

Indigenous Economics

ECON 251 - 801

Department of Economics

Fall 2024

Instructor: Dr. Laurel Wheeler

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:00 pm MT or by appointment.

Class Meetings: All class activities will take place online. Synchronous class meetings will be held via Zoom on Thursdays from 9:30-10:50 AM MT. Attendance is mandatory. Please review the schedule of class meetings contained in Table 1.

Course Website: This course uses the [Canvas website](#) for announcements, resources, assessments, and assignments

Teaching Assistant: TBD

Important Dates:

First day of course: September 3, 2024

Drop/add deadline: September 16, 2024

Withdrawal date: December 3, 2024

Last day of course: December 9, 2024

Final paper deadline: December 9th, 2024 at 11:59 pm MT

Refer to [Major Dates and Deadlines from the 2024-2025 Academic Schedule](#)

Communication Policies:

E-mail: I respond to emails within 1-2 business days. Email is fine for brief communication about course deadlines, expectations, etc. Please attend my virtual office hours for communication about substantive issues related to course content. I ask that you practice professional email etiquette when writing to me. You can find helpful resources on websites such as [this one](#).

Office Hours: Office hours are used to clarify course content, to discuss course assignments, or to talk about topics not related to the course. To attend office hours, join me in a Zoom call using the link provided on the course website. These calls may be one-on-one or group conferences depending on the nature of the questions.

Respectful Online Engagement: You are expected to engage with one another online as respectfully and mindfully as you would if classes were being held in person. Student conduct in this course is governed by the University's [Student Conduct Policy](#).



Respectful disagreement promotes learning and is encouraged. Sexist, racist, homophobic comments or other inflammatory remarks are not tolerated. This course may, at times, touch on controversial or sensitive topics. When you engage with these topics, you are expected to be considerate of the variety of lived experiences of your classmates. Finally, if you are witness to, or the target of, abusive or offensive behavior in this course, please inform me immediately. If you do not feel comfortable reaching out to me, you may reach out to the Economics Department's Undergraduate/Graduate Advisors, Undergraduate Program Directors, or Chair; or the Associate Dean of Student Programs within the Faculty of Arts. If you are put into a student group that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, please don't hesitate to request a change.

Disclaimer: Any typographical errors in this syllabus are subject to change and will be posted as errata and corrections on Canvas. I recommend that you enable the Canvas notification feature to ensure you see all new announcements.

Policy about course outlines can be found in [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) in the University Calendar.

The University of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Metis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.

1 Course Description

This course provides a survey of historical and contemporary issues in Indigenous economies. It starts with an overview of traditional Indigenous economies. Prior to contact with Europeans, Indigenous communities across the world had developed complex economic systems. Colonization introduced fundamentally different market systems. Building from that economic history, the remainder of the course focuses on the current economic conditions, considerations, and approaches of Indigenous peoples. The course explores how Indigenous communities navigate different approaches to wealth and human capital accumulation. It also studies the economic effects of important industries and social policies. The issues are explored through a social justice lens, using a model of “two-eyed seeing,” which positions standard economic models alongside Indigenous approaches.¹ Topics covered in this course include traditional Indigenous economies, business investment & entrepreneurship, Indigenous perspectives toward economic development, colonization and economic goods, sustainability, discrimination, and land use & management.

This course relies on an economics framework for studying social and economic issues of importance to Indigenous communities. A basic understanding of microeconomic theory is assumed, but no technical background is necessary for success in this course. The course prerequisite is ECON 101 - Introduction to Microeconomics. It is your responsibility as a student to ensure that you have the appropriate prerequisite for the course. Registration will be canceled if you have not taken (and passed) the prerequisite (or equivalent).

2 Course Format

This is an online course that relies on a mixed delivery format. Students will learn through a combination of asynchronous formal lectures and audiovisual materials, synchronous class discussions and activities, assigned readings, guest presentations, essay-based quizzes, a midterm project, and a term paper. A new topic is introduced approximately every week. Assignments and expectations for the upcoming week are posted every Friday.

A typical week involves reading one to three short chapters and viewing up to three pre-recorded lectures lasting no more than 20 minutes each. Lecture notes will not be provided separately, so students are strongly encouraged to watch the lectures and take notes. On Thursdays, students will attend a synchronous Zoom meeting from 9:30-10:50 am MT. Attendance is mandatory and participation is expected. Class meetings are used for moderated discussion and interaction (not for lecturing). To protect student privacy, and to encourage the free exchange of ideas, Zoom calls are not recorded and posted. See Section 7 for the schedule of lessons, class meetings, and assignments; and see Section 8 for the components of the course grade.

