



# Indigenous Economics ECON 251 - B1

Department of Economics

Winter 2021

**Instructor:** Laurel Wheeler

**Office:** Tory 7-16 - *Working remotely Winter 2021*

**E-mail:** lewhee@ualberta.ca

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 12:30 - 1:50 PM MT or by appointment<sup>1</sup>

**Class Meetings:** All class activities have been moved online due to COVID-19.<sup>2</sup> Synchronous class meetings will be held via Zoom every other Thursday of the term. You may choose to join *either* at 12:30-1:30 pm MT or 8:00-9:00 pm MT. **There are seven class meetings:** Jan 14, Jan 28, Feb 11, Feb 25, Mar 11, Mar 25, and Apr 8.

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

**Teaching Assistant:** Xuan Cui, xcui3@ualberta.ca

## Important Dates:

**First day of term:** January 11, 2021

**Drop/add deadline:** January 22, 2021

**Withdrawal date:** April 9, 2021

**Last day of term:** April 16, 2021

**Term paper deadline:** April 22, 2021 at 9 AM MST

Refer to [Major Dates and Deadlines from the 2020-2021 Academic Schedule](#)

## Communication Policies:

**E-mail:** I respond within 24 hours to student emails received Monday through Friday, 9 AM - 5 PM. I do not check emails outside of business hours. Email generally is not the most effective tool for communication about substantive issues related to course content. I encourage students with substantive questions to attend my virtual office hours. Email is fine for communication about course deadlines, expectations, etc.

**Office Hours:** Used to clarify course content, to discuss course assignments, or to talk about topics not related to the course. Feel free to email me to schedule an alternative time to chat/meet if the regularly-scheduled office hours don't work for you. There are two ways

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<sup>1</sup>Later office hours are available upon request to students based in different time zones

<sup>2</sup>Classes were originally scheduled to meet T/Th 12:30 - 1:50 PM MST.



to reach me using G Suite tools:<sup>3</sup> (1) Join me in a Google Meet conference using [the link provided](#) in the course calendar on eClass. These conferences may be one-on-one or group meetings depending on the nature of the questions. (2) Reach me on Google Chat during office hours. To chat with me, use the Gmail application to log into your UofA email account. Add me to the chat box by searching for lewhee@ualberta.ca. If the conversation becomes too complicated to carry out over Chat, we will switch over to Meet.

**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 [Code of Student Behaviour](#). 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, Associate Chairs, or Chairs; 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 eClass. I recommend that you enable the eClass notification feature to ensure you see all new announcements.

*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.*

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<sup>3</sup>Note that some browsers may not support G Suite. Try using Chrome or Firefox instead of Safari.

## **I. 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 of Indigenous peoples. The course explores how Indigenous communities navigate different approaches to wealth accumulation. It also studies the economic effects of social policies directed toward Indigenous peoples. The issues are explored using standard economic models and principles of social justice. Topics covered in this course include traditional Indigenous economies, business investment & entrepreneurship, Indigenous perspectives toward economic development, discrimination, land use & the environment, and fiscal transfers.

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. Core microeconomic concepts will be introduced in the context of identifying the sources of economic disadvantage, determining the actors responsible for promoting targeted economic progress, and assessing the conditions necessary for achieving it.

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). Policy about course outlines can be found in the Evaluation Procedures and Grading System section of the University Calendar.

## **II. Course Format:**

This course 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, online forum discussions, guest presentations, a midterm project, and a term paper. A new topic is introduced approximately every week. Assignments and expectations are posted every Friday.

A typical week involves reading one to three short textbook chapters and viewing up to four pre-recorded lectures lasting no more than 20 minutes each. Please note that lecture notes will not be provided separately, so students are strongly encouraged to watch the lectures and take notes. Approximately every other week, students will attend a one-hour synchronous Zoom meeting. Students may choose from two time slots: 12:30 - 1:30 PM MT or 8:00 - 9:00 PM MT. 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. Therefore, attendance is strongly encouraged. Online knowledge

activation activities that require reflection on recent course content take the form of forum discussions and essay-based quizzes (see Sections V and VI for the schedule and more details).

### **III. 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 and affective (i.e. relating to philosophy) in nature. Readings and lectures are the primary means of enhancing 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.

