes and make new habitats. They did not have language; however, they communicated with grunt-like sounds and signs. They had a lot more body hair that extended to the face and palm and provided added protection against the cold as they ascended to higher altitudes in the cave. Those who were weaker or older remained at the bottom. The creatures stopped feeding them. As the humans ascended, so did the creatures but their gaze remained as intense as before.

After many, many generations, the new humans had finally ascended to the near top of the cave. But they dared not attempt to go any further because the light badly hurt their eyes and they were afraid of the sounds that came from beyond the cave. They stayed near the top for a few more generations. Soon they were able to eventually see the creatures in their true form, and the new humans became afraid of the creatures' size and gigantic wingspan and powerful beaks.

One day, the creatures stopped bringing food to the new humans. Even the guards who perched several feet above the new humans to stare intensely at them ascended from the cave and disappeared from their sights. But one remained perched above the feeding area, staring intensely at the large group of new humans who waited there for their daily meal. Unbeknownst to the humans, these creations had flown to the sky and were still staring at them from a distance where the new humans could not see them. Through their

powerful beaks, they cawed a message that resonated throughout the entire animal kingdom they had anticipated this day for many thousands of years.

The new humans were experiencing anger and hunger for the first time. They grunted among themselves and made disapproving gestures to the creature that remained on guard. After a few days, they resorted to louder grunting and some began to strike pieces of rocks together as an expression of extreme anger. Soon, little sparks fell from the friction of the striking rocks striking and the shrubs beneath their feet ignited. They looked at the colorful flames in awe and wonder, and some were afraid of it because they burned themselves when they tried to eat it. They nonetheless kept adding shrubs to the fire, thus maintaining it. But even the awe of fire could not contain them for long. They were being driven by their hunger.

Soon, many of them began to throw rocks at the creature, hitting it and wounding it in the process. But the creature would neither budge nor reduce the intensity of its stare. However, after being hit repeatedly, and becoming badly wounded, it fell into the great fire beneath it. The new humans were initially afraid, but the smell of burning flesh incited them to taste the charred creature. Some burned themselves, but all eventually fed of the creatures flesh. They soon realized that they could not remain at [or] near the top of this cave because their food was beyond that point. One by one, they ascended to the top.

And in a temporary moment of silence, many animals watched as Homo sapiens came out of the darkness. Somewhere in Central Africa, Homo sapiens and the animal kingdom stood face-to-face for the first time. They were awed by endless land mass, the

lush vegetation, the gigantic creatures that roamed the eland, the clear blue skies, the gigantic birds that populated the skies and the snowcapped mountains. They understood that this land was their new environment and set off immediately to conquer it. The creatures watched as humanity made left is first footprints upon the surface of the earth. With the magnificent flapping of wings, they flew away to a high space above the earth. They would remain there for two million years upon which they would again return to the earth to even out the evolutionary playing field.

### **“The Rise and Fall of the Great Chameleon”**

**by Dia Victory**

Long, long ago the world was not as we know it to be now. It was a dull and colorless place and it was devoid of boundaries, as we know them now. The whole world back then was immersed in water. All of the creatures that lived under the water were gray and content with their boring surroundings that were all gray as well. There were two main dominating animal species one were giant fishes called Ailers and the other were large four legged crawlers at the bottom of the water called Ribbit. The Ribbits also had a tendency to leap and cover large spaces of distance in short amounts of time. Both species were extremely large not in population but in sheer size. One Ribbit full grown was almost ten feet wide and ten feet high but they were minuscule compared to the Wailers whose young were twenty feet wide and twenty feet high on average. The Wailers and Ribbits did not get along. In fact, the Wailers banished the Ribbits to the depths of the ocean that they occupied. One particular day a particular Ribbit named

Ciddit decided the ocean floor was too dark for her liking and against many admonishments from her peers she ventured upwards. This was something Ribbit had not done since the last war between the two species a century ago that had established the present day set boundaries. Caddis leaped a hundred leagues a minute so after ten minutes she was out of her regular surrounding. When Caddis arrived in what was roughly the middle of the ocean, she saw no one... This was because on that particular day most of the Wailers were attending a meeting at the great rock formation about the strange noises and vibrations they were hearing close to the surface. One particular Wailer however named Whaleon did not attend that meeting and was peering out of his cave when he spotted Ciddit unbeknownst to her. Waleon was shocked to see this strange but beautiful creature and could not believe his eyes. He immediately sent out vibrations to get her attention but she did not appear to feel him. Ciddit was busy exploring the new waters to notice the Whaleon approaching her. Whaleon grabbed Ciddit from behind and pulled her into his cave so that none of the others would come and claim this strange beauty as their own. Neither Ciddit nor Whaleon had even heard a detailed description of the other species since the two sets of creatures had not interacted in so long. So Ciddit became Whaleon's wife and never left the cave because Whaleon never wanted anyone to set his or her eyes on his exotic wife. After a couple of days Ciddit became pregnant and laid one hundred eggs. Ciddit had grown to love Whalen and eagerly awaited their children's birth. However, each day one egg crumbled and died and each day Ciddit looked more defeated than the last. Finally on the 99<sup>th</sup> day Ciddit died of grief. Whaleon immediately went out to find a new wife since it was time for him to

