

IS 4024A / GEOGENV 4003A Community-based Praxis Fall 2026

1. Course Information



Classes Start	Fall Reading Week	Classes End	Study day	Exam Period
September 9	October 10-18	December 9	December 10	December 11-22

Thursday September 17, 2026: Last day to add a second-term half course

Wednesday September 30, 2026: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (non-instructional day)

Monday October 12, 2026: Thanksgiving Holiday

Monday November 30, 2026: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty



Teaching Team	Role	Contact Information	Office Hours
Betsy Kechego	Instructor	bkechego@msn.com	By appointment
Dr. Cortney Golkar-Dakin (S. Awasis)	Instructor	cdakin2@uwo.ca	By appointment
Kevin Ng	Teaching Assistant	kng342@uwo.ca	N/A



- ☒ Office hours will be held in person or remotely via Zoom (on request)
- ☒ Students can make an appointment to meet by emailing an instructor
- ☒ Students will be able to drop into office hours as a group

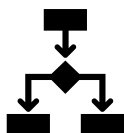
Calendar Description

This field course provides students with practical experience working in a local First Nations community on a collaborative project. Centering Indigenous ways of knowing, a major focus is on understanding intersecting cultural, political, ecological, social, and economic factors that shape community life. Topics include Indigenous governance, treaties, and political ecologies.

[bi-weekly 3-hour lecture, bi-weekly 3-hour outdoor tutorial, 0.5 course]

2. Extended Description

This experiential field course provides students with practical experience working in Chippewa of the Thames First Nations. Centering Indigenous ways of knowing, a major focus is on understanding intersecting cultural, political, ecological, social, and economic factors that shape community life. Local place names, stories, and responsibilities to place are based in reciprocal relationships with the land and expand the conceptual terrain across which Indigenous knowledge systems are engaged. Students are encouraged to critically reflect on these themes through Indigenous political ecological praxis, including field activities and a collaborative project. During the collaborative project, students partner with a community organization and prepare a resource, or complete other associated tasks, based on identified needs and strategies. Throughout the course, participants will visit various culturally significant sites and meet community leaders and scholars to understand how Indigenous ways of knowing inform sustainable and resurgent practices. Topics include Indigenous governance, treaties, and ecological justice.



Prerequisites

Any course in Arts and Humanities or Social Science and registration in third year or higher.

Prerequisite checking is the student's responsibility. Senate Regulations state, "unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

3. Readings

All resources, including assigned and supplementary materials, will be available on the [IS 4042F / GEOGENV 4003A OWL Brightspace learning environment](#) or [Western libraries](#). Any changes will be indicated on the OWL site and discussed with the class.

Richmond, C., Coombes, B., & Louis, R. P. (2024). *The practices and praxis of Indigenous environmental repossession* (Chapter 2). In *Because This Land Is Who We Are: Indigenous Practices of Environmental Repossession* (pp. 39-56). Bloomsbury Academic.

Jewell, E. (2024, September 30). *A decade of disappointment: Reconciliation & the system of a Crown*. Yellowhead Institute. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2024/09/30/a-decade-of-disappointment-reconciliation-the-system-of-a-crown/>

Kimmerer, R. W. (2024). *The Serviceberry: Abundance and reciprocity in the natural world*. Scribner.

Geniusz, M. S. (2015). *Plants have so much to give us, all we have to do is ask: Anishinaabe botanical teachings*. University of Minnesota Press.

4. Format

- This course is based around bi-weekly outdoor field activities. Please make sure to **dress appropriately for the weather** and bring a water bottle.
- Transportation will be available from Wampum learning lodge to the field site, leaving promptly at 9:00am. Additional details will be provided during the first session.
- Lectures are participatory and interactive, students are expected to come to class having prepared and/or reviewed the assigned materials, and ready to take an active role.
- In collaboration with the community partner and/or instructors, students will develop a project-related reading list.
- With the exception of illness, bereavement, and religious/ceremonial observances, attendance is required for field work.
- Students are responsible for material covered in lecture as well as assigned materials.

5. Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Generate community-based relationships;
- Collaboratively assess community needs and available resources;
- Develop a project plan and output for a partner organization;
- Honour responsibilities to the local community;
- Identify and apply theories of place;
- Value Indigenous leadership, governance, and perspectives on political-ecological relations;
- Critically reflect on one's own views and biases when using field research methods, including participatory observation.



6. Course Schedule



Week	Dates	Location	Topic	Materials	Due Dates
1	Sept 15	WLL-0220	Course overview		
2	Sept 22	COTTFN	Field Activity #1 – Meet the community partners	Richmond et al. 2024	Reflection #1 due
3	Sept 29	WIRB	Orange Shirt Day	Jewell 2024	
4	Oct 6	WLL-0220			Reflection #2 due
5	Oct 13		READING WEEK		
6	Oct 20	COTTFN	Field Activity #2 – Water	Kimmerer 2024 Chapter 1 & 2	
7	Oct 27	WLL-0220			
8	Nov 3	COTTFN	Field Activity #3 – Plants	Kimmerer 2024 Chapter 3 & 4	
10	Nov 10	WLL-0220			
11	Nov 17	COTTFN	Field Activity #4 – Land	Kimmerer 2024 Chapter 5 & 6	
12	Nov 24	WLL-0220			Presentations
13	Dec 1	WLL-0220	Course synthesis	Kimmerer 2024 Chapter 7 & Conclusion	Collaborative project due
	Dec 8	WLL-0220			Final Oral Exam

7. Communication



- Updates will be provided using OWL announcements. Please opt in to receiving OWL announcements by email.
- Students are responsible for checking their **UWO email account** in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).
- Please copy both instructors on emails. The instructor's email will be checked daily and students can expect to receive a response in 24 – 48 hours.
- This course will use the OWL forums for discussion and students are encouraged to post course-related questions and content to the discussion forum so that it is accessible for everyone to view.
- The discussion forums will be monitored by Instructors and/or teaching assistants.

