

SOC495H1S: New Topics in Sociology: Migration and Settler Colonialism

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University of Toronto
Winter 2026

Location and Time: Mondays 3:10-5:00 pm, location on ACORN and Quercus

Office Hours: In person Mondays 5:00-6:00 pm, location on Quercus, or on Zoom by appointment

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Statement of Acknowledgement: I wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land. [<https://indigenous.utoronto.ca/about/land-acknowledgement/>]

In the context of this course on migration and settler colonialism, I encourage students to critically reflect on what this statement of acknowledgement means to you in your social location. As we learn about historical and contemporary waves of migration to Canada, how have these new groups of arrivals buttressed or resisted colonial nation-building? How have Indigenous people also moved and experienced displacement from their homelands?

Read more about the University of Toronto's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada here: <https://www.provost.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/155/2018/05/Final-Report-TRC.pdf>

Course Description: Early European settlement in Canada was a key part of the colonial state's mission of seizing Indigenous land and resources. While today's migrants are mostly from non-European origins and often face social, economic, and political marginalization, they nonetheless live on stolen Indigenous land. Does that mean people of colour and migrants are settlers too? In this course, we will look at the emerging conversation between migration and settler colonial studies in Canada and beyond. We will examine the theoretical debate regarding the relationships between Indigenous people, white settlers, and racial "others" in Canada from the 19th century to the present. The course will include a critical analysis of the possibilities and limitations of political solidarity between migrants and Indigenous peoples. Topics will include settler colonialism in relation to Blackness, refugees, precarious migration, land and labour, and postcolonialism.

Restrictions: The prerequisite to take this course is 1.0 SOC FCE at the 300+ level. This program-restricted course is open only to sociology majors and specialists. Students without the prerequisite will be removed without notice.

Learning Objectives

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

1. Understand and evaluate arguments in the ongoing debate regarding the position of migrants and people of colour in relation to settler colonialism.
2. Understand the intertwined histories of Black, Indigenous, and migrant communities on Turtle Island and the possibilities and limitations of solidarity between them.
3. Articulate the importance of reflexivity in sociological research and critically locate themselves in the social structures of migration and settler colonialism.
4. Analyze and evaluate empirical and theoretical work on how migration and settler colonialism are inflected by race, land, labour, nationalism(s), and the state.

Evaluation Components

	Due	Weight
Discussion Board Posts	Sundays, 12 noon	10%
Class Lead and Response Paper	Various	15%
Reflexivity Project	January 26	20%
Community Engaged Learning Project	Research Report due March 2 Personal Reflection due March 16	30%
In-Class Test	March 30	25%

Discussion Board Posts – 10%

Please make at least one post on the discussion board before class. These posts are meant to help you think critically about the readings and come to class prepared. These posts should be about 100 words and can be in the form of a question, a reply to a classmate's post, or simply some thoughts that came to you while reading. It does not need to be polished – the goal is to get you thinking and writing about the course materials.

Here are some questions to guide your thinking:

- What did you find most interesting in the readings?
- What did you have trouble understanding in the readings?
- What are lingering questions in your mind after completing the readings?
- Is there a news article, YouTube clip, podcast, or other media you can share that relates to the readings?
- Is there a concept you learned about in another course that helped you better understand the readings?

Each post is worth 1% (pass/fail) up to a maximum of 10%. You may post multiple times per week, but you will only get credit for one post. To get credit for your post, you must submit your post by Sunday, 12 noon. This is to allow me time to read the posts before our class meetings on Mondays and integrate your questions and comments into the seminar. You will not be able to get credit for late posts.

Class Lead and Response Paper – 15%

On the first day of class, you will sign up for one week to be a class leader. There will likely be two leaders each week, depending on the number of students enrolled. On your week, you will be responsible for leading the class in discussion. You do not need to summarize the readings in your presentation – the emphasis should be on preparing questions to ask the class.

After the discussion, you will prepare a response paper that 1) briefly summarizes the main points from the readings (this part should be 1 page max) and 2) summarizes and extends the discussion. This paper should go well beyond a simple summary of the discussion – you should write about your own reactions and thoughts on the questions raised by you and your classmates. You must include elements from all the readings for the week. It may also be helpful to link back to readings in previous weeks. This paper should be 3-4 double spaced pages in length and must be handed in no later than one week after the discussion. Although there may be two student leaders each week, these papers are to be written and submitted individually.