¹Hatcher, A., C. Bartlett, A. Marshall, and M. Marshall. 2009. Two-eyed seeing in the classroom environment: Concepts, approaches, and challenges. *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education*, 9(3): 141-153. doi: 10.1080/14926150903118342.

3 Course Objectives and Expectations

The main objective of the course is to provide students with the tools to evaluate economic strategies for Indigenous communities. Specific learning objectives are both cognitive (i.e., relating to the processing of information) and affective (i.e., relating to philosophy) in nature. Readings and lectures are the primary means of acquiring knowledge and understanding. Students will integrate these sources of knowledge into class discussions while honing their ability to engage in respectful, open-minded dialogue. Other evaluative materials—e.g. the midterm project and the term paper—are designed to promote synthesis of knowledge for the purpose of taking a stance on complicated, topical issues.

4 Expected Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of traditional and contemporary Indigenous economies
- Contrast Indigenous economics with mainstream economics along many dimensions
- Show awareness of different ways to measure and conceptualize economic development
- Explain how colonization shaped Indigenous economies today
- Apply knowledge of the equity-efficiency trade-off to social justice objectives
- Analyze development policies and legislation within an economics framework
- Propose methods for measuring well-being, or relational “living well”
- Formulate a position on issues affecting Indigenous communities today

5 What Students can Expect

Drawing on the latest research on effective online instruction, students can expect:

- Frequent and clear communication about expectations. By Friday night, I will post clear and comprehensive information about the required readings, activities, lecture recordings, and deadlines for the upcoming week.
- Enhanced instructor accessibility. I am amenable to scheduling office hours at different times of the day to accommodate students in different time zones.
- Quick responses to technology challenges.
- Flexible scheduling of required work. Students may complete and submit coursework at their convenience during the week. The only requirement is that it must be submitted by Friday night at 11:59 pm MT in the week it is due.
- Frequent check-ins to evaluate the effectiveness of course design.
- Tools to help students stay organized and up-to-date on course activities. These tools include the reading list and the completion tracking feature on Canvas.

In my view, my role as the instructor is to be the curator of this course. I aim to provide students with the tools and resources necessary to facilitate their own path toward knowl-

edge acquisition. It is therefore critical that students actively participate and bring to my attention issues as they arise.

6 Textbooks and other Course Materials

The main text used in this course is the new book by Dr. Ron Trosper, “**Indigenous Economics: Sustaining Peoples and their Lands.**” Dr. Trosper is an economist, a professor at the University of Arizona, and a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. His textbook is the first of its kind. Diverging from the neoclassical traditions that undergird most economics courses today, this book explains how Indigenous economies center relationships rather than individualism and hyperrationality. You should be able to find this resource at the university bookstore, but the U of A library has also purchased the title and is providing unlimited digital access to students through the [Library](#).

We will also refer to the following secondary texts throughout the course:

- ***Indigenous Canada***, an [open-access MOOC](#) developed by faculty of the Department of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. PDF versions of the modules are posted on the course website. These readings synthesize information about the historical and modern conditions of Indigenous people in Canada.²
- “**Building a Competitive First Nation Investment Climate**” from the Tulo Centre of Indigenous Economics.³ You can access the textbook [here](#) or through the course website. This is a very applied text, written for practitioners – First Nations or tribal governments, or professionals interested in working with them – with an emphasis on investment.
- “**Economic Aspects of the Indigenous Experience in Canada**,” by Dr. Anya Hageman. You can access the textbook online at no charge through [this link](#).

Further recommended and required readings can be found on the course website. This course supplements required textbooks with scholarly articles, news articles, and policy reports. The Trosper book is the only text students are asked to purchase, as PDF versions of all other required readings are available online, either posted to Canvas or available through the Talis Aspire reading list.

7 Tentative Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Table 1 outlines the tentative schedule of topics, assignments, and class meetings for the entire term. All assignments (except the term paper) must be completed by Friday at

²The course made headlines in fall 2020, when [actor Dan Levy signed up to take the course](#) along with thousands of his followers.

