SCHOOL OF THE ENVIRONMENT – UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

ENV451 CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS - FS 2019

SYLLABUS

First class: September 6th, 2019
Thursdays: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Location: TBD
Instructor  Dr. Erich Vogt
erich.vogt@utoronto.ca
TA: Brian Pentz
Brian.Pentz@mail.utoronto.ca
Office hours: by appointment
Room – TBD

Course Description
Global environmental dangers are among the most profound challenges facing humanity. They fundamentally undermine the quality of life and threaten the organic infrastructure that supports all life on earth. It is within this context that the course explores the socio-political dynamics of global environmental affairs. The course will also look into the multiple causes of environmental harm and, with students’ help, will try to identify effective response mechanisms. Finally, it will examine a number of key challenges - including food and agriculture, water, energy, and climate change - through the lens of interdisciplinary communication, in academe and professional practice.

Drawing on both official and informal studies and field work from around the world and diverse sources, academic papers, news accounts and editorial pages of journals and newspapers, major negotiation conferences and informal meetings, as well as the insights of leading thinkers and thinking leaders in both the developing and developed worlds, the course will foster ‘deep’ learning (as opposed to ‘strategic’ learning), creative thinking, collaborative learning and critical debate. Students are encouraged to ask probing questions and offer comments, however tentative, in class.
This is a "capstone" course. It has been specifically designed for students coming to the end of their undergraduate study of the environment and preparing to move on to the next phase of their academic and professional development and competence.

Learning Objectives
Those who participate fully in this course should by its end:

- Have a well-rounded and balanced understanding of the interdisciplinary causes and implications of a range of global environmental challenges and of different forms of response;
- Comprehend and appreciate the role of the state system, global political economy, and civil society in exacerbating and/or mitigating environmental problems;
- Understand and articulate the difference in perspectives of developed and developing countries and appreciate the tensions between conservation and development;
- Differentiate among the perspectives and approaches of key social scientific traditions as they apply to environmental studies.

Learning methods – how you might learn from this course
Good teaching at its best is a conversation with students actively engaged in the ensuing learning process. To that end lectures are an essential tool for teaching the most basic skills: comprehension and reasoning. They put a premium on the connection between individual facts and offering the needed context to building sound arguments. My lectures require students to synthesize, organize and react as they listen.

Participation and sharing knowledge are two of the guiding principles of the course. Both however require doing the indispensable: investing the time needed to do the assigned readings. If you are unable to commit the requisite time, this course may not be for you!

Instructor and students alike recognize that we all have unique, albeit diverse insights, knowledge and experiences with regard to the topic, and that, therefore, it is imperative that everyone is sensitive to and respectful of the contributions of others. It is against this backdrop that both the instructor and students are
committed to actively contribute to a safe class environment with zero tolerance for physical, verbal or relational aggression. They are also committed to ensure that every comment, perspective and question is treated with respect.

We will attempt to draw on the most collaborative aspects of thinking and learning (without succumbing to ‘group-think’), and we will explore how viewing the themes under investigation through the lens of interdisciplinary environmental studies further enrich our understanding. We will explore some of the challenges by seeking out ways to address them better together. In our increasingly connected world – and where we work with increasingly diverse inputs and influences in our search for solutions – we need to learn to work with each other across disciplines, build on our collective strengths, and help each other to overcome our shortcomings and weaknesses.

**Course framework and format**

Students will see the value and importance of depth (narrow expertise) and breadth (broad spectrum of issues) of information and experience, and they are encouraged to explore the tensions and paradoxes between the policies and the politics on the one hand and the practice on the other - and how they invariably feed into each other.

Weekly classes will include lectures, in-class discussions, group study updates and presentations. The instructor reserves the right to ‘switch gear’ or shift the focus/emphasis of class sessions to respond to emerging environmental issues on the global and local horizons. The course outline is therefore primarily indicative of the range of subjects that we can expect to cover.

A limited ‘laptop use’ policy will be in effect while class is in session.

Also, students are very much encouraged to meet with the instructor during office hours. Please make an appointment as early as possible. Emails are normally responded to within 48 hours. The instructor does not respond to emails during weekends or on public holidays.
Course Assignments – All papers are to be submitted electronically via Quercus

1) Critical review - 20 Percent
Based on insights gained in previous environmental courses, you will be asked to critically review a contemporary environmental text as treated by a designated author.
Three (3) pages, 1.5 spacing, 12 points font, no footnotes/endnotes, no bibliography. A selection of essays will be provided roughly 2 weeks before due date.
Due: October 4th, 2019

2) Memorandum - 25 Percent
What should an energy and climate-friendly agriculture policy of your G20 country of choice look like? And how would the new policy need to be politically managed to move it from concept to implementation?
Four (4) pages, 1.5 spacing, 12 points font, no footnotes/endnotes, no bibliography.
Due: November 8th, 2019

