

# GEOGRAPHY 3640

## Social Geography of the Environment



“I don’t believe in Global Warming – Banksy” and “Politicians Discussing Global Warming – Isaac Cordal”

Tuesday and Thursday 10-11:15 @ St. John’s College 114

Instructor: Jonathan Peyton (Office Sinnott 305)

Phone Number: 204-474-9089

Email: jonathan.peyton@umanitoba.ca

Office Hours: Wednesday 1-2:30 (or by appointment)

**Course Outline** – Welcome to the Anthropocene... the Age of Humans. The goal of this course is to develop an understanding of the interaction between human society and the natural environment. We interrogate the relations between natural systems and social systems so that we might better understand the seemingly insurmountable environmental problems and conflicts of our age. Our task is to bring some of the leading analytical currents in human-environmental geography (Marxian political economy, social construction, ethics, markets and scarcity, feminist or urban political ecology, for example) to bear on the seemingly benign ‘things,’ materials and relationships of everyday life. To do this, we test our geographic theories and analyses by looking at ‘on the ground’ examples of how these things are made, how these relationships are forged, what their social, economic and environmental effects are, and what work they do in the modern world. We use examples from all over the world, but drawing primarily from Canadian human-environment relations and resource development contexts, to show how our ‘things’ have larger effects than at first glance.

### Course Objectives

- To engage with multiple theories, methods and modes of analysis at the intersection of human society and the environment.
- To test these theories, methods and analyses through a series of case studies into the complex lives of the everyday things that make up the modern world and shape our relationships to it.

### **Learning Outcomes** – Students will...

- learn the key frameworks and concepts in social, cultural and economic geography for understanding the relations between society and the environment.
- understand the overlapping dimensions of some of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's most pressing environmental problems.
- learn analytical tools for disaggregating and thinking critically about the cause and effects of environmental problems.
- learn how to become an effective and engaged environmental citizen.

### **Course Etiquette**

*What to expect from your professor:* provocative, challenging and informative lectures; wrapping up lectures/discussions on time; a willingness to listen to and learn from you; prompt and fair grading of your assignments; timely responses to your questions and comments.

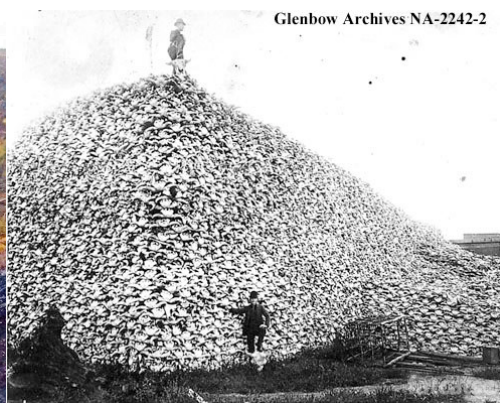
*What I expect from you:* being prepared for class, arriving on time, and not engaging in disruptive behaviour (you can sleep, browse Instagram, talk to friends, and send texts in the many hours when you are not in this class); completing the readings and preparing questions and comments for class discussions; a willingness to listen and learn from your instructors *and* your classmates.

### **Textbooks, Readings, Materials**

Required textbook: Paul Robbins, John Hintz and Sarah A. Moore. 2014. *Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell)

Many copies of this text are available in the UofM bookstore, used, UofM Library, and online. Students could also use the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the book though it is missing some class materials that will be used towards the latter half of the course.

Other material will be made available though the UofM's course management interface UMLearn. Articles and links will be posted weekly. Students can also access these academic articles through the UofM Library e-journal service.



Daldykan River near Norilsk Nickel Mine, Russia (observer.co.uk); Bison bones on the prairie (Glenbow Archives)

## **Lecture and Readings Schedule**

January 8 – Introductions and Syllabus

January 10 – The Population Bomb?

- Robbins Chapter 2

January 15 – Markets and Commodities: The Story of Things

- Robbins Chapter 3

January 17 – The Commons: Property and the Public

- Robbins Chapter 4

January 22 – Detour 1: Spatial Justice in Winnipeg's North End

- Assignment Option A handed out

January 24 – Detour 2: Oil and gas in Manitoba and beyond

- Film: Deep Time
- Assignment Option B and C handed out

January 29 – Environmentalism I

- Robbins Chapter 5

January 31 – Environmentalism II

February 5 – Environmental Risk, Hazard and Uncertainty

- Robbins Chapter 6

February 7 – Political Economy: Capitalism, Nature and Development

- Robbins Chapter 7
- Assignment #1 Due

February 12 – Carbon Dioxide

- Robbins Chapter 9

February 14 – Midterm Exam

February 19 & 21 – READING BREAK!!!