Reflexivity Project – 20%

Indigenous, Black, feminist, and other critical sociologists recognize that one's social location matters when it comes to the research questions we ask and how we conduct research. It is particularly important in research on/with communities that have historically been targets of unethical research without seeing any benefit to them. This project asks you to think critically about your social location in relation to migration and settler colonialism in one of two ways:

- 1) Write a 4-5 page essay (double spaced) analyzing your social location in the context of migration and settler colonialism. You may draw on course readings and other academic and non-academic sources. This should be written as a first-person narrative, giving details about your location in structures of gender/race/colonialism/migration etc.
- 2) Create a piece of art, poem, or other creative format to represent your social location in the context of migration and settler colonialism. If you choose this option, you must also submit a 2-page artist's statement (double spaced) explaining the meaning behind your project. The artist's statement should include citations to academic sources.

More details will be provided in class.

Community Engaged Learning Project – 30%

Indigenous knowledges emphasize relationships and reciprocity; learning about migration and settler colonialism in the classroom only gets us so far. Engaging with community members, spaces, and land helps us to move beyond colonial ways of learning. To achieve this, this class will be working with the National Newcomer Collective for Truth and Reconciliation (NNCTR) on their needs assessment of immigrant settlement agencies across Canada and their work with Indigenous communities. In groups of 2-3, students will assist the NNCTR's research team with background research for each region across Canada. Students will write a research report for SOC495

summarizing both their findings from the data and what they have learned about migration and settler colonialism. More details will be provided in class.

In-Class Term Test – 25%

The test will consist of essay style questions covering readings, lectures, and discussions. More details will be provided in class.

Course Policies

Course Delivery: This course will be taught as a seminar, meaning that while I will be doing some lecturing, you should expect at least half of the time to be dedicated to discussion. This means that you need to come to class prepared by having done the readings and formed some critical thoughts on them.

Course Communication: The regular class meetings and Quercus discussion boards are opportunities to connect with myself and fellow students. Please treat all online communication with the same respect as you would in-person. You can expect replies to emails within 48 hours on weekdays. Please include the course code (SOC495) in the subject line and make sure to review this syllabus before asking questions to see if they are answered already.

Community Agreement: During the first class, we will collaboratively draft and sign on to a Community Agreement that establishes a code of conduct and guidelines on how we will maintain a collegial classroom environment, including how we will respectfully engage in discussions of sensitive topics like racism, xenophobia, violence, and discrimination. If a conflict arises, we will refer back to the Community Agreement to resolve it. As such, all students are expected to familiarize themselves with the Community Agreement and abide by it at all times.

Office Hours: I encourage students to make use of office hours (either during the regularly scheduled times Wed 10-12 and Fri 1-2, or on an ad hoc basis) to clarify course material or discuss assignments.

Accessibility: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as> or email accessibility.services@utoronto.ca as soon as possible.

Missed Deadlines and Tests: Students who miss a test will receive a mark of zero for that test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. Within three days of missing a test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with one of the following:

- Absence declaration via ACORN (**can only be used once during the semester**)
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

Late Assignments: Late assignments without a valid excuse will be deducted 5% per day, including weekends and holidays. Each student is entitled to a one-week extension on **one** assignment per term, no questions asked. To use this extension, you must submit the Extension Request Form at least 24 hours before the due date.

Grade Appeals: If you feel the grade you received on an assignment is not an accurate reflection of the work that you produced, you may appeal it through the following steps. Within two weeks of receiving your grade, you must submit (via email) a written explanation of why you believe there was a **substantive error** in grading. In your appeal, you must address all comments provided to you by the marker. Keep in mind that upon regrading, your mark may go up or down or stay the same.

Turnitin: Students agree that, by taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to *Turnitin.com* for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the *Turnitin.com* reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of those papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the *Turnitin.com* service are described on the *Turnitin.com* web site.

Assignments not submitted through Turnitin will receive a grade of zero (0 %) unless students instead provide, along with their exams, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the exam they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via Turnitin) is in place because, strictly speaking, using Turnitin is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is fundamental to scholarship at the University of Toronto and beyond. Academic offenses include, but are not limited to, using someone else's ideas in a paper or exam without proper citations, submitting your own work for credit in multiple courses, obtaining assistance from others during exams (including having someone edit your work or looking at a classmate's work), and falsifying illness on the Absence Declaration tool. Please familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters: <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>

Generative Artificial Intelligence: Students may choose to use generative artificial intelligence tools as they work through the assignments in this course; this use must follow the course community agreement on AI and must be documented in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work. Failure to do so will be considered a matter of academic integrity and will be dealt with accordingly. For security reasons, U of T recommends using AI tools that are supported by the University, such as Copilot. Find more about U of T's approach to using AI here: <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-uoft-genai/genai-tools/>

Writing Support: Each college has a writing centre with instructors who can assist you at various stages of writing projects. I highly recommend seeking help from your college writing centre for your reading responses. Find your writing centre here: <https://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/>

Class Schedule and Readings

All readings will be made available on Quercus under the Library Reading List tab. Every attempt will be made to follow this schedule, but it is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Week 1: Introduction to Migration and Settler Colonialism (Jan 5)

This week serves as an introduction to the fields of migration and settler colonialism and the emerging conversation between the two. During this meeting we will also review the syllabus, create a Community Agreement, and sign up for class leaders.