³The Tulo Centre describes itself as a “not-for-profit institution, based in Kamloops, British Columbia, whose mission is to help interested Indigenous governments build legal, administrative, and infrastructure frameworks that support markets on their lands.”

midnight in the week they are due. Topics are subject to change, but changes will be announced at least one week in advance. The latest version of the syllabus will be uploaded to the course website to reflect any changes.⁴

8 Components of Course Grade

There are four main components of the course grade: participation, quizzes, a midterm project, and a term paper (see Table 2). In this course, students will not be evaluated based on their performance on high-stakes exams. Instead, the midterm project takes the place of a midterm exam. The term paper takes the place of a final exam.

Grading:

The most important component of a student's grade calculation is the term paper, which can earn students up to 40 points toward their final grade. The midterm project and participation can each earn students up to 20 points toward their final grade. Each of the two quizzes is worth ten points. The sum of all components produces a nominal score of up to 100 points. The student's final grade will be determined by the nominal score rounded up to the nearest integer. Letter grades will be assigned according to the grading scale outlined in Table 3.⁵

Participation in this Course:

The participation score is comprised of three parts: (1) Up to five points are awarded based on class attendance. There are 12 total opportunities for students to attend class, and students are allowed two unexcused absences without penalty. Absences due to reasons such as religious belief or incapacitating illness will be excused as long as the student notifies me in advance or as soon after the absence as possible. After two unexcused absences, one-half point will be deducted from the participation score for each additional unexcused absence until all five points have been deducted. (2) Students will also receive up to five participation points for completing the introduction video in the second week of the course. (3) The remaining ten participation points will be awarded at my discretion, based on active participation in class activities and discussions.

Quizzes:

This course has two open-book quizzes that are administered online through Canvas. Students may use their notes and online resources but they must complete the quiz independently, without help from their classmates or others. Each quiz consists of one essay

⁴Note that major course deadlines (e.g. quizzes) will not be altered. Students are responsible for keeping up to date with any announcements made in class.

⁵For example, if a student's final score is 80.6, that would be rounded up to an 81, and the student would receive the letter grade of B+. There is no bell curve associated with this course.

question that requires students to think critically, demonstrate an understanding of the recent material covered, and formulate a well-supported opinion. Students have one hour to take the quiz once they start it, but they are able to start the quiz anytime during the week that it is due.⁶ Quizzes are due Friday before midnight MT. Quizzes are not cumulative in nature. The course webpage contains a sample quiz question and a grading rubric. Within a week of the quiz deadline, students can expect to receive their grades and written feedback.

Midterm Project:

In the first few weeks of the course, students will be given a set of competing explanations about why many Indigenous communities contend with economic injustice today. Students are asked to choose the explanation they find most compelling. For the midterm project, students are asked to research, evaluate, and articulate their chosen topic. Arguments must be presented in accordance with the economic framework discussed in class but students may be creative in how they choose to present their arguments (e.g., relying on multimedia, telling stories, etc.) Assessment is based on the breadth and depth of research forming the foundation of an argument and whether the argument is grounded in economic theory. Midterms are due October 25th. More detailed expectations and guidelines are available on Canvas.

Term Paper:

The term paper requires students to evaluate a policy pertaining to Indigenous economic development and write a 1500-word paper describing their assessment of the policy. The paper must contain a description of the policy and an articulation of the effects of the policy, taking into consideration unintended as well as intended consequences. Students are asked to link directly to the material covered in class, demonstrating an understanding of Indigenous economies as well as an understanding of basic microeconomic theory. Students will be provided with a list of eligible policies but are welcome to choose a different policy that does not appear on the list. Students are required to meet with me at least once to discuss their chosen policy and policy position.

Please also refer to the below statement on the use of generative AI in Section 9.

Bonus Credits:

Students are able to earn up to five bonus points for participating in experiential learning about Indigenous peoples and cultures outside of the classroom. Activities may include things like attending the Round Dance hosted by the First People's House. Please check the course website for announcements about extracurricular opportunities, which will be updated regularly, or email me to ask for approval of an activity I may have missed.

⁶Fast typists may be able to complete the quiz in 30 minutes. The full hour is provided to prevent typing speed from being a binding constraint.

