



The University of Western Ontario
INDIGENOUS STUDIES 2218-F
Contemporary Indigenous Issues
Fall 2023

Instructor: Vanessa Ambtman-Smith, PhD Candidate, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography & Environment and Assistant Professor, Indigenous Studies Program

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12pm -1:00pm or by appointment

Email: yambtman@uwo.ca

I take this opportunity to welcome students to the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek (Ah-nish-in-a-bek), Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-no-show-nee), Lūnaapéewak (Len-ahpay-wuk) and Attawandaron (Add-a-won-da-run) peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples (e.g., First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.

Course Description: This course explores the critical challenges still faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada. The material covered will be timely and relevant, including legal and political mobilization; jurisdictional authority and self-determination; land rights and treaty relationships; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls inquiry.

Prerequisite(s): None.

Antirequisite(s): The former Anthropology 2218F/G

Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Apply critical thinking and analytical skills to representations of contemporary First Nations, Inuit and /Métis to understand how colonization has impacted and continues to impact, Indigenous communities in Canada.
2. Understand the origins of key contemporary issues and challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada.
3. Identify and recognize unique contributions of Indigenous knowledge systems in society.
4. Understand how ‘reconciliation’ processes can address systemic barriers to Indigenous Peoples.
5. Deepen self-understanding of their own cultural identity and social power locations and the ways in which these inform their relationship to and agency in addressing the contemporary challenges experienced by Indigenous Peoples of Canada as a result of historic and ongoing colonization.

Required Text(s):

Simpson, L. (2011). Dancing on our turtle’s back: Stories of Nishnaabeg re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence / Leanne Simpson. Arbeiter Ring Pub.

Method of Evaluation: Evaluation Breakdown:

More information about the assessments will be provided in class and posted to the class site on OWL.

Evaluation components	Assignment Schedule	Value
In-class discussion activities: There are four discussion activities embedded in this course to promote respectful sharing and discussion of content where you will engage in discussion with your peers, contribute your own ideas, reflections and questions.	In-class discussion activities will occur in-person	4 activities valued at 5% = 20%
Meaning Making (Essay) assignment proposal: You have a choice to demonstrate understanding of course content. For this you can choose between two options (see below). For either option, you will need to submit a proposal, either in written format or video, that addresses the following: a) what topics you will cover in your final project; b) what will the result of your project be (original art piece, graphic novel, poetry, final essay, etc.); and c) Why are you choosing to do this? Why does it matter to you.	Proposal due (video or written format)	5%
Story-telling assignment: Stories are powerful, compelling, and cultural ways of sharing information and effective ways of challenging public opinion on complex issues (Pappas 2021). This assignment asks students to write a story (700-800 words not including references) about a topic relevant to this course, do basic research and seek to bridge difference in opinion about this topic.	Story due end of Week 6	20%
Biography Assignment: Students choose a contemporary Indigenous scholar/ person and complete a short biography. How you choose to present this information is open (poster with captions; 500-word op-ed or new article; video, art piece with captions, pre-recorded class presentation, or webpage format).	Bio due end of Week 10	20%
Final project: Meaning Making/ Essay Assignment: Your final project in the course is a meaning making assignment or traditional essay. I encourage you to demonstrate learning in a way that is self-expressive, immersive, and meaningful. Choose your own topic and approach – based on your proposal in Week 3 and build on skills learned in and outside the classroom. The goal is to bring your unique perspective and lived experience to course content. If you choose to do a different format than a conventional written essay, I require a 3-page written reflection on what you have learned from completing the project to accompany your completed work (or images of your completed work), as well as a biography of sources used. For essay formats, papers are to be 2000-2500 words in length based on your examination of a topic relevant to the course. The paper should demonstrate critical engagement with the course material and the core content of the paper should be both problem analysis and critical reflection. You must show a minimum of 5 scholarly sources beyond course material and follow a well-organized and clearly written paper.	Final project due end of Week 13	35%

Grade Breakdown	Explanation
90-100	Excellent. You have surpassed my expectations (rare).
80-89	Very good. You have fulfilled my expectations.
70-79	Good. Expectations are mostly fulfilled with weak areas.
60-69	Satisfactory. There are problems such as confusing writing or expectations are not fulfilled.
50-59	Less than satisfactory. There are major problems.
<50	Unsatisfactory, Fail.

This course is designated as in person, meaning we will meet every week for class time. This will provide the opportunity for us to interact, share ideas, and learn from one another as a community. This critical exchange of ideas is an integral part of learning. Although Zoom instruction can be offered, utilizing this resource should be limited to when students are unable to attend due to illness. Readings and assignment information will be posted in OWL.

How to Contact Me:

You may contact me by email: Prof. Van Smith: vambtman@uwo.ca - but it may take up to 24 hours for a response on weekdays (e.g., Monday – Friday) or up to 48 hours for a response on weekends (e.g., Saturday – Sunday and stat holidays). If I cannot provide an immediate response, or if the matter is something that requires more time for discussion, I will direct you to meet with me during office hours, or via zoom. Please ensure that your emails are worded professionally and include the course number in the subject line (2218F).

