

STANDING ABOVE THE CLOUDS



THEMATIC EXPLORATION OF THE FILM COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY LEVEL



OBJECTIVE

Explore five different themes through the eyes of the wahine in the film by examining, researching and reflecting on the guiding questions.



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the Legal/political implications?
- Who determines Indigenous Jurisprudence?
- Why might someone take a stand?
- What are the environmental impacts?
- Do leaders exhibit similar characteristics?



ACTIVITIES

LEGAL/POLITICAL Students may work individually or in small groups, presenting incremental findings to each other at intervals, as they work to creatively develop new legal and political strategies to support the #ProtectMaunaKea movement profiled in the film. This project would take several weeks, and could be the focus of a 1-quarter or 1- semester course, supplemented by speakers and film. What statutes, legal frameworks, and decision-making processes enabled the telescopes to be placed on the mountain? List each statute and process, the date it was established, how and when it was used and by whom.



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ACTIVITIES CONT.

List all of the cultural and environmental statutes (federal, state, local, and international) that might be deployed to protect the Mauna. Have any not been used? Are there any that could be used differently to aid in the struggle today? Develop a list of (1) cases and (2) instances in which sacred places were protected, in Hawaii and other US states. What legal and other (financial, political, etc.) strategies were used? Examine whether any of these strategies could be applied in the struggle to protect Mauna Kea. Who are the investors in the telescope? For each of them, what are their primary interests? Develop a list of the ways in which protecting the Mauna might benefit their interests. Based on this research, develop three comprehensive strategies, legal and otherwise (political, financial) that might aid Mauna protectors.

INDIGENOUS JURISPRUDENCE

Indigenous legal theories contain information about appropriate conduct between human beings and between human beings and Mauna Kea. Students will study the film and selections from related texts on Mauna Kea, on Hawaiian relationality, and on Indigenous law/ legal theory and address the following questions: State and federal law that enable the construction of telescopes on Mauna Kea are in violation of traditional Indigenous law regarding right relationships between humans and Mauna Kea. What are some elements of right relation between humans and the Mauna that you learned about in the film? Discuss, and write about with reference to the film, and to work by authors including Vaughn, Pualani Louis, and Black.



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TAKING A STAND

At the beginning of the film, Pua Case describes the sacredness of Mauna Kea and then asks viewers if they also know of a sacred place, and then, if they do, what they would do to protect it. Students in this module will consider, “Where is my Mauna Kea?” and what movements are in my heritage/ my blood? This is a biographical exercise. Students will reflect on where they are from, the landscape in which they were raised, and what they learned to hold sacred.

Students will move from there to consider when they have stood for something. What was it they stood for? Why do/did they stand? What threatened them in their stance? If they have not stood for anything, they will be asked to consider what they would stand for, and why.

Finally, students will be asked to consider their lineage. Do they have family members that stood for something, that was part of a movement (civil rights, economic rights, land rights, water rights, fair representation, suffrage, etc.)? If they are able to, they will be asked to interview a relative about that stance, or to look for archival information (newspaper clippings, other media) about their group’s participation in that movement. Through this research, they will then be asked to answer the same questions they reflected on in the previous exercise, but this time through the eyes of their relative or group member: What did they stand for? Why do/did they stand? What threatened them in their stance? In conclusion, students will be asked to consider how or if they see the Mauna Kea movement described in the film differently, having reflected on their own stances, and those of their family members or larger social group.



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ENVIRONMENTAL

In the film, both Pua Case and Hāwane Rios describe the ecological significance of Mauna Kea as a watershed that forms and affects weather systems, retains moisture, and touches both the sea floor and the high altitudes. In this module, students will be asked to consider the ecological significance of Mauna Kea. What is the hydrology of Hawaii, and of the Mauna? Examine hydrogeological maps. What is the Mauna's influence on regional precipitation, on the water table? What is the geological history of Mauna Kea, of Hawaii, and of the Hawaiian islands? What are some of the ecological impacts of desecration of the Mauna? Western science has a specific framework and way of describing the Mauna and its ecology, Indigenous Hawaiian science draws on other evidence, methods, experiences, and ways of knowing the Mauna. What are some of the differences and similarities between the two ways of knowing the Mauna and its significance? Students will also be asked to reflect personally: what is your watershed? Is it clean? Is it protected? In what ways? If not, why, and what steps could be taken to ensure its protection and sanctity?



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LEADERSHIP

The film focuses on the experiences of three women leaders in the struggle to Protect Mauna Kea. Students will be asked to consider the elements of leadership, of female leadership, of the role of family in social movements, in part through consideration of the following questions: Based on the film, what are some characteristics of a strong leader?

Consider other movements for land, water, and life that you are familiar with. Are they composed of individual protesters/ protectors? Of families? What do the speakers in this film teach viewers about family and taking a stand? What are the values that guide the leaders profiled in the film?

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STANDARDS:

Drawing on UCD general education (GE) standards (which might be similar to other university GEs), this film and the draft recommended curriculum would fulfill the following GEs:

Writing experience: Course must place significant emphasis on developing a complex written work, including... integration of writing assignments that progressively develop critical thinking;

American Culture, Governance and History Literacy: Course must present issues pertinent to the governance or history of the United States and analyze major forces underlying historical events and political institutions within the United States;

Domestic Diversity: Course must provide students with an understanding and appreciation of the social and cultural diversity of the United States, the relationships between these diverse cultures, and larger patterns of national history and institutions, and teach students to develop the ability to critically examine the structures from which cultures in the United States emerge;

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World Cultures Literacy: course must help students develop a global perspective, and must present material pertaining to social relations and/or cultural production in one or more societies outside of the United States.

The Department of Native American Studies also has its own Student Learning Outcomes, and this curriculum would meet all of the following:

Critical Thinking: including developing conclusions from multiple sources

Communication skills: students will demonstrate the ability to clearly and effectively write about the experiences of Indigenous peoples; Students will demonstrate the ability to work effectively in in-class group activities.

Research skills: Students will demonstrate knowledge of qualitative research methods.

Content mastery: students will be able to explain various concepts commonly used in the discipline of Native American Studies, including the concept of tribal sovereignty; Understand the historical development of tribal governments and the current functions of those governments at the current time; Understand historical experiences and contemporary issues in the U.S. as well as the larger Western Hemisphere (and beyond)



GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

