#### Honors 100 Gateway: What Kind of Ancestor Do You Want to Be?

**Western Colorado University**

**Spring 2022**

**T/Th 9:30-10:45**

**Taylor 104**

Dr. Hausdoerffer

Office Hours: T/Th 11:00-12:30 *or by appointment*

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## Course Description

What kind of ancestor do you want to be? Who are your ancestors, whether alive or passed on, whether blood-related or not, whether you have met them or not, whether younger or older, whether human or more-than-human, whether biotic or abiotic? Which habits or values of those ancestors do you want to perpetuate? Which aspects do you want to reject, revolutionize, improve upon, transcend? How do you want to impact future beings and communities, existing beyond your time on this planet, as a future ancestor? How are you *already* an ancestor? These are the core questions of Honors 100 Gateway: What Kind of Ancestor Do You Want to Be?

As this ancestor question is as big as ethical questions get, this course will interact with multidisciplinary and multicultural ways of knowing in wrestling with the challenges and opportunities of multigenerational ethics. The question “what kind of ancestor do you want to be?” will provide the personalized framework (and existential journey) through which each student brings meaning to the academic field of ethics. Thus, the course will ask each student both to understand diverse attempts to answer this question and to try to answer the question themselves, with each student’s answer providing a “north star” to inspire and guide the major decisions of their lives ahead.

As your professor, I dearly hope that the work you produce out of this course will be something you can look back on, throughout college and beyond, as values-based guidance (from you, to you) for the road ahead.

Even though the ancestor question emerges from indigenous oral traditions, particularly from the Anishinaabe people of Minnesota, it calls everyone to consider the extent of responsibility they carry for themselves, their family, diverse human communities, and the ecosystems, regions, and planetary systems that sustain them.

Of course, great questions like this lack perfect answers. Perhaps the best we will do is find a more personalized version of the question—tied to where and who we each are—to awaken our social and ecological responsibility. Thus, more than a course with hard-and-fast content, answers, and exams, please consider this a sixteen-week-long “educated conversation” with the professor simply serving as “head learner” and the students, readings, and experiential research we embark on as our “teachers” helping us struggle with such a compelling question.

## Required Texts

1. Hausdoerffer, et. al *What Kind of Ancestor Do You Want to Be?* (Chicago, 2020)

**REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify me during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for this course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through Learning Assistance Center, 943-7056. https://www.western.edu/academic-resource-center/disability-services**

**Important Course-Facts:**

* + **PLAGIARISM** involves submitting as one’s own words and/or ideas the work of others without proper and customary acknowledgement of one’s sources. The penalty for violations of academic honesty is FAILURE IN THE COURSE. When in doubt: ASK! You are responsible for the consequences if you do not ask.
  + **Multiple Submissions** is also a violation of academic honesty. Submitting substantial portions of the same work for credit more than once without the explicit consent of the instructor(s) to whom the material is submitted for additional credit.
  + **Attendance policy**: Any student missing beyond **TWO classes** will lose **five points** from his or her final grade PER ABSENCE. Only a documented emergency, confirmed through the Student Affairs/Dean of Students Office (x2090), counts as an excused absence (beyond your two “freebies”).
  + **Late policy:** Assignments and papers are due at the BEGINNING of the indicated due date. Any paper handed in after the BEGINNING of the class day on which it is due will lose one grade per day. No late Finals will be accepted.
  + I take the idea of a **respectful, yet critical, learning environment** very seriously. Students who disrupt the ability of other students or the professor to focus in this environment could be excused from class, or even receive an “F” for the semester.
  + You have a responsibility to **check your student email account on a regular basis**. I sometimes announce course changes, reminders, and opportunities over email. There are no excuses for neglecting to check your WESTERN STUDENT email account—you can forward it to your personal email account if you want to.

**Assignments:**

1. Class participation: 20 points=20%
2. 3-person Presentation: 10 points=10%
3. Discussion lead/presentation: 10 points=10%
4. In-class think pieces: 30 points=30% (15 each)
5. Ancestor Project: 30 points=30%

100 points=100%

1. **Class participation:**

**This is not a lecture course, but a 16-week-long “educated conversation”:** “educated” because we all come to class with common preparation from examining multi-media expertise each day; “conversation” because none of the questions posed in this class come with an answer key so all voices are needed to engage, openly and with risk, with each other over the day’s shared question (sometimes posed by me, sometimes posed by you). This class lives and dies by your *presence*, your reading preparation, your daily energy, your questions and critiques, and your creativity. Your discussion grade will assess the extent to which your contributions reflect reading preparation, stimulate further discussion, respond to lectures, challenge your and others’ assumptions, and show empathetic respect towards the ideas of fellow students.