February 26 – More-Than-Human Natures 1: Tuna

- Robbins Chapter 11

February 28 – Nature/Culture

- Robbins Chapter 8

March 5 – More-Than-Human Natures 2: Wolves and Bison

- Robbins Chapter 11
- (possible) Guest Lecture: Mya Wheeler (PhD Student – UofM NRI)

March 7 – Underground Geographies 1: Uranium

- Robbins Chapter 12

March 12 – Underground Geographies 2: Copper

- Tim Heffernan, “The New Bronze Age” *Pacific Standard* (2013)  
<https://psmag.com/the-new-bronze-age-448264ff8807#.z414vx6wb>

March 14 – Underground Geographies 3: Class Choice!

- The Shale Gas Revolution (boom/bust/boom)
- *OR* Dams and the Making of a Hydro-social cycle

March 19 – Urban Natures 1: The Machine in the Garden

- Jennifer Price, “Thirteen Ways of Seeing Nature in LA” *The Believer* (April 2006) [http://www.believermag.com/issues/200604/?read=article\\_price](http://www.believermag.com/issues/200604/?read=article_price)

March 21 – Free Class – Major Assignment Preparation

March 26 – Urban Natures 2: Lawns (the grass isn’t always greener...)

- Robbins Chapter 14
- Major Assignment Due

March 28 – Urban Natures 3: E-waste

- Robbins Chapter 17

April 2 – Urban Nature 4: Water

- Robbins Chapter 15

April 4 – Living in the Anthropocene (and some Review)

April 9 – Final Exam (in-class)



“Nickel Tailings no. 34” Edward Burtynsky; Wall-E Amidst the e-waste (Valentino Bellini/Al Jazeera); Mount Polley Mine Disaster near Quesnel, BC (fairholmeimperial.com)

**Midterm and Final**



There will be a midterm and a final exam – both of these exams will take place in class and will last for 75 minutes. Each will be worth 20% of your final grade.

### **Written Assignments**

There are two written assignments in the class: A shorter written assignment due in February (of about 1000-1200 words) and a more substantial assignment due toward the end of March (of 1500-2000 words). You will be offered a choice for each assignment – you can choose to tailor your coursework to your own strengths as a learner.

#### **Assignment 1**

Students will be given handouts for the first assignment two weeks before the due dates (there are separate due dates for the different assignments). This assignment will be returned to students within two weeks of submission. Assignment 1 will be worth **20%** of your final grade and each option will require some additional academic research to contextualize and substantiate the claims and arguments of the submission.

*Option A:* This will be an assignment related to the Photovoice and Spatial Justice guest lecture on January 22. Students will be asked to take 6-8 photographs and to provide a short analytical, descriptive or statement for each (following the examples shown in class). A more substantive piece of writing (about 1000 words) will accompany the photographs and text. A handout on January 22 will explain the requirements of the assignment and students will be given the option to share their final product with the class if they would like to.

*Option B:* This will be a substantive review of Deep Time (dir. Noah Hutton 2015), the film that we will watch in class on January 24. A handout on January 24 will explain the requirements and objectives of the assignment. Students choosing Option B will be given ~1200 words to make their case.

*Option C:* Students will be asked to develop a media scan that works as an overview and evaluation of popular framings of a selected resource conflict, resource development or environmental issue that is prominent in current public forums. A handout on January 24 will explain the requirements and objectives of the assignment. Students choosing Option C will be given ~1200 words to make their case.

#### **Assignment 2**

Students will receive handouts for the second assignment at least four weeks prior to the submission date – there will be several options for the second assignment as well. Assignment 2 will be worth **30%**.

*Option A:* Students will be asked to choose a ‘thing’ or a material object and interpret it as a human-environment relation, in a similar manner to our overall class approach.

Students should use a minimum of 2 of the human-environment perspectives (based on the chapters in Robbins et. al.,) that we have developed in class to analyse their chosen ‘thing’. The second half of the textbook provides numerous examples of how to do this.

*Option B:* Students can develop more in-depth discussions of analytical frameworks and theories that have been secondary to classroom lectures and discussions or the textbooks narrative, or even environmental ideas and approaches that they encountered through their research for Assignment 1. For instance, the Environmental Ethics chapter mentions the notion of ‘environmental justice’ but does not expand on it. Students interested in

this idea could use this opportunity to dive deeper into the literature on this topic, to explain what it is, to possibly critique, and to examine the possibilities that it brings to environmental and geographic research.

