
Aboriginal/Indigenous Justice

Indigenous Studies 419 / Criminology 419

Fall/2025

The Professor

Your instructor is Dr. Ted Palys. The best ways to get in touch are to:

- Send an email to palys@sfu.ca
- Visit Saywell Hall 10334 during one of my office hours

Designated office hours for the Fall semester are Tuesdays from 1:00 to 2:00, i.e., before our class, and Friday afternoons from 1:00 to 2:00. Other times for in-person or Zoom meetings can be arranged by appointment. If possible, sending a note ahead of time that you are coming will be helpful and allow me to stagger times if/when multiple people want to see me.

The easiest and most reliable way of getting in touch is via email. However, email should be limited to arranging an appointment or making queries that can be answered in a couple of sentences or less.

The Course

I very quickly learned that “Justice” in the eyes of Indigenous People/s is all about relationships, and hence the focus of this course is on relationships, particularly (1) the changing nature of the relationship between Indigenous and settler peoples in Canada; and (2) the management of relations – and trouble -- within Indigenous communities. Reflecting those objectives, the course has three parts:

- 1.** A brief tour through 500 years of post-contact experience and the shifting relations and different policies of those times to understand how we got to where we are.
- 2.** An examination of efforts of Indigenous communities to establish Aboriginal justice systems within their communities.
- 3.** A consideration of the various venues/means through which Indigenous People/s in Canada and elsewhere have and are currently seeking justice in their relations with settler peoples, including (a) the courts; (b) political negotiation and treaties; (c) protest and other direct action; (d) governance and other “resurgence” initiatives; and (e) international forums such as the United Nations.

Readings

There is no required text book for this course. Course readings will be accessible through links on the course web page (see below). I will try and stay a few weeks ahead of the class in posting these. In addition to scholarly readings, you also will be exposed to assorted media – films, news clips, recorded interviews, newspaper articles – as well as class guests who are involved in/part of BC's/Vancouver's Indigenous community.

The Weekly Seminar

Each week's seminar, particularly in the early weeks of the course, will begin with a bit of a statement about the issues contained in the week's readings. Our main task, however, is to explore together the issues framed by those readings, and to reflect on relevant contemporary events. Accordingly, you need to prepare for class by having read and considered the readings in order to answer and ask questions, and to engage in discussion, related to the course content. In the event you miss a class for some reason, it is your responsibility to find out what the agenda holds for the next week; the course web page will always be the most up-to-date source of information in that regard.

Note that **25%** of the seminar grade will reflect your participation in discussion and evidence of preparation as revealed through that discussion, i.e., the participation grade is not simply an "attendance" grade. You also can build participation points by sending an emailed question or comment to me before class regarding any of the week's readings.

Course Web Page and Email

There are two ways (beyond communication in class) that I will keep in touch with you regarding the course.

- First is via the course web page that contains links to this course syllabus and other course-related materials. It's the best place to go if you are wondering what is happening next week and/or what you should be preparing. The URL for that page is <http://www.sfu.ca/~palys/crim419.htm>
- Second is via class email (indg-crim-419@sfu.ca) that allows you and/or me to send an email that goes to every person registered in the course. There are two things to keep in mind regarding the email.
 - The email address used is your SFU email address.
 - You can only send email to the class address when using your SFU email.

Course Assignments

The major portion of your grade in the course (75%) will derive from completion of **three** assignments you will complete throughout the semester. The assignments are essentially take-home essays in which you address questions/issues posed by the course instructor at the end of the three sections of the course. Your job is to demonstrate that you have read and understand the readings and other course materials to which you are exposed (including required readings, videos, guest speakers, newspaper articles, and/or discussion). Although not highly formal – I am not particularly concerned with formal citation for any of our course materials, for example – you will be expected to maintain a scholarly level of analysis. In the end, your obligation is to produce 3 entries of 1500 to no more than 2000 words each.

To ensure that you are not left in a sea of ambiguity as to my expectations on this task that comprises such a significant portion of your final grade, I will assign the first question on 29 September and your response will be due on 06 October. It will be worth 25% of your final grade in the course.

The second and third sets of questions will be released when we get to the end of each section near the end of the second and third months of the course. However, both the second and third assignments are not due until the Monday after our last class, i.e., both will be due at the end of Monday, 08 December. All assignments should be submitted to me electronically according to instructions that will follow in due course.

Evaluation Summary

Course Element	Grade Value
Assignment 1 due October 6th	25%
Assignments 2 and 3 due December 8th	25% x 2
Participation grade	25%
Final Exam	There is no final exam

A word About AI

Artificial Intelligence is everywhere these days. While it can be a useful tool to do some of the grunt work in our lives very quickly and easily, it is not a very good tool when you are still learning about how to think critically and write well. It also can be incredibly dumb and produce complete garbage if you don't know how to use it and do not have the knowledge or skills to evaluate its output. I expect you to do your own reading and writing in this course. The three assignments in this course are written ones, and some of you may be tempted to use AI to complete your work. You should not. There are probably people who know how to use it in a way that covers their tracks, but there are

also many telltale signs that reveal AI use. I will approach grading your assignments assuming you have all done independent work. If I should become suspicious that you have used AI to complete your work, I will assign a grade of zero for that assignment. If you disagree with my assessment, you are welcome to appeal it and I will interview you orally about the issues you were to address in the assignment and base your grade on your responses in that exchange.

Grading

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percent Range	Comments
A+	95 – 100	Outstanding performance. Represents work of exceptional quality. Content, organization and style all at a high comprehension of the subject and use of existing research and literature where appropriate. Also uses sound critical thinking, has innovative ideas on the subject and shows personal engagement with the topic.
A	90 – 94	
A-	85 – 89	
B+	80 – 84	Good performance. Represents work of good quality with no major weaknesses. Writing is clear and explicit and topic coverage and comprehension is more than adequate. Shows some degree of critical thinking and personal involvement in the work. Good use of existing knowledge of the subject.
B	75 – 79	
B-	70 – 74	
C+	65 – 69	Satisfactory performance. Adequate work. Shows fair comprehension of the subject, but has some weakness in content, style and/or organization. Minimal critical awareness or personal involvement in the work. Adequate use of the literature.
C	60 – 64	
C-	55 – 59	
D	50 - 54	Marginal performance. Minimally adequate work, barely at a passing level. Serious flaws in content, organization and/ or style. Poor comprehension of the subject. Poor use of research and existing literature.
F	0 – 49	Failing work.

***Notes for students re Crim Grading Policies:**

- if you choose not to complete all of the course evaluation components, you will not receive a passing grade; you will receive an “N”. This policy does not mean you must pass every assignment you submit – you must simply complete/submit every assignment.
- In general, in first and second-year Criminology courses, the School of Criminology now expects grades in the A range normally to comprise no more than 20% of all the grades in the course with a C+ average. In third and fourth-year Criminology courses, grades in the A range should normally comprise no more than 30% of all the grades in the course with a B average.
- The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the School of Criminology adhere to SFU policy related to grading practices, grade appeals (Policy T20.01), and academic honesty and student conduct (S10.01 and S10.05). It is the responsibility of students to inform themselves of the content of these policies.