Ellermann, Antje, and Ben O’Heran. 2021. “Unsettling Migration Studies: Indigeneity and Immigration in Settler Colonial States.” Pp. 21–34 in *Research Handbook on the Law and Politics of Migration*, edited by C. Dauvergne. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Recommended:

Phung, Malissa. 2011. “Are People of Colour Settlers Too?” Pp. 289-297 in *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity*, ed. A. Mathur, J. Dewar, M. DeGagne. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Madokoro, Laura. 2019. “Peril and possibility: A contemplation of the current state of migration history and settler colonial studies in Canada.” *History Compass* 17(1):e12515.

Veracini, Lorenzo. 2011. “Introducing Settler Colonial Studies.” *Settler Colonial Studies* 1(1):1–12.

Week 2: Decolonizing Anti-Racism (Jan 12)

The conversation sparked by Lawrence and Dua is foundational to the academic debate regarding the relationship between people of colour and Indigenous people. They center decolonization because anti-racist activism and scholarship has sometimes served to sideline Indigenous concerns. Sharma and Wright’s response argues that this only serves to falsely conflate migration and colonialism and reinforce the power of nationalism.

Lawrence, Bonita and Enakshi Dua. 2005. “Decolonizing Antiracism.” *Social Justice* 32(4):120–43.

Sharma, Nandita and Cynthia Wright. 2014. “Decolonizing Resistance, Challenging Colonial States.” *Social Justice* 35(3):120–38.

Week 3: Are People of Colour Settlers? (Jan 19)

Continuing the conversation from last week, should we consider people of colour as settlers? Is this an accurate representation of how people of colour are positioned in relation to Indigenous nations and lands, despite their exclusion from whiteness? Chandrashekar's article applies Tuck and Yang's work to the author's own life and positionality. It will provide helpful inspiration as you work on your reflexivity essay.

Saranillio, Dean Itsuji. 2013. "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: A Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference." *Settler Colonial Studies* 3(3-04):280-94.

Tuck, Eve and K.Wayne Yang. 2012. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1(1):1-40.

Chandrashekar, Santhosh. 2018. "Not a Metaphor: Immigrant of Color Autoethnography as a Decolonial Move." *Cultural Studies - Critical Methodologies* 18(1):72-79.

Week 4: Black and Indigenous Intertwined Histories (Jan 26)

One of the more contentious claims from Lawrence and Dua is that even Black folks who are descended from enslaved people are settlers, despite having been brought to the Americas against their will and losing their connection to their homelands. This week we will read work from Black and Indigenous scholars that further interrogates this claim. How have Black and Indigenous dispossessions been intertwined through history?

King, Tiffany. 2019. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. **Introduction.**

Amadahy, Zainab, and Bonita Lawrence. 2009. "Indigenous Peoples and Black People in Canada: Settlers or Allies?" Pp. 105-136 in *Breaching the colonial contract*, ed. A. Kempf. Springer Netherlands.

Week 5: Immigrant "Settlement" (Feb 2)

****Guest presentation from Nobe-Ghelani and Lumor****

Non-profit organizations working with immigrants and refugees often speak of "settlement" and "integration" as positive goals, without attention to how those terms have been fraught for Indigenous peoples. How might non-profit organizations work with immigrants and refugees in ways that further their well-being in Canada, while also being mindful of how immigrant "settlement" may reinforce Indigenous displacement? How can immigrant "settlement" at the community level resist settler colonialism?

Cahuas, Madelaine, and Alexandra Arraiz Matute. 2021. "Enacting a Latinx Decolonial Politic of Belonging: Latinx Community Workers' Experiences Negotiating Identity and Citizenship in Toronto, Canada." *Studies in Social Justice* 14(2):268-86.

Nobe-Ghelani, Chizuru, and Mbalu Lumor. 2022. "The Politics of Allyship with Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian Refugee Serving Sector." *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 38(1):111–25.