*Option C:* This is the ‘choose your own adventure’ option. Students with a desire to forge their own major project path will be allowed to propose an alternative project. This could take any form (research paper, journalistic opinion or research, short video, web-based, other visual media, interpretive dance, planning a field trip, etc.) as long as it related to a geographic understanding of human-environment relations. This is your chance to either write directly, in your desired format, about something you care about... or to explore your creativity in a research context.

### Participation

The remaining **10%** of your grade will consist of a participation grade. This will consist of three quizzes for three marks apiece. The exams will happen throughout the semester (though they will not be announced beforehand) during the last 15-20 minutes of the lecture slot. If you complete all three you will automatically be given the extra mark, for a total of ten marks. The good news here is that you will all know the questions beforehand – they will always be taken from questions provided in the textbook at the end of each chapter.

### **Important Dates and Mark Structure**

Assignment #1: February 7 in class – 20%

Midterm: February 14 in class – 20%

Assignment #2: March 26 in class – 30%

Final Exam: April 9 in class – 20%

Participation: Throughout the course, in class – 10%

The **Grading Standard** for this course is as follows:

A+	(90-100%) is Exceptional	C+	(65-69%) is Satisfactory
A	(80-89%) is Excellent	C	(60-64%) is Adequate
B+	(75-79%) is Very Good	D	(50-59%) is Marginal
B	(70-74%) is Good	F	(0-49%) is Failure

### **Late Assignments**

Students will not be permitted to write make-up tests, except for documented medical or compassionate reasons. Students may hand in assignments late but will be assessed a late penalty if they do so (– 2 marks per day including weekends).

### **Feedback**

Evaluative feedback will be provided several times before the Voluntary Withdrawal date of March 20.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Students should acquaint themselves with the University’s policy on plagiarism and cheating and examination impersonation (see University of Manitoba General Calendar).

Please submit your own unique work – I take plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty very seriously. Consult the U of M Calendar “academic regulations” for more information on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. I will talk about proper citation methods when we get closer to assignment due dates. Please see me if you have any questions about sources, citations or academic/research ethics.

### **Student Accessibility Services**

If you are a student with a disability, please contact SAS for academic accommodation supports and services such as note-taking, interpreting, assistive technology and exam accommodations. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. mental illness, learning, medical, hearing, injury-related, visual) are invited to contact SAS to arrange a confidential consultation.

*Student Accessibility Services* <http://umanitoba.ca/student/saa/accessibility/>

520 University Centre

204-474-7423

[Student\\_accessibility@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Student_accessibility@umanitoba.ca)

**A Note on Email:** I will happily answer email queries that you might have about course administration or other housekeeping duties – but I will only be checking email during regular office hours (ie. not on evenings and weekends). I will aim to answer you’re emails within 48 hours. If your questions are more substantive (requiring a longer answer or explanation) I will ask you bring them to me before/after class or during office hours. Feel free to stop me in the halls or to make an appointment if you’re not able to make it to the regularly scheduled office hours. In general, personal face-to-face communication is much preferred over email.

Here is the U of M blurb about class communication:

The University requires all students to activate an official University email account. For full details of the Electronic Communication with Students please visit:

[http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/media/Electronic\\_Communication\\_with\\_Students\\_Policy\\_-\\_2014\\_06\\_05.pdf](http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/media/Electronic_Communication_with_Students_Policy_-_2014_06_05.pdf)

Please note that all communication between myself and you as a student must comply with the electronic communication with student policy

([http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing\\_documents/community/electronic\\_communication\\_with\\_students\\_policy.html](http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/electronic_communication_with_students_policy.html)). You are required to obtain and use your U of M email account for all communication between yourself and the university.

**A Note on Technology:** Many students prefer to take notes on laptops. This is fine as long as you use the computer only for this purpose (ie. not for reading blogs or Tumblr, using Facebook, writing emails, playing games, etc.). This is disruptive for your classmates.

Cell phones should be turned off at the beginning of class... and texting is a big-time breach of classroom etiquette. Please do not text during class.

Unless a specific dispensation has been made, students should not record lectures. Posting of class materials or recordings to the Internet is prohibited.

**A Note on Lectures:** I'll be using powerpoint and links during the lectures to illustrate and supplement the things we talk about in class. I'll post the slides and links so that you can use them as study guides. I tend to use little text on the powerpoints so please don't use them as a substitute for lecture/seminar attendance. The slides should be used as a general outline but not as a comprehensive guide to what we will be talking about. You should still take notes.