make some children and mating season was almost over. As he was bringing his new wife Walea into his home a strange thing happened. They heard a loud crack and the cave became illuminated with a golden light. As they stepped in, they saw a strange creature surrounded by the remnants of the egg. The creature had four legs and a small hump between his legs on which he was sitting. It also had the head of a whale. These, however, was not the most important fact, since the creature was the thing illuminating the cave as it was bright gold with little green specks. Whalea turned and fled the cave before Whaleon could stop her and she alerted the whole Wailer community with her cries. They rushed into Whaleon's cave and were astounded by what they saw. Whaleon confessed what had happened to create such a creature and he was immediately killed but not before naming his son Chameleon. The Wailers did not know what to do about Chameleon since their culture did not allow them to kill children. However, they could not allow such an anomaly to exist among them. They ultimately decided to send him up to the surface to be killed by the gold god as many of their kind who had erred were killed. Therefore, Chameleon rose into the atmosphere to face the gold god. He felt heat and felt that the gold god has smiled on him thus allowing him to live. Chameleon's serenity was broken while bobbing on the surface when he heard a loud squawking sound from above; it was a great big flying object. It swooped down to get Chameleon but upon contact it turned blue, as did the entire ocean around Chameleon. The flying object was so startled it hurled Chameleon in the depths of the ocean once more. As Chameleon reached the bottom of the ocean the floor became golden like his body and lit up the ocean floor. He then saw a Ribbit and when he touched it the Ribbit became bright green

like his specks. When the Ribbit saw what had happened she ran away only to discover all the Ribbits now had this mysterious new hue. The Ribbits were fearful of this strange creature and catapulted him out of the water. Again, Chameleon found himself at the surface facing the gold god. He stayed at the surface for days until he spotted some rock jutting out from the ocean into the air. Chameleon climbed the rock and stood at its tip. As his foot touched the tip the water around the rock sunk for miles and miles and the rock became finely ground beneath his feet. The crushed rock then became brown and soft but firm and densely packed but pliable. Chameleon made many forms of things by combining the land with a little of the surrounding water and it all took on a distinct color and it grew then the gold god smiled on it. Soon Chameleon had fruit tree; animals and many other things to keep him occupied. Then one day Chameleon saw a Wailer at the surface and pulled it onto his land. It was Whalea the Wailer who was to be his stepmother. As she touched the land, she became the replica of Chameleon except in a female form. Chameleon made her his wife and they made many children. Then one day Chameleon made a new figure out of the land but instead of molding it with water, he molded it with his own blood. When the gold god smiled on this new figure and it grew ten times the size of Chameleon. The new figure stomped Chameleon and his family into the ground This new mystical two-legged figure also reversed Chameleon's powers so that instead of the ability to change things into the color he wished he himself (Chameleon) would now be forced to take on the color of whatever the object was.

### *Summary and Conclusion:*

Environmental Policy and Politics in All Its Dimensions departed from conventional approaches to teaching environmental politics by introducing the narratives of the Ojibwa as a key example of biocentric world view prevalent in American Indiana and other primarily indigenous cultures. The term “global” was thus not limited to “international” but extended to a more holistic concept of earth and the biosphere. The students responded well to this approach; it engaged their creativity as well as their critical thinking skills. Beginning the course with a world view both unfamiliar to the students and unexpected for a course on environmental politics introduced an element of uncertainty that fostered intellectually healthy inquiry and guarded against making certain assumptions.

One challenge for the future is to determine the extent to which further synthesis of the biocentric and anthrocentric world views is feasible or desirable. The discord that the students experienced in effecting the transition from one to the other was very revealing and provoked considerable discourse regarding how deeply engrained the DSP is in our society. Should this course be taught again, an additional option might be to include more actual case studies from different parts of the world and according to different scenarios, *e.g.*, response to the environment after a natural disaster such as a hurricane, or at different periods in history, and determine to what extent the DSP or other worldviews are dominating the lives of the stakeholders.