#### **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

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

- Demonstrate knowledge of traditional and contemporary Indigenous economies in Canada
- Show awareness of different ways to measure and conceptualize economic development
- Identify sources of economic disadvantage that Indigenous communities face
- 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 welfare
- Formulate a position on issues affecting Indigenous communities today

#### **What Students can Expect:**

Every reasonable effort will be made to facilitate student learning despite the unusual circumstances of the 2020-2021 Academic Year. 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. I have set up Q&A and discussion forums to help students engage with their peers as well as with me.
- 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 eClass.

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

#### IV. Textbooks and other Course Materials:

PDF versions of all required texts are posted to eClass. The main text used in this course is “**Economic Aspects of the Indigenous Experience in Canada,**” by Dr. Anya Hageman. The textbook is not yet in print, but Dr. Hageman has kindly agreed to make it available to students of this course free of charge.

The second main source of readings for the course is *Indigenous Canada*, an open-access course developed by faculty of the Department of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. These readings contain some of the best information on the historical and modern conditions of Indigenous people in Canada available in a succinct format. (The course was popularized this fall, when [actor Dan Levy signed up to take the course](#) along with thousands of his followers.)

Third, students will read excerpts of the textbook from the Tulo Centre of Indigenous Economics, “Building a Competitive First Nation Investment Climate.”<sup>4</sup> You can access this textbook through eClass or at <https://www.tulo.ca/textbook>. 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.

Further recommended readings include:

- Wuttunee, W. (2004). *Living Rhythms: Lessons in Aboriginal Economic Resilience and Vision*. McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal.  
This book presents stories about Indigenous economic successes interwoven with lessons of traditional wisdom.
- Loxley, J. (2010). *Aboriginal, Northern, and Community Economic Development: Papers and Retrospectives*. Arbeiter Ring Publishing, Winnipeg.  
This book describes Canadian Aboriginal community economic development.
- The *Aboriginal Policy Research* edited volumes  
Each volume covers a different policy-relevant topic or set of topics, such as health and well-being; learning, technology, and traditions; governance; housing; etc. If you have a particular

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<sup>4</sup>The 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.”

interest in policy, I would recommend these volumes.

This course supplements required textbooks with scholarly articles, news articles, and policy reports. Whenever possible, supplementary course materials are posted to eClass.

### V. Tentative Schedule of Topics and Assignments:

Table 1: Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Assignments
1	Jan 11-17 <b>Jan 14</b>	Introduction to Indigenous Economics <b>Class Meeting #1</b>	
2	Jan 18-24	Indigenous Canada	Introduction Video
3	Jan 25-31 <b>Jan 28</b>	Traditional Indigenous Economies <b>Class Meeting #2</b>	Forum #1
4	Feb 1-7	Contemporary Indigenous Economies	Quiz #1
5	Feb 8-14 <b>Feb 11</b>	Economic Development and Social Justice <b>Class Meeting #3</b>	Forum #2
6	Feb 15-21	Winter Reading Week	
7	Feb 22-28 <b>Feb 25</b>	Welfare, Health, and Education <b>Class Meeting #4</b>	
8	Mar 1-7	Discrimination	Midterm Project Due
9	Mar 8-14 <b>Mar 11</b>	Discussion of Midterm Projects <b>Class Meeting #5</b>	Forum #3
10	Mar 15-21	Land Use & the Environment	
11	Mar 22-28 <b>Mar 25</b>	Business Investment and Entrepreneurship <b>Class Meeting #6</b>	Quiz #2
12	Mar 29-Apr 4	Fiscal Transfers	Forum #4
13	Apr 5-11 <b>Apr 8</b>	Policy Solutions and Responsible Actors <b>Class Meeting #7</b>	
14	Apr 12-18	Economic Equality in Cities	Forum #5

Table 1 outlines the tentative schedule of topics, assignments, and class meetings for the winter term. All assignments must be completed by Friday at 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 eClass to reflect any changes.<sup>5</sup>

## VI. 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 tests. Instead, the midterm project takes the place of a midterm exam. The term paper takes the place of a final exam.