8. Evaluation

Grades will be allocated based on the assignments below. More detailed instructions for assignments will be provided separately. All assignments will be evaluated based on the quality of reasoning, writing, structure, and format. Students should demonstrate deep engagement with key concepts, course materials, field activities, and the collaborative project, and communicate their ideas in a clear, concise, and organized way. The student's own analysis and synthesis of materials should be emphasized and supported by discussion of theoretical frameworks, detailed evidence, specific examples, lived experience, and independent research as appropriate.

Assessment	Weighting	Due Date(s)
Reflection	(2x10%) 20%	Sept 22 Oct 6
Collaborative Project	25%	Dec 1
Presentation	10%	Nov 24
Participation	15%	Sept 15 Sept 22 Oct 20 Nov 3 Nov 17 Dec 1
Oral Exam	30%	Dec 8



Reflection (2x10%=20%)

Reflections are short 1-page assignments that involve responding to the assigned materials, participating in field activities, and preparing for the collaborative project. You will share your reflection in class discussions but evaluation will be based on the written assignment. More detailed instructions and guiding questions will be provided separately.

Collaborative Project (25%)

Create an output for your partner organization! This could be in the form of a report, field activity, application, zine, podcast, website, video, infographic, finding aid etc. The format will depend on your unique skillset and the preferences of your partner organization.

Presentation (10%)

Share your collaborative project output with the class. Explain how your project relates to key concepts from the assigned materials. Describe how you contributed to meeting needs identified by the community organization, strategies you applied, any remaining limitations, as well as plans for dissemination.

Participation (15%)

This course requires participation in field activities as well as ongoing active engagement and collaborative work with a community organization.

Oral Exam (30%)

Synthesize theories of place and community praxis; describe your reasoning for key concepts. Apply your ideas to specific actions and describe at least two insights that arise. Draw on evidence to explain direct and indirect implications. More detailed instructions and guiding questions will be provided separately.

Submission and late policy

- All assignments are due before lecture at 9:30am EST unless otherwise specified.
- Assignments should be submitted through OWL, on or before the due date.
- Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin via OWL (statement in policies below).
- Students will have unlimited submissions to Turnitin up to the due date.
- There is a 48-hour submission window. Late assignments without academic consideration or accommodation (see Section 9 below) will be subject to a late penalty of 5%/day.
- After an assessment is returned, students should wait at least 24 hours to process feedback before contacting the instructors; to ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days of receiving feedback.

Grading

Click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning grading. The table below outlines the University-wide grade descriptors.

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

Grades will not be adjusted on the basis of want or need.

9. Accommodation Policies

When a student receives academic considerations or academic accommodations which overlap with the 48-hour flexibility period, the longest period of accommodation will determine the deadline. The built-in flexibility of the assessment should not be taken to extend any considerations or accommodations.

Academic Accommodations

The Department of Geography and Environment and the Indigenous studies program strive at all times to provide accessibility to all faculty, staff, students and visitors in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. More information about accessibility at Western is available [here](#).

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 519-661-2147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website.

Students with disabilities may wish to register with Accessible Education which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities.

Academic Consideration for Student Absence and Missed Work

University policy on academic considerations are described here. This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here.

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

Also note that because the submission deadline for assessments already includes flexibility in the form of a 48-hour submission window, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility.

If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, review the assigned materials and arrange to borrow a classmate's notes. If you expect to be absent for an extended amount of time, please make arrangements with the instructor.

Students must familiarize themselves with the Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the Student Medical Certificate or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Course Assessments that Require Supporting Documentation

For this course the following assessment has been designated as requiring supporting documentation: COLLABORATIVE PROJECT DUE DEC 1

Religious Accommodation

Students should review the policy for [Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm. Indigenous students with ceremonial commitments should also contact the instructor.

10. Use of Electronic Devices

The instructor encourages a laptop-free classroom environment during lectures and student-led presentations.

11. Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a [Scholastic Offence](#).



All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University. 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.

12. Mental Health

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please refer to [Mental Health@Western](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

13. Support Services

[Western's Support Services](#)
[Student Development Centre](#)

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts [here](#).

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, contact support@uwo.ca.

[Western Technology Services](#)

[Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) are the preferred browsers to optimally use OWL; update your browsers frequently. Students interested in evaluating their internet speed, please click [here](#).

If students need assistance with OWL, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help page](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

14. How to Be Successful in this Class:

Students enrolled in this class should understand the level of autonomy and self-discipline required to be successful.



1. Invest in a planner or application to keep track of your courses. Populate all your deadlines at the start of the term and schedule time at the start of each week to get organized and manage your time.
2. Make it a daily habit to log onto OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
3. Take notes as you go through the lesson material. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn more effectively.
4. Connect with others. Try forming a study group and try meeting on a weekly basis for study and peer support.
5. Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, check the online discussion boards, contact your instructor, or attend office hours.
6. Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.

15. Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Students are permitted to use generative AI tools/software/apps for information gathering, brainstorming, editing, coding, and other forms of academic support, provided that their use is transparent and appropriately documented. A copy of prompts and responses may be requested by the instructor. Students must clearly indicate where and how AI tools contributed to their work.

While AI can be a useful aid, it can also provide false, biased, or incomplete information. Students are expected to critically evaluate all AI-generated content and synthesize information through independent thinking. Written assignments should not simply reproduce AI outputs and must demonstrate critical engagement and the student's own voice.

Failure to disclose AI use will be treated as academic misconduct. Students remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of all submitted work, regardless of AI assistance.

16. Academic Offences

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