3) Research/Policy paper – 30 Percent
The purpose of this combined research/policy paper is to give students an opportunity to explore and develop an SDG-relevant paper of particular interest to them. This five (5) page paper must: (1) examine the chief causes/drivers of the issue/problem - as you see them based on the best literature available and your own critical assessment; (2) analyze and evaluate how the relevant ‘players’/stakeholders might respond to the proposals - e.g. balance the pros and cons; and (3) provide recommendations of moving the issue to the next level (by way moving the paper from concept to managing stakeholders’ and the politics).
The paper shall be double-spaced, with 1 inch margins, 12 points font, footnotes/endnotes and bibliography required. Paper outlines must be approved by the professor. Please submit two paragraphs via email by Friday, September 20th, 2019
Due: November 29th, 2019

4) Participation/Attendance - 25 Percent
Participation means making insightful comments, asking probing questions, and being involved in the ongoing discussions in ways that show students have done
the readings and are thinking critically about the content and discourse of the class. Attendance for the entirety of each class is expected. Coming to class late or leaving class early will be counted as a miss. For each class missed 1% will be taken off students’ participation/attendance score.

There will be no final exam in the Final Examination period.

**Evaluation criteria of all written work products**
The primary criteria used in evaluating students’ written work are the following:

1) **Content**: Content is Queen/King!!!
2) **Mechanics**: Defined as freedom from minor factual errors and spelling and grammatical errors. Where asked, students are expected to include thorough, accurate and consistent references in any bona fide academic referencing style that includes page numbering.
3) **Writing style**: It should be appropriate for an academic environment. Beyond that, style will be evaluated primarily in terms of clarity. Proper use of the English language is expected!
4) **Structure**: Papers will also be evaluated in terms of their organization and coherence. The structure of the paper must logically flow from the assignment question(s) and must add up to a coherent whole.
5) **Precision and accuracy**: Precision means saying exactly and specifically what you mean, avoiding ambiguity and vague generalities. Accuracy refers to absence of major factual errors.
6) **Analysis**: Analysis will be evaluated in terms of success in using evidence in the form of data/information to construct a logical argument which convincingly answers your assignment question(s).

**Evaluation criteria of all oral presentations**

1) **Success in communicating** key concepts succinctly and accurately, thereby demonstrating sound understanding of the work being presented.
2) **Mechanics of communication**, such as manner of speaking (including good diction and tone), structure of the presentation and level of organization.
3) **Ability to respond** appropriately and fairly to questions and contribute to and stimulate unstructured discussion among peers.
Late penalties
No due dates will be extended. Penalty for late work will be 2% of the assignment mark per day late, including weekends. The only exemption from this penalty will be for work that is late for health reasons, if a University of Toronto Student Medical Certificate is provided, or for personal reasons if documentation from Accessibility Services or a College Registrar is submitted.

Grading scheme
The course will follow the University of Toronto’s undergraduate courses grading scheme:

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More information is available here: [https://fas.calendar.utoronto.ca/rules-regulations#grading](https://fas.calendar.utoronto.ca/rules-regulations#grading)

Academic Integrity
Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves. Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto’s *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* ([http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm](http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm)). It is the rule
book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

- In papers and assignments:
  - Using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement
  - Copying material word-for-word from a source (including lecture and study group notes) and not placing the words within quotation marks
  - Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor
  - Making up sources or facts
  - Including references to sources that you did not use
  - Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including:
    - working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work
    - having someone rewrite or add material to your work while “editing”
  - Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own without your permission

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone
- Looking at someone else’s answers
- Letting someone else look at your answers
- Misrepresenting your identity
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including doctor’s notes
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades

You can get further guidance on academic integrity from the website of the Office of Student Academic Integrity at: www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students

**Accessibility needs**
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 contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible at [https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca](https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca)
CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS
Class topics, activities and readings

Week I: September 6th, 2019
Drivers of Environmental Change

Readings
“The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, ‘Living Beyond our Means – Statement from the Board”, 2005,
Gustave Speth, The Bridge at the Edge of the World, Yale University Press, 2008,
“Looking into the Abyss”, pp. 17 – 45, and “Modern Capitalism: Out of Control”,
pp. 46 – 66
Simon Nicholson/Paul Wapner (eds.), Global Environmental Politics – From Person to Planet, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder/London, 2015, pp. 1 - 16

Week II: September 13th, 2019
The International Community responds

Readings
Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals, in

• Guest speaker:
  Douglas Macdonald, UofT, School of the Environment, TBC

Week III: September 20th, 2019
Intellectuals reflect and respond
Readings
Jennifer Clapp/Paul Dauvergne, Paths to a Green World, MIT Press, 2011, pp. 1 – 17
Yash Tandon, End Aid Dependency, Pambazuka Publishers, 2008