Table 2: Components of Grade

Component	Weighting	Due Date
Participation	20%	Full term
Quiz #1	10%	February 5th
Midterm Project	20%	March 5th
Quiz #2	10%	March 26th
Term Paper	40%	April 22nd

## 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 grade of up to 100 points. The student's final grade will be the nominal grade rounded up to the nearest integer. Letter grades will be assigned according to the grading scale outlined in Table 3.<sup>6</sup>

## Participation in this Course:

The participation score is based largely on student contributions to online forum discussions. Students will have the option of **choosing three out of five forums** in which to participate throughout the term. Each forum contribution can earn students up to five points. (Note that students are invited to participate in as many forums as they want, but only their top three contributions will count toward their grade.) Details about expectations for meaningful forum contributions are posted to eClass. The remaining five participation points are awarded for completing the introduction video in the second week of the course.

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<sup>5</sup>Note 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.

<sup>6</sup>For 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.



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

Points are not explicitly awarded for class attendance, but attendance is strongly encouraged.

### **Quizzes:**

This course has two open-book quizzes that are administered virtually through eClass. Each quiz consists of one essay 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.<sup>7</sup> Quizzes are due Friday by 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 experience 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. Students are given the opportunity to discuss their topics with their classmates to brainstorm

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<sup>7</sup>Fast 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





ideas and get feedback if they wish. More detailed expectations and guidelines are available on eClass.

### **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 incidence of the policy,<sup>8</sup> 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 extant policies they may choose to evaluate, but they may alternatively choose a different policy for combating poverty and inequality. I strongly suggest that students meet with me at least once to discuss their policy and policy position. More detailed expectations and guidelines are available on eClass.

### **Bonus Credits:**

In a normal (sans pandemic) year, I would offer up to three bonus points to students who participate in experiential learning about Indigenous peoples and cultures outside of the classroom. These activities would include things like attending the Round Dance hosted by the First People's House. I will try to find alternative, remote activities that would serve the same purpose, and I will post announcements about bonus point opportunities as they arise.

### **VII. 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. This term, I will give my approval for other types of reasons related to the coronavirus pandemic at my discretion. Extensions will not be granted for reasons such as sleeping in, competing work in other courses, misreading the schedule, weddings, vacations, or travel arrangements.

Every effort has been made to build flexibility into the design of the course, hoping to accommodate students who are experiencing new challenges or juggling new responsibilities this term. I recognize that students may face unforeseen challenges. In those cases, I ask that students explain their circumstances to me and we will work together to come up with

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<sup>8</sup>In other words, who benefits? Who loses?

solutions. Although all students are 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 assessment is a take-home paper 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: "[Final Exam Deferral Student Process](#)".

### **VIII. 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 [Code of Student Behaviour](#) and avoid any behaviour that 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 [Academic Integrity website](#). If you have any questions, ask your instructor.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that they could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

**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.

**IX. 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.

### **X. Student Resources:**

The best all-purpose website for student services is: <https://www.ualberta.ca/current-students>.

**Alternative Access to the UofA Email Account:** Students residing abroad this term may have difficulty accessing their University of Alberta email account. According to Information Services and Technology (IST), there is an alternative way to access UofA email. Details are available on the [IST Email and Calendaring webpage](#).

**Systems Requirements:** Information Services & Technology provides information about the technology requirements for online learning on their website: [Technology for Remote Learning - For Students](#)

**Advising:** USS Advisors are booking one-on-one meetings with students that can be held on the phone, over Google Meet, or Zoom. Bookings can be made through the [Student Services](#) page of the Faculty of Arts website.

**Accessibility Resources:** (1-80 SUB) The University of Alberta is committed to creating work and learning communities that inspire and enable all people to reach their full potential. Accessibility Resources promotes an accessible, inclusive, and universally designed environment. For general information and to register for services visit the [Accessibility Resources webpage](#).

**The Academic Success Centre:** (1-80 SUB) [The Academic Success Centre](#) offers a variety of workshops on effective study and exam strategies. There are in-person and online sessions available for a modest fee.

**The Centre for Writers:** (1-42 Assiniboia Hall) [The Centre for Writers](#) offers free one-on-one writing support to students, faculty, and staff. Students can request consultation for a writing project at any stage of development. Instructors can request class visits and presentations.

**Health and Wellness Support:** There are many health and community services available to current students. For more information visit the [Health and Wellness Support webpage](#).

**Office of the Student Ombuds:** [The Office of the Student Ombuds](#) offers confidential interviews, advice and support to students facing academic, discipline, interpersonal and financial difficulties.

**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. 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. Resources and more information can be found at [Sexual Violence Information and Resources](#).