Important Policies

Policies for Assignment Deadlines:

All written assignments are to be submitted electronically to the instructor and are due on or before the date and time specified under “methods of evaluation” for each assignment. This means if your assignment is due at 9.00am and you submit it at 9.31am, it will be considered late. Extension of deadlines or alternate dates for tests will be granted only for documented illness or compassionate reasons. Workloads (i.e., other class work, projects, readings, employment) do not count as a reasonable excuse. Late submissions will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day, including papers submitted after a specified time. If your assignment is submitted 5 days or more past the due date without sufficient grounds for lateness as specified above, it will be marked purely for your educational benefit. Your mark will not count towards your final grade for the course.

Extension of deadlines or alternate dates for tests will be granted only for documented illness or compassionate reasons. Workloads (i.e., other class work, projects, readings, employment) do not count as a reasonable excuse. Late submissions will be penalized at a rate of 4% per day, to a maximum of 20%. Further information on “Academic Consideration for Missed Work” is below.

Assignment objectives and rubrics will be posted on OWL, as well as discussed in class. Should you have a concern regarding the grade you received for an assignment, you must wait 24 hours from the receipt of the grade (on OWL) to contact the instructor. In doing so, please make an appointment and prepare in writing, with evidence, why you feel your grade is inappropriate. Please be aware that in requesting a grade reassessment, your grade could go up/down/or stay the same. Note that calculations errors (which do occur!) should be brought to my attention immediately.

Course Absences due to Daily COVID Screening Questionnaire Missed assessments (e.g., presentations, essays, quizzes, tests, midterms, etc.) require formal academic considerations (typically self-reported absences and/or academic counselling). Methods for dealing with missed work and course content are at the discretion of the instructor(s). Students should be aware that some learning outcomes cannot be easily made up and may need to be completed in a subsequent year. Your instructor will provide you with further information as to how this applies within this course. Students who demonstrate a pattern of routinely missing coursework due to self-reported COVID symptoms, and therefore do not demonstrate mastery of the learning outcomes of the course, will not receive credit for the course. Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning. In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor. In the event that online learning is required, a stable v1 (2021.09.03) internet connection with working microphone and webcam will be required. As has been the case in the past, the decision to pivot to online learning will be made by Western, and not individual instructors or departments (excepting temporary online instruction in the event of instructor illness).

A Note on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

Policies on Examinations:

No electronic devices of any kind are allowed during tests and examinations.

Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence (SRA) form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the [Senate policy](#) are met. Two important exceptions to this rule: SRAs will not be allowed for final examinations or assessments worth more than 30% of a given course.

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 SRAs, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a [Student Medical Certificate](#) (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/having_problems/Self_Reported_Absence.html

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western (http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Indigenous Services:

A link to Indigenous Initiatives can be found at <http://indigenous.uwo.ca> and the Indigenous Student Centre here: <http://indigenous.uwo.ca/students/about>

Writing Support Centre:

A link to the Writing Support Centre can be found at <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/>

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Course Schedule and Themes:**Course Schedule: Contemporary Indigenous Issues (IS 2218F)**

Date and week	Themes and instructor(s)	Assignments and due dates
September 12 th : Week 1	Introduction to the course and creating community.	
September 19 th , Week 2	Contemporary Challenges.	1 st in-class discussion activity (5%)

September 26 th , Week 3	Gendered Violence; Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SQTIP in Canada.	Proposal due (video or written format) and submitted by Friday September 29th at 11:59pm EST.
October 3 rd , Week 4	What is decolonization? Is reconciliation possible?	2 nd in-class discussion activity (5%)
October 10 th , Week 5	Land displacement: Environmental dispossession and repossession.	
October 17 th , Week 6	Children and Families.	3 rd in-class discussion activity (5%). Story due end of Week 6, and submitted by Friday, October 20th at 11:59pm EST.
October 24 th , Week 7	TBD: Guest Lecture.	
October 31 st -----	No class ----- Reading Week -----	
November 7 th , Week 8	Indigenous Health and healthcare.	4 th in-class discussion activity (5%)
November 14 th , Week 9	The Environment and waters	
November 21 st , Week 10	Self-determination and autonomy.	Bio due end of Week 10, and submitted by Friday, November 24th at 11:59pm EST.
November 28 th , Week 11	Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Indigenous contributions.	
December 5 th , Week 12	Indigenous community-based research.	
December 12 th , Week 13	No class	Final Project due Friday, Dec. 15th at 11:59pm EST.

Course Schedule and Readings: Note: The schedule may be subject to change. If there are any changes, we will discuss them in class first. We may not discuss or cover all readings in class; however, they are intended to give added context to what is discussed. Readings with posted on OWL. Preparation materials should be reviewed before the commencement of class each week.

Important Dates

- Classes will commence the week of September 11th, cease during Reading Week, October 30th – November 3rd, 2023, and terminate on December 8th.
- September 7th: Fall/Winter term classes begin.
- September 15th: Last day to add a first term half course or a first term full course.
- September 29th: [National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#) (this day is non-instructional, meaning classes will not run this day), IS office closed.
- October 9th: Thanksgiving Holiday, IS office closed.

- October 30th – November 5th: Fall Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open).
- November 13th: Last day to drop/ withdraw from a first term half course or a first term full course without academic penalty.
- December 8th: Classes end.
- December 10th – 22nd: Mid-year examination period.

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