Week 6: Migrant/Indigenous Encounters in the 19th Century (Feb 9)

While Canadian immigration policy excluded most non-European immigrants until the 1960s, there have been Chinese, Indian, and other racialized communities on Turtle Island since long before their formal (if not always substantive) inclusion into the Canadian nation. What can historical analysis of migrant and Indigenous relations in the 19th century tell us about how racialization and empire worked both then and now?

Mawani, Renisa. 2009. *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921*. Vancouver: UBC Press. **Chapter 1**.

Bains, S. K., Mawani, R., Bhandar, D., & Dhamoon, R. (2019). *Unmooring the Komagata Maru: charting colonial trajectories*. Vancouver: UBC Press. **Introduction (pp. 3-31)**.

****READING WEEK – NO CLASS (Feb 16)****

Week 7: Imagining the Nation (Feb 23)

Benedict Andersen calls nations "imagined communities", where most members will never personally know or meet their kinsfolk but still recognize one another to be fellow citizens. How do Canadians define who is part of this imagined community? Who is physically present but symbolically excluded? Where are im/migrants and Indigenous people positioned in the national imaginary?

Mackey, Eva. 1999. *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada*. New York: Routledge. **Chapter 3**.

Thobani, Sunera. 2007. *Exalted subjects: Studies in the making of race and nation in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. **Introduction**.

Week 8: Refugees and Precarious Migrants in Settler Colonial Space (Mar 2)

One way in which scholars attempt to make sense of the migrant/settler distinction is through the degree of voluntariness of migration. Refugees, then, are not settlers because they are forced to leave their home countries. Is this distinction analytically useful? Similarly, temporary migration is on the rise in Canada, so many migrants do not have the right to stay on the land permanently. What is the relationship of precarious legal status migrants to settler colonialism when they cannot "settle"?

Bhatia, Amar. 2013. "We Are All Here To Stay? Indigeneity, Migration, and 'Decolonizing' the Treaty Right to Be Here." *Windsor Yearbook of Access to Justice* 31:39–64.

Adese, Jennifer, and Malissa Phung. 2021. "Where Are We From? Decolonizing Indigenous and Refugee Relations." Pp. 117-142 in *Refugee States: Critical Refugee Studies in Canada*, ed. V. Nguyen and T. Phu. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Recommended

Fobear, Katherine. "Queer settlers: questioning settler colonialism in LGBT asylum processes in Canada." *Refuge*, vol. 30, no. 1, Fall 2014, p. 47

Villegas, Paloma E., Breanna Barrie, Serriz Peña, Jilanch Alphonso, and Alveera Mamoon. 2019. "Integration, Settler Colonialism, and Precarious Legal Status Migrants in Canada." *Journal of International Migration and Integration*.

Week 9: Indigenous Sovereignty and Nationhood (Mar 9)

Sharma and Wright (2008) critique Indigenous sovereignty movements for dangerously reifying the nation-state. However, do Indigenous notions of sovereignty align with European colonial ones, or do they offer an alternative? How might Indigenous nations offer ways to think about living better with each other and the land?

Sharma, Nandita. 2020. *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. **Chapter 1.**

Coulthard, Glen. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. **Chapter 2.**

Week 10: Post-Colonial and Settler Colonial Encounters (Mar 16)

Frantz Fanon's work is foundational in postcolonial theory. However, Coulthard points out that there has never been a serious attempt to decolonize in Canada. How can postcolonial theory help us understand ongoing settler colonial violence? We return to Coulthard's book, which we began reading in Week 7, as an Indigenous take on Marxist and postcolonial theory.

Fanon, Frantz. 1952. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press. **Intro, Chapter 5, final section of Chapter 7: "B. The Negro and Hegel"** (pp. 168-173)

Coulthard, Glen. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. **Chapter 1**

Week 11: Settler Colonialism Beyond Turtle Island (Mar 23)

Settler colonialism is not restricted only to Turtle Island, but extends to Australia and New Zealand, Latin America, Palestine, and beyond. This week we will consider how settler colonialism takes unique shape in those contexts, and how migrants are recruited into those settler colonial projects.

Gardner, Karl. 2024. "Indigenous Anti/Deportation: Contesting Sovereignty, Citizenship, and Belonging in Canada and Australia." *Social & Legal Studies* 33(2):168–90.

Olwan, Dana M. 2015. "On Assumptive Solidarities in Comparative Settler Colonialisms." *Feral Feminisms* (4):89–102.

Week 12: In-Class Test (Mar 30)

No readings.