



# Indigenous Economic Development ECON 451 (B1)/ ECON 612 (B3)

Department of Economics

Winter 2021

**Instructor:** Laurel Wheeler

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

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

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 11 AM - 12 PM MT or by appointment

**Class Meetings:** All class activities have been moved online due to COVID-19. Synchronous Zoom meetings will be held **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30-10:50 AM.**

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

## 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

**Final project deadline:** April 20, 2021 at 2 PM MT

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 to reach me virtually using G Suite tools:<sup>1</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

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<sup>1</sup>Note that some browsers may not support G Suite. Try using Chrome or Firefox instead of Safari.



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 their 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.*

## **I. Course Description:**

Why is wealth not uniformly distributed across individuals and communities? What strategies are effective in combating poverty? For decades, the field of development economics has studied questions such as these almost exclusively within the context of low-income countries. But poverty and inequality exist in middle- and high-income countries as well. Case in point, Indigenous communities in settler colonial societies such as the Americas and Oceania tend to experience relatively low levels of economic development. This course contextualizes the contemporary economic conditions of Indigenous peoples and communities against the backdrop of the process of colonization. Economic development theory and methods are applied to the study of economic development strategies for Indigenous communities. Topics covered in this course include, but are not limited to, the source of poverty; institutions such as property rights and governance; health and human capital; geography and endowments; and savings, credit, and insurance.

This course focuses on microeconomic issues in development. It is often comparative in nature, relating lessons learned about overcoming development challenges in developing countries to the context of Indigenous communities in developed countries. Particular emphasis is placed on First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples in Canada. Finally, this course is strongly empirical in nature. Simple economic development models and theory are introduced in lecture for the purpose of motivating the empirical research described in the assigned readings.

When discussing theory in this course, intuition is privileged over formal math with the understanding that students previously have been exposed to the math in their introductory courses. Students are also assumed to have background knowledge of important economic principles such as market failures, multiple equilibria, externalities, public goods, and opportunity costs. This course offers refreshers of microeconomic concepts as well as methods (i.e. approaches to empirical analysis), but it should be noted that this course is not designed to replace courses on introductory microeconomics or applied econometrics. This course is open both to undergraduate students and graduate students, so there will be a wide range of levels of student preparedness. Students are encouraged to draw my attention to concepts or methods that require further exposition.

The course prerequisites are ECON 384 and ECON 399 (Intermediate Microeconomics II and Introductory Econometrics). It is your responsibility as a student to ensure that you have the appropriate prerequisites 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:**

Students learn predominantly through a combination of assigned readings, synchronous class discussions (via Zoom), paper presentations, policy briefs, and the empirical research project.



Formal lectures, audiovisual materials, and guest lectures will play a minor role in promoting learning. A new topic is introduced approximately every week. Assignments, readings, and expectations are posted every Friday. Students are expected to have completed the readings by class time on Thursday of the following week.

A typical week involves reading two scholarly articles in detail and skimming one to two other recommended articles for main ideas. The first half of Tuesday class meetings are used to introduce the topic, review concepts and methods, and answer questions. The second half of class on Tuesday will be used to meet with research group one. Students are expected to have completed the required reading and respond to one question about the reading on an e-Class forum by Wednesday night. The first half of class on Thursday will be devoted to student-led paper discussion. The second half of class will be used to meet with research group two. To protect student privacy, and to encourage the free exchange of ideas, Zoom calls are not recorded and posted. Therefore, attendance is strongly encouraged.

In my view, my role as the instructor is to be the curator of the 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 come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. I acknowledge that the assigned readings may be difficult, and I expect students to be challenged. Students are encouraged to come to class prepared to ask questions about parts of the papers they don't understand.

### **III. Course Objectives and Expectations:**

The main objective of this course is to empower students to apply the empirical lessons and methods of the field of development economics to the context of Indigenous populations. Readings and lectures will be 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 presentation of the policy brief and the research project—are designed to promote oral and written communication skills and to promote the ability to generate original research ideas.

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

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

- Demonstrate knowledge of the economic conditions of Indigenous populations, particularly in Canada
- Show awareness of different ways of conceptualizing and measuring poverty
- Think critically about the sources and consequences of poverty and inequality
- Identify economic development issues that are particularly relevant to Indigenous populations due to unique features of their colonial/legislative history, geography, or de-



mographics

- Succinctly summarize the details of a policy area
- Hypothesize channels through which policy likely affects individual economic well-being
- Extrapolate lessons from the field of development economics to the context of Indigenous populations
- Demonstrate understanding of the ethics of conducting research on Indigenous economic development issues
- Develop a viable research plan to evaluate a specific policy area

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

Every reasonable effort will be made to facilitate student learning despite the unusual circumstances surrounding 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, 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 each other as well as with me.
- Quick responses to technology challenges.
- 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.

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

The field of development economics has evolved substantially in recent decades, yet Indigenous development remains a minor focus of the literature. As such, this course does not rely exclusively on one text. This is a seminar-style course that draws on readings from a wide range of scholarly journal articles. The readings are designed to provide students with an overview of issues in the broad field of development economics as well as an overview of the research being conducted specifically in the vein of Indigenous economic development. Recommended readings are accessible through the Reading List tool, updated weekly on e-Class.

Although there is no required textbook for this course, there are several excellent treatments of topics in development economics that students may want to explore. Further recommended readings include:

- Bardhan, P. and Udry, C. (1999). *Development Microeconomics*. Oxford University Press: NYC, NY.  
This book presents simple theoretical models used by development economists to explain the



problems facing the poor. It is written at the advanced undergraduate or first-year graduate level.