1. **3-person Presentation (Jan 27):** In groups of three, each group will have ten minutes to present on one traditional Western philosopher we covered and explore the question (based on that philosopher): “to what extent does traditional moral theory help us answer ‘what kind of ancestor do you want to be?’” Summarize a) the thinker’s leading idea and way of knowing relevant to the ancestor question, b) name one central way in which they are helpful in, and c) one central way in which they fall short of, assisting you in answering the semester’s question. Be sure to quote and interpret the philosopher’s words in your presentation (at least one passage in the summary, one passage in the “helpful” section, and one passage in the “falls short” section). Ten minutes goes fast, so practice-practice-practice!
2. **Discussion Co-Lead and Author-Ancestor Profile:** Each student is required to co-lead (with Dr. Hausdoerffer or a visiting teacher) one day of class, based on readings between February 3 and April 19: the student will email Dr. Hausdoerffer three potential discussion questions for class 48 hours before class (with a quote from that day’s reading that sparked each question). Together we will narrow/consolidate those to one question, and then we will co-run class based on that question. At some point in class (up to student leader and dependent upon the flow the student wants for the question, assigned chapter, and discussion), the student leader will present for ten minutes on the author: who the author is and how that author—within and beyond the boundaries of the chapter—attempts to be a good ancestor.
3. **In-Class Think Pieces (February 24 and April 7):** At two points in the semester, students will have the entire class period to write and submit to me a think-piece answering a relevant question (to be announced that day, but there will be good hints for the attentive student!) surrounding the ancestor inquiry. During that class, students will be able to use any resources that they would like to answer the question—class notes, class readings, each other, web searches, etc. More to come in terms of clear expectations for what would make for a high-quality answer.
4. **Ancestor Project: What Is Your Rice?** The following two paragraphs will make more sense after the readings of Week 1 but keep, keep asking me questions all semester until you fully understand it:

In order to know what kind of ancestor you want to be it helps to know what relationships make you who you are at your best, so you can bring good to those relationships as a guiding principle in becoming a great ancestor. These relationships can be with humans (living or dead, known or unknown personally to you), with natural beings and places, with principles or practices that reflect your values, with cultural traditions, etc.

For example, in the opening article of the semester (Hausdoerffer, *Wildness*), the relationship with Minnesota wild rice is described as a guide to seeking help from land and culture when exploring the question of “What Kind of Ancestor Do You Want to Be?” For the people I interview in that chapter, rice figuratively and literally merges: a) connections with the wisdom of previous generations; b) ecological, economic, dietary, cultural, and spiritual health; and c) measurement for the extent to which we are empowering future generations to thrive. How amazing to have so many kinds of *good* packed into one relationship with one being—wild rice. Well, what is *your* rice? What place or person or being or process or principle or practice or community in your background and/or in your hopes for the future captures those three things as closely as possible as wild rice does for the community discussed in the chapter? How does that entity (you will see for me it is snowpack, but I invite you to get creative!) help guide you in answering: what kind of ancestor do I want to be?

In pursuit of finding “your rice” as your measurement for the kind of ancestor you want to be:

* Select five readings from the semester to back up the kind of ancestor you want to be (maybe articles that help you find your “rice”), and discuss those readings in depth to root your ideas in course materials
* Visit the place (virtually if financially or logistically necessary) to bring to life your “rice” (this can include ecological features, cultural traditions, leaders you want to interview, etc). “Visit” the place to generate the kind of narrative around how you answer the question, similar to how I use my story and journeys to wrestle with the question in both my *Wildness* and *Ancestor* chapters
* Write your own “missing chapter” (12-15 pages) for the Ancestor anthology, blending course readings and personal experience to reveal a) what is your “rice” and b) how does knowing your rice guide you in knowing the kind of ancestor you want to be? Again, this “rice” metaphor will mean much more after Week 1 readings and discussions, but please keep asking me about the metaphor and my expectations for how you apply it until you feel confident to play with it in your “missing chapter.”
* **YOU MAY PROPOSE AN ALTERNATE FORMAT** to me, if you are not inspired to write an essay. Could be a film, a podcast, an artistic portfolio, a service-learning project, etc. Surprise me, so long as you still find a way to use five readings, your own experience, and the discovery of your “rice” to attempt an answer to the ancestor question.
* **More information, and a rubric, will be provided over course of semester,** but start looking for your rice and hunting for your “five readings” right away!

