

Faculty of Arts and Science

Winter 2026

**POL 410H1 F/POL2391H1 F:
Topics in Comparative Politics III: Indigenous Research Consortium
(Mondays 11am - 1pm)**

Listening to N'Daki Menan: The Politics of the Teme-Augama Anishinaabe

Professor Dale Turner

Office hours: By appointment

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STATEMENT ON ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL LAND

We would like to acknowledge this sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across

Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory.

Revised by the Elders Circle (Council of Aboriginal Initiatives) on November 6, 2014.
Information is available at <https://indigenous.utoronto.ca/about/land-acknowledgement/>

Seminar Description:

This seminar is about listening.

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to reflect carefully on what it means to listen to Indigenous peoples *in and on their own terms*. Listening here is not passive. It is an ethical, political, and philosophical practice—one that requires attention, patience, and a willingness to sit with uncertainty.

We begin with a fundamental question in contemporary Indigenous politics: **Can Indigenous peoples’ traditional understandings of their relationships to land be reconciled with the Canadian state’s understanding of Indigenous rights?** You will encounter this question first through legal and political frameworks, and later through stories, memories, artistic practices, and lived community experience.

The seminar unfolds in two parts.

In **Part 1**, you will develop a working understanding of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state, focusing on the evolution of Aboriginal rights discourse from the 1969 White Paper to the present. Along the way, you will be introduced to key concepts, cases, and debates that continue to structure Indigenous–state relations in Canada. This part of the course is meant to orient you, not to produce legal mastery.

In **Part 2**, the seminar turns toward n’Daki Menan, the homeland of the Teme-Augama Anishinaabe, my community. Here, you will be asked to listen differently. Law remains important, but it is no longer treated as the sole or final authority. Instead, you will encounter land through court cases, historical writing, storytelling, artistic practice, and conversations with community members. These visits are not “guest lectures” in the usual sense; they are opportunities to practise listening as a relational responsibility.

Throughout the course, you will be encouraged to notice how your understanding changes—especially how your early interpretations of legal cases may shift as you listen to people who live with their consequences. The aim is not closure or certainty, but a deeper appreciation of what remains unresolved, and of the responsibilities that continue long after court decisions are rendered.

Seminar Readings:

All readings will be available on Quercus.

Grading:

- 1. Short Essay on Part 1 (15%) Due January 29, 2026 before 23:59**

2. Journal (75%) You will keep a journal between weeks 5-13. I will say more about this style of writing in the first week.

A few thoughts on journal writing (I will say more in class):

The journal is worth 75% of your grade. I would have made it 100%, but I am not permitted to. So, I understand why you may have some concerns about what I am looking for with your journals. The journal is *reflective* in style, which means, first and foremost, that you write in the first person! I am interested in *your* thoughts about what *you* are experiencing in this seminar. Your “experiences” are made up of complex overlapping and intersecting encounters around what you read, hear, and see. Your task is to articulate the meaning of these experiences using pen and paper—not to perform expertise, but to think honestly and carefully in real time. If you haven’t started yet, no worries, in a very real way, the seminar really gets going in Week 5 on Monday February 2, 2026!

What I hope to see from your journals is that you have engaged this reflective exercise with a good attitude – take yourself and your thoughts seriously! Many of you are trying to figure out what to do with the next few years of your lives (me too, actually), so feel free to integrate this seminar to what matters most to you. This is the key to good journal writing: speak your truth and with a good mind (that may sound vague to some of you, please feel free to come see me, or send me something you would like me to read). Your journal should have at least 9 entries, there is no page limit, but if you fill the journal I’ll buy you lunch. You are not being graded for organization, grammar, or word count (unless I can see clearly that you have not put much effort into the project). You will be graded by how well you express your thoughts about what you will experience during this seminar. The seminar is evolutionary, and so should your thoughts. Be creative... be argumentative... question a lot of what you read, hear, and see... try to tell at least one joke.

I’ve attached a chapter I found online about journal writing - it’s pretty good. I’ve posted in Weeks Two the “Guidelines for Journals” section, which is excellent!

I think we may have a short reading aloud circle in a few weeks to hear what some of you are thinking (totally voluntary, of course). If you have any questions or concerns come see me and we can chat in person.

Chapter on Journal Writing [LINK](#) [Links to an external site.](#)

For you keeners, I recommend a fabulous book on journal writing by Natalie Goldberg titled, *Writing Down to the Bones*.

3. Participation 10% - This is an easy 10%, don’t make me call on you (I will, oh yes I will.)

Weekly Schedule

Part 1: Aboriginal Rights and Politics in Canada 1969-2026

Week 1 (January 5, 2026) – Introductions and Course Syllabus

Please note: This first class will be held over Zoom. I will be returning to Toronto that week and will be unable to be on campus. Zoom details will be posted on Quercus in advance.

All subsequent classes will be held in person, unless otherwise noted.

Week 2 (January 12, 2026) – Introduction – Brief History of Indigenous Politics in Canada

First Hour Class Activity:

Ongoing Seminar Practice: News, Listening, and Perspective

Beginning in **Week 3**, we will set aside approximately **the first 30 minutes of each seminar** for a semi-structured discussion of current events, news coverage, and anything you feel is important to discuss. The Olympics will be on and we could watch a hockey game in class (I'm only half joking).

