

**YORK UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE DEPARTMENT IN SOCIOLOGY**

**SOCI 6204 3.00  
Indigenous Theory  
Fall 2017  
Monday 7pm-10 pm**

**Course Instructor:**

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**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Location:** Ross South 202

**Course Description:**

This course addresses the complex range of social, political, historical and legal thought that contemporary Indigenous theorists are engaging with. As Native communities wrestle with the multiple legacies of colonization—including land theft, identity legislation, attacks on traditional governments and forced cultural change, contemporary Indigenous theorists are engaging with ways to re-empower their communities. They seek to re-envision futures which restore communities to traditional values while rethinking and challenging both common-sense notions of “traditionalism” and Canadian liberal frameworks of “self-government” which confine and constrain Indigenous communities to a colonized future. Through exploring contemporary Indigenous writing on identity, racism, community, land, cultural survival, and law, this course will provide students with an opportunity to engage with the politics of Indigenization, and the issues affecting the futures of Indigenous peoples, with a primary focus on Canada. All students are welcome.

**Organization of the Course:**

Classes are seminar style. Each student will be expected to have read the material and contribute to the discussion, for each class. Occasionally, the instructor may deliver a short lecture related to the reading in question. Classes may be supplemented by films and videos.

## Course Learning Objectives

(1) **Statement of purpose:** To familiarize students with the contemporary worldviews, circumstances, dilemmas and dreams of North American Indigenous communities in their struggles for survival and rebirth, as expressed through Indigenous theorists.

(2) **Specific learning objectives:** Within the field of sociology, post-colonial theory is frequently (and indiscriminantly) applied to Indigenous contexts, despite the vast differences in circumstances between former colonies who have won a formal independence and those stateless nations who still negotiate ongoing colonialism on a regular basis. Furthermore, understandings of colonialism seldom take up the realities of settler colonialism (whereby the colonizing nation has set itself up on top of the landbase of the colonized). In this context, the course will provide students with a body of theory that flows directly from the circumstances of those who are still colonized, and whose land has been taken over and occupied by settler governments. It will, in particular, provide them with insights relating to specific areas where Indigenous theorists often differ from postcolonial theorists—around issues of relationship to land, identity, and nationalism/sovereignty.

Furthermore, the devaluation of Indigenous thought and worldviews within western academia has resulted in considerable confusion about the validity of Indigenous knowledge. The course provides a glimpse of how theorists are attempting to engage with non-western epistemologies in Western contexts.

## Course Texts:

Allen, Chadwick. *TransIndigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*. University of Minnesota, 2012.

Borrows, John. *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit's Guide*. University of Toronto Press, 2010.

Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013

Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*. University of Minnesota, 2013.

LaRocque, Emma. *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse, 1850-1990*. University of Manitoba Press, 2010.

Lawrence, Bonita. *Fractured Homeland: Federal Recognition and Algonquin Identity in Ontario*. UBC Press, 2012

Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Duke University Press, 2014

Sunseri, Lina. *Being Again of One Mind: Oneida Women and the Struggle for Decolonization*. UBC Press, 2011

Williams, Robert A, Jr. *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest*. Oxford University Press, 1990.

## **Assignments:**

Critical Commentaries (two, at 5-7 pages each)	30%	Presentation	20%
Seminar participation	10%	Term paper (20 pages max)	40%

**Critical Commentaries:** Students must prepare brief, critical commentaries on two course readings of their choice (not the one you presented on). Commentaries must critically evaluate the readings and must raise questions for further exploration.

**Term paper:** Topics may come directly from course readings and discussions, or they may be related to a student's more specific research interests. Paper is due on the first day of term in January; to be submitted by email.

**Presentation:** For their presentations, students will choose a specific week and prepare a presentation covering the salient aspects of the book.

**Seminar Participation:** Each student is expected to contribute fully to each seminar, to be prepared to discuss the readings in some depth.

## **WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**September 11:** Introduction and discussion.

**September 18:** LaRocque, Emma. *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse, 1850-1990*. University of Manitoba Press, 2010.

**September 25:** Lawrence, Bonita. *Fractured Homeland: Federal Recognition and Algonquin Identity in Ontario*. UBC Press, 2012

**October 2:** Sunseri, Lina. *Being Again of One Mind: Oneida Women and the Struggle for Decolonization*. UBC Press, 2011

**October 9: Thanksgiving – No classes**

**October 16:** Allen, Chadwick. *TransIndigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*. University of Minnesota, 2012.

**October 23:** Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*. University of Minnesota, 2013.

**October 30:** Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Duke University Press, 2014

**November 6:** Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* University of Minnesota Press, 2013

<http://www.sfu.ca/video-library/video/860/view.html> - Coulthard at SFU in Fall 2014

**November 13:** Williams, Robert A, Jr. *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest*. Oxford University Press, 1990.

**November 20:** Borrows, John. *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit's Guide*. University of Toronto Press, 2010

**November 27 & December 4:** Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

**Final Paper Deadline: January 4, 2016**