

ANTH4006B: Decolonizing Methodologies in the 21Century: Practicing Engaged Anthropology
Course Outline – Winter 2026

Course Meeting Time: Tuesdays/2:35 - 5:25pm

Method of Delivery: In-Person, One lecture per week (3 hours)

Instructor: Dr. Carolyn Ramzy (she/her)

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Office Hours: by appointment on zoom.

Brightspace Link: <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/363825>

Course Description:

This fourth-year seminar explores a breadth of critical literature on 'decolonizing methodologies' within and adjacent to the field of anthropology in the 20th and 21st century. By focusing on sound, storytelling, and community-engaged methods in ways that center feminist, Indigenous, Black and racialized scholarship, we challenge extractive knowledge production and imagine scholarship as a form of reparative care, activism, and advocacy for once marginalized voices in anthropology and its related disciplines, ethnomusicology and sound studies. This course will equip students with an in-depth understanding of both the critiques of the discipline's methods and ethics while practicing engaged anthropology that rethinks voice, vulnerability, archives, and community engagements as anticolonial forms of ethnographic field research.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- Identify key historical and contemporary decolonizing methodologies in anthropology, ethnomusicology, and sounds studies.
- Critically analyze decolonizing ethnographies with attention to form (poetry, graphic narrative, fiction, among others) with attention to ethics and relational accountability
- Conduct a small-scale and community engaged sound-walks in Ottawa National Art gallery to examine and apply critical themes of this course
- Reflect on your own positionality and that ways that our stories and storytelling are ultimately entangled in shared histories, economies, and soundscapes.

Required Course Materials

Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course. Readings are drawn from materials that can be found at the MacOdrum Library Reserve Desk or are available online through ARES and Brightspace. The texts below are a voluntary purchase.

Robinson, Dylan. *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020

Absolon, Kathleen E. *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know: Indigenous Re-Search Methodologies*. 2nd ed. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2022.

Evaluation and Assignments

Over the course of this term, you will build a CUPortfolio that will become your field notebook to house the materials we work on for assignments, in-house workshops, and your own reflections following our field trips around our own campus and the National Art Gallery. Breakdown of the course components and descriptions are below:

In-class Discussion Leading and Participation: 20%

Course-Long CuPortfolio Project:

- Community Agreement 20% - Due Feb 3
- Field Trip Reflection 20% - Due March 3
- In-Class Writing Labs: 20% - Rolling deadline, all due by March 24
- Final Reflection: 20% - Due April 14

In-Class Discussion and Participation: 20%

To facilitate in-class discussions and to ensure a more collaborative seminar, you will participate in class discussions as well as discussions on the assigned articles. You will sign up for discussion-leading opportunities on the first day of class.

And remember--- you're not doing these alone! I co-facilitate all seminar discussions and assist you to frame conversations drawn from our shared literature, drawing it back to our readings and module themes.

Your discussion leading will address the following questions:

- Why is this article relevant? Highlight at least one significant intervention and/or critique, and tie back directly to our course themes
- Bring two critical questions to debate with your colleagues that bring us DIRECTLY BACK to the article, and other readings that week.

Community Agreement Reflection: 20% - Due Feb 3

Drawing on our collaboratively written Community Agreement and Week 4 readings, write a focused reflection (800–1,000 words) that analyzes what it means to treat the classroom as a site of decolonizing anthropology, rather than just a place to “learn about” it.

In your reflection, respond to all of the following:

1. Community as rebellion

- Identify one specific clause, phrase, or principle from our Community Agreement.
- Explain how this element of the agreement resonates with Maynard and Simpson’s vision of “commune” and their insistence on building forms of life and care that prepare us for “the end of (this) world.”
- How does this part of the agreement move beyond individual “niceness” toward shared responsibility or co-resistance?

2. Refusing business-as-usual academia

- Using García Peña’s preface, discuss how our Community Agreement either challenges or risks reproducing the academic norms she critiques (e.g., isolation, competition, surveillance, tokenization).
- Name one way the agreement supports “community as rebellion” inside the classroom, and one area where it could go further.

3. Your positionality and obligation

- Reflect on your own position in the classroom (e.g., along lines of race, gender, class, Indigeneity, migration, ability, and institutional location).
- Identify one concrete obligation or practice you are taking on because of the Community Agreement and these readings. Be as specific as possible (e.g., about listening, speaking, citation, collaboration, or how you will handle disagreement or harm).

Field Trip to the National Art Gallery Reflection: 20% - Due March 3

Founded in 1880, the National Art Gallery houses Canada's most prestigious, significant, and extensive collections of Canadian and Indigenous visual and audio-visual arts. Its [Ankosé tagline](#), drawing from the Anishinaabemowin language, means "everything is connected." We show up and ask: how?

During this tour, you will receive a handout to walk you through the exhibits and will contain a few reflections prompts to guide our time through 3 sites there: tour of (A101 -A116) Canadian and Indigenous art; tour of Rideau Street Chapel; and Kìwèkì Point.

In-class writing lab: 30% - Rolling Deadline, all must be in by March 24

During the term, we will explore various decolonial ethnographic methods that are art-based, including the use of poetry, narrative fiction, and visual storytelling. We will start each of these in class, with directions and prompts handed out with each workshop, each with a rolling deadline. All submissions over the course of the term are due by March 24.

Final Reflection: 20% - Due April 7

At the beginning of our seminar, we began with a **collectively written Community Agreement**, imagining the classroom not only as a place to *learn about* decolonizing anthropology but as a space to actively *practice* it together. This final reflection brings you back to that starting point, inviting you to revisit your original commitments in light of everything you have read, heard, created, and experienced this term.

Your task is to reflect on how your understandings of *decolonizing the classroom*—and by extension, *decolonizing the field*—have shifted through the semester. Draw on your **CuPortfolio**, our class discussions, field experiences, and course literature to guide your thinking. You are encouraged to write with honesty and care, linking personal insights with theoretical grounding and citing course texts in **Chicago/Turabian** style. You may include images, field notes, or excerpts from your portfolio if they strengthen your narrative.

Consider the following guiding questions as starting points:

- **Starting Points and Shifts:** When you revisit our Community Agreement and your early reflection, what feels newly significant or complicated? How has your understanding of what it means to “decolonize” a classroom evolved?
- **Carrying Lessons Beyond the Classroom:** In what ways do the challenges of decolonizing our classroom mirror the challenges of decolonizing anthropology, ethnomusicology, or sound studies? How have your encounters with voice, vulnerability, and accountability reshaped your thinking?
- **Methods for Repair and Relation:** Which methods or practices—inspired by Kathleen Absolon’s *Kaandossiwin*, Dylan Robinson’s *Hungry Listening*, or other readings—felt most meaningful to you in building reparative, community-engaged scholarly practice?
- **Looking Ahead:** What principles or habits of thought will you carry forward? How might you continue to imagine scholarship as a form of *reparative care* for the people, places, and disciplines you engage?

Use this reflection to bring together the threads of your work and relationships across the course. Let it serve as both a closing gesture and an opening invitation—to continue the work of decolonizing scholarship as a living, evolving practice beyond the classroom.