9 Statement on the Use of Generative AI

Generative AI tools such as Chat GPT are emerging as opportunities for creativity and innovation, but the technology is still new, and we are in the early stages of navigating the complexities. The use of generative AI is not expressly prohibited in this course, however I would strongly urge students to consider carefully how to apply these tools and whether the benefits outweigh the costs. Along those lines:

- The [University of Alberta Student Academic Integrity Policy](#) states: “No Student shall represent another’s substantial editorial or compositional assistance on an assignment as the Student’s own work.” Submitting work created by generative AI and not indicating such would constitute cheating as defined above.
- Use of generative AI in research and writing must conform to clear ethical guidelines in order to ensure academic integrity and and rigorous conduct of research. You must provide a transparency statement explaining how AI algorithms, tools, or applications were utilized in your research and writing process.
- If you use any generative AI tools, you must clearly and explicitly acknowledge and cite the tool/application, using well-known citation styles. The American Psychological Association (APA) citation guide for in-text citations and references provides specific examples for this purpose. ([How to Cite ChatGPT](#))
- The output from generative AI tools could be biased, discriminatory, incomplete, and inaccurate. For instance, they may recommend references solely based on citation counts that are gender-biased, culturally insensitive or geographically inequitable. Machine learning models and algorithms are susceptible to the biases inherent in the data used to train them. If the data contains biases, the generative AI tool may replicate and amplify them, affecting the validity of research outputs and perpetuating existing biases in academic scholarship. Lack of transparency around the nature and types of underlying data used to train machine learning models and algorithms is a major concern.

The final point is of particular concern in this course, which deals with topics that are rife with stereotypes. Even some of the latest research to come out of the field of Indigenous Economics may suffer from bias. In their assignments, students enrolled in this course will be expected not to repeat inaccurate characterizations and not to perpetuate stereotypes, so in some sense, the use of Chat GPT may be more harmful than helpful. If students have questions or concerns, they should contact their instructor.

10 Policy for Late or Missed Term Work

In accordance with University policy, students are expected to request approval for missed term work within two working days (or as soon as possible with due regard for the circumstances). The “[Request for Excused Absence or Deferral of Term Work](#)” form is available in the “forms” section of the Intranet. Traditionally, approved reasons for missing

coursework include religious belief, severe domestic affliction, or incapacitating illness. Extensions will not be granted for reasons such as sleeping in, misreading the schedule, weddings, vacations, travel arrangements, or coursework for other courses.

Every effort has been made to build flexibility into the design of the course. Toward that end, students have an entire week to finish readings, watch lectures, and submit assignments. I recognize that students may nevertheless face unforeseen challenges. In those cases, I ask that students explain their circumstances to me and we will work together to come up with solutions. Although all students will be expected to complete all components of the course, students may be provided with the opportunity to make up the work they missed.

Because the final paper is a take-home project assigned well in advance of the due date, late submissions will not be accepted except under exceedingly rare circumstances. Advice for students with extenuating circumstances requiring them to miss the deadline is contained in: [“Absence from Final Exams”](#).

11 Student Responsibilities

Academic Integrity: The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Student Academic Integrity Policy and the Student Conduct Policy (on the [University of Alberta Policies and Procedures Online](#) (UAPPOL) website) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

All students should consult the [Office of Student Conduct and Accountability](#).

Instructors are required to report potential violations of the Student Academic Integrity Policy.

Sharing Course Materials: Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s). Most instructional material associated with the course is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

Letter of Recommendation Policy: As you advance in your academic careers, you may eventually find yourselves in a position where you need to ask instructors for letters of recommendation. Please understand that these letters will only strengthen your applications

if they are strong, positive, and specific. Toward that end, you may want to consider the ways in which you can demonstrate qualities like inquisitiveness, preparedness, diligence, and collegiality through active participation in class and in office hours. My policy is that I will happily write a student a letter of recommendation if I feel I know the student well enough to do so. Simply receiving an A in the course may not suffice.

12 Learning and Working Environment

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment.

All students should review the Student Conduct Policy (on the [University of Alberta Policies and Procedures Online](#) (UAPPOL) website). If you are experiencing harassment, discrimination, fraud, theft or any other issue and would like confidential advice and information, please contact any of these campus services:

- [Office of Safe Disclosure & Human Rights](#): A safe, neutral and confidential space to disclose concerns about how the University of Alberta policies, procedures or ethical standards are being applied. They provide strategic advice and referral on matters such as discrimination, harassment, duty to accommodate and wrong-doings. Disclosures can be made in person or online using the Online Reporting Tool
- [Sexual Violence Supports](#): - It is the [policy](#) of the University of Alberta that sexual violence committed by any member of the University community is prohibited and constitutes misconduct. The University takes seriously its responsibility to reduce sexual and gender-based violence through a culture of consent, gender inclusivity, anti-oppression and support, and to respond to misconduct or conditions that allow, facilitate, or give rise to sexual and gender-based violence.
- [University of Alberta Protective Services](#): Peace officers dedicated to ensuring the safety and security of U of A campuses and community. Staff or students can contact UAPS to make a report if they feel unsafe, threatened, or targeted on campus or by another member of the university community. For non-emergency dispatch, call 780-492-5050. For lost and found, call 780-492-2943. **In an emergency, call 911.**

13 Student Resources

The [University Calendar](#) is one of the principal sources of U of A policy information for students. It includes admission requirements and deadlines, academic regulations, programs of study, academic standards, degree requirements, and University policies for both undergraduate and graduate students.