Week IV: September 27th, 2019
The State, Private Sector and Civil Society respond

Readings
James Gustave Speth, “Environmental Failure: A Case for a New Green Politics”; see
https://e360.yale.edu/features/environmental_failure_a_case_for_a_new_green_politics

Week V: October 4th, 2019
Biodiversity – it’s all about us
Readings

“The economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, in
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/economics/pdf/teeb_repo rt.pdf, pp. 1 – 55 only

- Guest speaker:
  Barbara Zimmerman, Director Kayapo Project, International Conservation Fund of Canada, TBC

Critical Review due

Week VI: October 11th, 2019
Climate change – is the Paris Agreement the game changer?

Readings
IPCC Synthesis Report for Policy Makers, Climate Change 2014,
The Paris Agreement; see http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php
IPCC Special Report October 2018; see
“Climate change visualized: How Earth's temperature has changed since 1970”, see https://www.axios.com/climate-change-earth-temperature-change-902e2958-451b-4044-a6a3-8dab46902da6.html?fbclid=IwAR0vlGfdduQ0v4mpzFvEBK8U1qdTQHOQ8YS5gZgJ3keZYbSOXX9vbTtUcNc
“Experts call for ban on glass skyscrapers to save energy in climate crisis”, The Guardian, 28.7.2019, see
Week VII: October 18th, 2019

**Climate change – the North-South divide, the financing instruments, and a higher calling**

**Readings**
Task Force 20, Climate Change and Environment, G20 Summit, 2019, Japan, see https://t20japan.org/task-forces/climate-and-environment/

Week VIII: October 25th, 2019

**Food & Agriculture – two sides of a coin?**

**Readings**
Homi Kharas/John McArthur, “The world is off track to end hunger, so what’s the solution”; see https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2017/10/23/the-world-is-off-track-to-end-hunger-so-whats-the-solution/
“Agriculture Department buries studies showing dangers of climate change”, Politico, see https://www.politico.com/story/2019/06/23/agriculture-department-climate-change-1376413

- **Guest speaker:**
  Nidhi Tandon, Director, Networked Intelligence for Development

Week IX: November 1st, 2019

**Resource extraction and Environmental Justice**

**Readings**

- **Guest speaker:**
  Jochen Bezner, Orange Solar
Critical Review due

Week X: November 8\textsuperscript{th}, 2019

Reading Week, no class

Week XI: November 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2019

Water – flowing between Conflict and Cooperation

Readings
8\textsuperscript{th} World Water Forum in Brasilia/Brazil, http://www.worldwaterforum8.org/node/942
David C. Victor, “Oceans on the front lines of global climate change”, see https://www.brookings.edu/blog/planetpolicy/2017/10/31/oceans-on-the-front-lines-of-global-climate-change/

- Guest speaker:
  Lawson Oates – Director, Toronto Water

Week XII: November 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2019

Environmental Waste – from rags to riches?
Readings


“Irish teenager wins global science award for removing microplastics from water”, thejournal.ie, see https://www.thejournal.ie/irish-student-science-award-microplastics-4745270-Jul2019/

“Sweden’s recycling is so revolutionary, the country has run out of rubbish”, see YouTube video https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/sweden-s-recycling-is-so-revolutionary-the-country-has-run-out-of-rubbish-a7462976.html


European strategy for plastics, European Commission, 2019, see https://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/plastic_waste.htm

“What is e-waste?”, electronix redux, see https://rogersmembercentre.com/rmcapp/remc.html#/registration

“The Wasteland”, 60 Minutes, see https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=electronic+waste+60+minutes&view=detail&mid=182D026AF766EEBAF733182D026AF766EEBAF733&FORM=VIRE

“Electronic Waste”, City of Toronto, see https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/recycling-organics-garbage/electronic-waste/

Guest speakers:

Ms Elisabeth Perlikowski, SickKids Hospital
Mr. Stephen Miranda, Canada Fibers Ltd.
Week XIII: November 29th, 2019

The Fourth Estate – the fifth wheel on the environmental front

Readings
http://cjr.org/the_observatory/ambivalent_coverage_of_climate.php?page=2,
“The Changing News Room Environment”, NYT, 11.1.2013, see
https://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/11/the-changing-newsroom-environment/?searchResultPosition=7,
Yale University Survey of Media and Climate Change, see literature references in Quercus entitled “Media and Climate change”
“Journalists on the Environment Beat Look Ahead”, NYT, 27.1.2014, see
“Universities must be free to make autonomous decisions, UAlberta president says amid David Suzuki controversy”, see Globe and Mail, 26.4.2018,
https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-universities-must-be-free-to-make-autonomous-decisions-ualberta/,

Research/Policy paper due

Good luck on your upcoming FINALS!!!