- Banerjee, A.V., Benabou, R., and Mookherjee, D. (2006). *Understanding Poverty*. Oxford University Press: NYC, NY.  
This book provides non-technical explanations of many of the most influential papers in the field of development economics, including some of the ones we will discuss in this course.
- Banerjee, A.V. and Duflo, E. (2011). *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*. PublicAffairs: NYC, NY.  
This book provides intuition and anecdotes to help the reader understand the lives and choices of the poor. It is highly readable.
- Angrist, J.D. and Pischke, J.S. (2009). *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*: Princeton University Press.  
This is a methods book, highly recommended to those of you interested in conducting applied microeconomics research.

This course occasionally supplements scholarly articles with news articles and policy reports. When appropriate, supplementary course materials will also be uploaded to the course webpage.

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

Table 1 outlines the tentative schedule of topics and assignments for the winter term. 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.<sup>2</sup>

## **VI. Components of Course Grade:**

There are three main components of the course grade: participation, a presentation of a “policy brief”, and a collaborative research project (see Table 2). There are no high-stakes examinations associated with this course. The policy brief takes the place of a midterm examination, and the research project takes the place of a final examination.

### **Grading:**

The most important component of a student's grade calculation is the research project, which can earn students up to 40 points toward their final grade. The midterm policy brief and participation are each worth 30 points. The sum of all components produces a nominal

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<sup>2</sup>Note that major course deadlines (e.g. the presentation dates) will not be altered. Students are responsible for keeping up-to-date with any announcements made in class.



Table 1: Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic
1	Jan 11-17	Introduction to Indigenous Economic Development
2	Jan 18-24	Indigenous Canada
3	Jan 25-31	Economic Development
4	Feb 1-7	The Source of Poverty
5	Feb 8-14	Research Design: Measurement & Methods
6	Feb 15-21	Winter Reading Week
7	Feb 22-28	<b>Presentation of Policy Briefs</b>
8	Mar 1-7	Institutions: Property Rights
9	Mar 8-14	Institutions: Governance
10	Mar 15-21	Finance
11	Mar 22-28	Human Capital: Health & Education
12	Mar 29-Apr 4	Colonialism
13	Apr 5-11	Investment, Transfers, and Credit
14	Apr 12-18	Endowments and Geography or Relational Contracts/Gender

Table 2: Components of Grade

Component	Weighting	Due Date
Participation	30%	Various, Full Term
Presentation of Policy Brief	30%	Feb 22-28
Research Project	40%	Apr 20

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>3</sup>

### **Participation in this Course:**

This is a seminar-style course dependent on student participation in discussions of scholarly articles. Participation in paper discussion is worth 30% of the final grade. Two types of participation are graded. First, each student is required to lead the discussion of three scholarly articles (worth 12%). Second, by Wednesday night, students who are not leading discussion are required to post to an e-Class forum a short response to a question about the article (worth 18%). Detailed expectations for leading discussion and forum contributions can be found on e-Class.

### **Midterm Examination:**

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<sup>3</sup>For example, if a student's final score is 81.6, that would be rounded up to an 82, and the student would receive the letter grade of A-. There is no bell curve associated with this course.



Table 3: Grading Scale

Range	Letter Grade
94 and above	A+
90-93	A
82-89	A-
76-81	B+
70-75	B
64-69	B-
60-63	C+
57-59	C
55-56	C-
52-54	D+
50-51	D
Under 50	F

There is no midterm examination in this course, but interested students will be afforded the opportunity to take a mock midterm for feedback only. The mock midterm examination would be held the week of March 8th. This option is provided to students interested in testing their understanding of important concepts.

**Policy Brief Presentation:**

The week of February 22nd-28th will be devoted to student presentations of “policy briefs.” Students will choose a single policy topic related to Indigenous economic development that they will research, summarize, and present to the rest of the class. The topic may or may not be related to one of the topics covered in the course. Either way, I encourage students to meet with me early in the term to discuss their proposed topic. Students are expected to describe their chosen policy in accordance with the economic framework used in class but are encouraged to be creative in how they choose to deliver their presentations (e.g. relying on multimedia, telling stories, etc.). More detailed expectations and guidelines will be provided in the first two weeks of the course.

The policy brief presentation is a learning tool that serves to accomplish many objectives. In addition to developing a deeper understanding of a specific policy area, students will gain experience presenting economics research and soliciting feedback from their peers. Students will be asked to send their presentation notes to the class prior to their presentation date and solicit feedback, references, and suggestions from their peers.

**Research Project:**

In lieu of a final examination, students will work collaboratively – with each other and with





me – on an empirical research project. The goal is to provide students with the opportunity to pursue supervised research in economics from the conception of an idea to the write-up of the findings. Students will gain exposure to all aspects of research in the area of Indigenous economic development, including: seeking ethics approval, conducting a literature review, developing the conceptual framework and testable hypotheses, obtaining and cleaning data, conducting data analysis, interpreting output, and writing a short research paper. Evaluation will be based on whether students are making meaningful contributions to the project (with the understanding that students will come with different skills and strengths). Students will be divided into two groups such that undergraduate students will work together and graduate students will work together. More detailed expectations about contributions will be provided at different stages of the project. For e.g., each student will be expected to contribute equally to the literature review, and that will be made clear before we embark on that part of the project.

## **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 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 assessment is a research project that will be pursued gradually throughout the term, the late submission policy is not very applicable. But 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 he or she 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](#).