**Course and Readings Schedule (subject to change, so pay attention)**

**I. Ancestor Introduction and History of Western Ethics**

**Week 1: January 11 & 13**

**Tues:** Course Introduction. What is an “ancestor”? What kind of ancestor do you want to be?

**Thurs:** What is ethics? Read: Introduction to *Ancestor* and Hausdoerffer from *Wildness*

**Week 2: January 18 & 20**

**Tue:** What is ethics? Read: Aristotle [(Book I)](https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/aristotle/Ethics.pdf) and Hume

**Thurs:** What is ethics? Read: Kant and Mill

**Week 3: January 25 & 27**

**Tue:** What is ethics? Read: [Nel Noddings](https://uwethicsofcare.gws.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Noddings-Empathy.pdf) and [Ursula LaGuin](https://www.utilitarianism.com/nu/omelas.pdf)

**Thur:** Three-Person, 10-minute Presentations: To What Extent Does [Western Philosopher \_\_] Answer the Question? What is their way of knowing a question like that? Name one central way they give guidance; name one major thing missing from their way of knowing?

**II. Where Are Your Ancestors?**

**Week 4: February 1 & 3**

**Tue:** Read: *Ancestors* (Coleman and Abeyta)

**Thurs:** Read: *Ancestors* (Krug and Prentiss)

**Week 5: February 8 & 10**

**Tue:** Read: *Ancestors* (Calvert and Cummings)

**Thur:** Read: *Ancestors* (Berry and Kakugawa)

**Week 6: February 15 & 17**

**Tue:** Read: *Ancestors* (Gibney and Wise and Lunsford)

**Thur:** Read: *Ancestors* (Williams and Moore)

**Week 7: February 22 & 24**

**Tue:** Hiking tour of *where is our ancestor* (Read Jackson/Hausdoerffer/Warren)

**Thurs:** In-class think piece on “Where are your ancestors?”

**III. Who or “What” Is Your Ancestor?**

**Week 8: March 1 & 3**

**Tue:** Read: *Ancestors* (Sisk and Kakugawa and Sweeney)

**Thurs:** Read: *Ancestors* (Johnson/Warren and Dungy/Williams and Kakugawa)

**Week 9: March 8 & 10**

**Tue:** Read: *Ancestors* (Gansworth and Loeffler)

**Thurs:** Read: (Meine and LaDuke and Kakugawa)

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**Week 11: March 22 & 24**

**Tue:** Read: *Ancestors* (Herron and Van Horn)

**Thurs:** Read: *Ancestors* (Salmon and Forbes)

**Week 12: March 29 & 31**

**Tue:** Read: *Ancestors* (Sandilands and Kimmerer)

**Thurs:** Read: *Ancestors* (Shiva and Hausdoerffer [from *Ancestor*] andKakugawa)

**Week 13: April 5 & 7**

**Tue:** Read: *Ancestors* (Johnston and Native Youth Guardians)

**Thurs:** In-class think piece on “Who or ‘What’ Is Your Ancestor?”

**IV. What Kind of Ancestor Do You Want to Be: What Is Your “Rice” or “Snow”?**

**Week 14: April 12 & 14**

**Tues:** Read: *Ancestors* (Bray and Guittierez)

**Thurs:** Read: *Ancestors* (Nelson and White)

**Week 15: April 19 & 21**

**Tues:** Read: *Ancestors* (Wolfgramm/Spiller and Merculieff/Hecht and Hogan)

**Thurs:** Planning session for Ancestor Project

**Week 16: April 26 & 28**

**Tues:** Present Ancestor Project

**Thurs:** Present Ancestor Project

## Finals Week: Present Ancestor Project Thursday, May 3 8:00-10:00 AM. Ancestor Paper due