The [Student Service Centre](#) provides students with information and access to services to support academic, financial, mental, and physical well-being.

[First Peoples' House](#) provides an environment of empowerment for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners to achieve personal and academic growth.

The [Academic Success Centre](#) provides professional academic support to help students maximize their academic success and achieve their academic goals. They offer appointments, advising, group workshops, online courses, and specialized programming year-round to students in all university programs, and at all levels of achievement and study.

[Writing Services](#) offers free one-on-one writing support to students, faculty, and staff. Students can request a consultation for a writing project at any stage of development. Instructors can request class visits and presentations.

Under the [Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy](#), the Office of the Dean of Students coordinates academic accommodations for prospective and current students with documented disabilities affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, and physical or mental health. The provision of academic accommodations helps to remove structural barriers that these students encounter in academic environments in order to facilitate equivalent learning opportunities for these students. [Accommodations and Accessibility](#) promotes an accessible, inclusive, and universally-designed environment at the University of Alberta.

[Health and Wellness Support for Students](#) outlines the mental and physical health resources which are offered on-campus and in the community.

The [Office of the Student Ombuds](#) is a confidential service which strives to ensure that university processes related to students operate as fairly as possible. They offer information, advice, and support to students, faculty, and staff as they deal with academic, discipline, interpersonal, and financial issues related to student programs.

The [Need Help Now](#) webpage offers contact information for a variety of supports if you are in immediate need of mental health and wellness support. You can also call the 24-hour Distress Line: 780-482-4357 (HELP).

Table 1: Schedule

| Week | Dates | Topic | Assignments |
|------|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Sep 3-8 Sep 5 | Course Welcome Class Meeting | |
| 2 | Sep 9-15 Sep 12 | Introduction to Indigenous Economics Class Meeting | Introduction Video (Sep 13) |
| 3 | Sep 16-22 Sep 19 | Indigenous Canada Class Meeting | |
| 4 | Sep 23-29 Sep 26 | Traditional Indigenous Economies Class Meeting | |
| 5 | Sep 30 - Oct 6 Oct 3 | Colonization and Economic Dilemmas Class Meeting | Quiz #1 (Oct 4) |
| 6 | Oct 7 - 13 Oct 10 | Economic Justice Class Meeting | |
| 7 | Oct 14 - 20 Oct 17 | Indigenous Economies Now & Into the Future Class Meeting | |
| 8 | Oct 21 - 27 Oct 24 | Discrimination Class Meeting | Midterm Project (Oct 25) |
| 9 | Oct 28 - Nov 3 Oct 31 | Human Capital Accumulation Guest Lecture | |
| 10 | Nov 4 - 10 Nov 7 | Land Class Meeting | |
| 11 | Nov 11 - 17 | Fall Reading Week NO CLASS | |
| 12 | Nov 18-24 Nov 19,21 | Business Investment & Entrepreneurship Sign up for time to discuss term paper | Quiz #2 (Nov 22) |
| 13 | Nov 25 - Dec 1 Nov 28 | The Policies & the Players Class Meeting | |
| 14 | Dec 2 - 4 | Course Wrap-up | |
| | Dec 9 | | Final Paper due |

Table 2: Components of Grade

| Component | Weighting | Due Date |
|-----------------|-----------|---------------|
| Participation | 20% | Full term |
| Quiz #1 | 10% | October 4th |
| Midterm Project | 20% | October 25th |
| Quiz #2 | 10% | November 22nd |
| Term Paper | 40% | December 9th |

Table 3: Grading Scale

| Range | Letter Grade |
|--------------|--------------|
| 96 and above | A+ |
| 91-95 | A |
| 86-90 | A- |
| 81-85 | B+ |
| 76-80 | B |
| 71-75 | B- |
| 66-70 | C+ |
| 62-65 | C |
| 58-61 | C- |
| 54-57 | D+ |
| 50-53 | D |
| Under 50 | F |