

IDEV2000: DECOLONISING DEVELOPMENT

Guelph Institute of Development Studies
University of Guelph

Fall 2026
Dr. Andrea Paras (she/her)

Calendar Description

The objective of the course is to understand the role of colonization and racism in producing continued inequalities in both local and global contexts. The course examines how particular political, economic and social actors and institutions within the development system have been implicated in reproducing various forms of inequalities and also assesses their potential for addressing the causes and consequences of intersecting systems of oppression. Students receive training about how to integrate anti-colonial, anti-racist, and Indigenous perspectives and approaches to pursuing inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

Course Description

The course is roughly divided into three parts. The first part begins with a critical examination of different histories and concepts related to colonialism and decolonisation. It provides a foundational understanding about the concepts of race and whiteness, and the role of racism, settler colonialism and slavery in producing so-called “underdevelopment.” This first half of the course concludes with a discussion of the legacy of decolonisation movements and an assessment of different perspectives on development. The second part of the course focuses on perspectives and strategies related to decolonisation, resistance, solidarity, allyship and justice. These include perspectives about Indigenous resurgence, feminist approaches, earth-centered and relational perspectives, anti-racism, and art-based activism. In the third part of the course, we look at implications for development practice, including discussions about anti-racism, allyship and decolonial solidarity.

The assigned reading list prioritises the perspectives of Indigenous, Black, racialized and Global South perspectives. In addition to written texts, the list also includes videos, media articles, short stories and poetry. Not only does the content of this course focus on decolonization, but the format of the course has also been designed through a critical and decolonial pedagogical lens. Concretely, what this means is that this course creates space for us to critique dominant and taken-for-granted ways of being and knowing within the university context. By doing so, we are able to imagine alternative ways of being and

knowing in the university space that are less hierarchical and more participatory, collaborative, accessible and inclusive.

Course Objectives

- Critically engage with foundational concepts related to race, racism, white saviorism, colonialism, and decolonization;
- Stimulate your interest in understanding the historical legacy of settler colonialism and slavery in and beyond Canada, particularly as it relates to development scholarship and practice;
- Engage with a variety of Indigenous, Black, feminist, earth-centered and decolonial perspectives to envision different possibilities for decolonial resistance, solidarity and allyship;
- Critically reflect on how your positionality, including different intersections of identity and privilege, play a role in shaping your perspectives and experiences;
- Challenge you to critique the university as a colonial space;
- Create opportunities for you to experiment with and practice decolonial ways of being, doing and knowing within the context of a university course;
- Generate creativity, imagination and empathy through the use of visual media;
- Develop functional skills related to collaboration, teamwork, planning, and organization;
- Develop metacognitive skills related to self-regulation, reflection and self-evaluation.