CIRCUMPOLAR STUDIES

WAS, IS, COULD BE...

International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences
Arkhangelsk / Online
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Circumpolar Studies was...

A brief foray into the distant past
Some dates for context

1987: *Our Common Future*, October

1989–1991/06: AEPS development in late Cold War environment; June adoption; included Indigenous peoples’ organizations

1991/12: of the Soviet Union

1991: The Web goes world wide

1993: AEPS added sustainable development

1994: Netscape browser
Some dates for context

1996: Formation of the Arctic Council

1997: Proposal for a university of/for the Arctic

2002: BCS 100 piloted
CIRCUMPOLAR STUDIES WAS...

Initially a plan for a Bachelor degree

A light-weight, laddered program that leveraged existing capacity
Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies

The Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies (BCS) is a new way for students attending University of the Arctic (UArctic) member institutions to learn about the North, with courses held in the classroom, on-line, outdoors and around the world. As UArctic’s signature undergraduate program, BCS provides a solid understanding of issues relevant to the Arctic and opportunities to further study unique and diverse research subjects. You can choose Circumpolar Studies as your main study subject (“major”) or combine it with other degree programs at your home institution. The BCS program gives you the opportunity to learn about the lands, peoples and issues of the Circumpolar North and prepares you for advanced study or professional employment in fields as diverse as sustainable resource management, self-government, Arctic engineering and tourism.

What Courses Do I Take?

The BCS program consists of three components: Introduction, Core, and Advanced Emphases. Most students will take at least the introduction and core, depending on what options are available at your home institution and whatever you wish to specialize in. The main component of the program is the Circumpolar Studies Core, consisting of six courses (two each) in the People & Environments, Land & Environment, and Contemporary Issues perspectives. The core component alone is sufficient for a Circumpolar Studies minor, and students interested in pursuing a minor can take additional Units & Emphases for a total of 4 units.

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits. This is roughly equal to a 3 credit course in many North American institutions. Finally, students can complete one or more Advanced Emphases, roughly equivalent to half a year of studies. Advanced Emphases focus on advanced study of an area, issue, or problem of particular relevance to the North and for its people. Currently available Advanced Emphases include Arctic Governance; Northern Scandinavian Politics and Society; Arctic Environmental Technology; and Polar Oceanography and Meteorology. Advanced Emphases in indigenous tourism, aboriginal public administration, international project management, Arctic sustainable resource development, and many others are currently in development. Your home institution will offer Advanced Emphases that reflect its particular area of expertise. You may also choose to complete your degree at another member institution of the University of the Arctic that offers an Advanced Emphasis in your area of specialization.

How Do I Take the Courses?

The Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies is designed for flexible delivery to meet the needs of United Nations member states with various language and cultural diversity. The program is taught through a variety of methods, including on-site, on-line, and distance learning. The majority of courses are taught online, but on-site courses are also available. The program is designed to accommodate the needs of working professionals and students who are unable to attend classes during traditional academic sessions.

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Towards a common vocabulary

“The seven core Circumpolar Studies courses, including an introduction and three pairs of courses in different topics, ensure that all students share a broad knowledge and understanding of the lands, peoples, and major issues of the Circumpolar World.”
Circumpolar Studies was, is, could be... 

Circumpolar Studies is... 

Where we are now
Just ‘Circumpolar Studies’

Slimmed down the project
• Dropped the “Bachelor”
• Dropped Advanced Emphases

Revised the core texts
Looking for ‘Circumpolar Studies’ colleagues

Spreading the word

• To expand participation

Solving national academic / bureaucratic mismatches
Circumpolar Studies could be...

Recommitted to shared voices and co-construction of knowledge
Circumpolar Studies can ...

Be open to ways of knowing that are generous in their inclusiveness

Support, encourage, and build on the work of Indigenous scholars

Again be “a new way for students to learn about the North”
Circumpolar Studies could be...

- Inclusive, Comparative,
- but also Separate, Distinctive
- Geographically
- Linguistically
- Culturally
- Epistemologically
- Ontologically
- Academically
In the North, for the North, by the North – differently

Building bridges
Embracing differences
North-centred critique
Decolonial
Ethical
Supporting sustainable, respectful cohabitation of the North

Living well together, Indigenous and incomers
Recognizing and honouring the infinite forms of expertise
Leaving space for other voices, all voices
Making connections far and wide
Teaching and learning also in unconventional ways, on the land, in classrooms, in the virtual realm

Sharing knowledge and best practices
Thank you

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