In our opening workshop in Week 2, we will collectively produce what Ludwig Wittgenstein calls a “**surveyable representation**” highlighting where you get your news. Working together on the blackboard, we will:

- identify the news sources you regularly consult
- categorize these sources (e.g., liberal, conservative, centrist, independent, alternative, Indigenous, international)
- reflect on the overall political orientation of the class as a group, including patterns, tensions, and outliers

At least **one of the news topics discussed each week** will focus on a **contemporary Indigenous issue**.

This exercise is not about consensus or correctness. Its purpose is to make visible the background assumptions, orientations, and media ecologies that shape how we interpret political news and events. We will return to this issue throughout the semester, paying attention, not only to *what* is reported, but *how* it is framed, whose voices are foregrounded, and whose are absent.

This practice is meant to cultivate habits of listening across difference—an essential ethical and political skill for the kind of work this seminar asks us to do.

Lecture: From the 1969 White Paper to UNDRIP in Canadian law.

Week 2 Reading:

JR Miller, Chapter 16 of *Skyscrapers hide the heavens: a history of Native-newcomer relations in Canada*, University of Toronto Press, 2017 [Download PDF](#) [Download Notes PDF](#)

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, “Volume 1 - Looking Forward Looking Back PART ONE: The Relationship in Historical Perspective” from RCAP’s Final Report [Download PDF](#)

Week 3 (January 19, 2026) – Aboriginal Rights in Canadian Constitutional Law

Reading:

Sally Weaver, Chapter 1 of Making Indian Policy in *Making Canadian Indian Policy: The Hidden Agenda 1968–1970*, University of Toronto Press, 1981 [Download PDF](#)

Optional Reading (Required for graduate students)

John Borrows, “Frozen Rights in Canada: Constitutional Interpretation and the Trickster”, *American Indian Law Review*, Vol. 22 No.1 [Download PDF](#)

Week 4 (January 26, 2026) – RCAP’s Vision, UNDRIP, and the Bear Island Cases

Concluding Part 1: Law, First Readings, and Orientation

At the conclusion of Part 1, you will undertake a first sustained reading and reflection on key Aboriginal rights cases, including those relevant to the Bear Island litigation.

By this point in the seminar, you will have a working, introductory understanding of section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982 and of the general structure of Aboriginal rights reasoning in Canadian constitutional law. This is not meant to be mastery. It is meant to be *orientation*.

The purpose of this initial engagement is to allow you to form early impressions and judgments about how Indigenous land relationships are translated into legal language, evidence, and reasoning.

These first reflections will later serve as a point of comparison for you. As the seminar moves into Part 2—through encounters with community members, artists, storytellers, and lived histories—you will be invited to reflect on whether, and how, their understanding of these same legal cases changes. The aim is not to arrive at a single correct interpretation, but to become attentive to how listening differently can transform how law itself is read and understood.

Week 4 Reading:

Tully

First Essay due Friday January 30, 2026 (Uploaded before 23:59)

Part 2: The Teme-Augama Anishinaabe

Week 5 (February 2, 2026) – Turning to N’daki Menan

- Introducing the Temagami region, the Teme-Augama Anishinaabe, and Bear Island
- Preparing students for place-based listening

Readings

- Maps and brief historical overview (Temagami / Bear Island)
- Short contextual materials (to be confirmed)

Week 6 (February 9, 2026) – Art, Land, and Indigenous Presence

Guest: Caroline Brown (Teme-Augama Anishinaabe artist) (*in person*)

Focus

- Indigenous artistic practice as a mode of relating to land and history
- Opening different ways of attending before turning to Temagami-focused texts

Week 7 (February 16, 2026) – Reading Week
(No class)

Week 8 (February 23, 2026) – Mapping N'daki Menan I

Paul Raffin, *Echomaker* (I): Listening to Land and Story

- Craig MacDonald
- Storytelling, memory, and responsibility
- What kinds of knowledge narrative can hold

Readings

- *Echomaker* (selected chapters)

Week 9 (March 2, 2026) – Mapping N'Daki Menan II

Paul Raffin, *Echomaker* (II): Story, Evidence, and Translation
(Possible visit from Paul Raffin, date TBC)

- Narrative versus legal forms of recognition
- The ethical burden of telling Indigenous stories

Week 10 (March 9, 2026) – The Temagami Experience (I): Settler Memory and Place

- Intimacy, friendship, and erasure

Readings

- *The Temagami Experience* (selected chapters)

Week 11 (March 16, 2026) The Temagami Experience (II): Inheritance, Friendship, and Afterlives

(Possible guests: Geoff Hodgins; others TBC)

Week 12 (March 23, 2026) – Bear Island: Law, Memory, and Responsibility

- The Bear Island court cases and their aftermath
- Listening to lived consequences beyond legal resolution
- Community Dinner (evening – details TBC)

Guests (anticipated)

- Mary Laronde
- Paula Potts
- Chief Shelly Moore-Frappier

Week 13 (March 30, 2026) – Aftermaths and Futures: Language, Governance, and Continuity

- Contemporary issues: treaty negotiations, MNO, Robinson Huron annuities
- Language revitalization and ongoing Indigenous presence

Possible guests

- John Turner
- Doug MacKenzie
- Robin Koistinen