

# GEOG 4670 Environmental Geographies



Wednesdays 2:30-5:15 @ St. John's College 125

Office Hours: Wed 1-2:30 (Sinnott 305)

Instructor: Jonathan Peyton (204.474.9089) [jonathan.peyton@umanitoba.ca](mailto:jonathan.peyton@umanitoba.ca)

**Course Outline** - Environmental Historian Douglas Weiner has suggested that “every environmental story is a story about power.” This course explores the many dimensions of human-environment relations by examining the stories we tell about the natural world and analysing how those stories reflect, challenge and reproduce environmental inequalities and uneven development. The course will be primarily based in political ecology and allied approaches to resource and environmental conflict. We will use nature in the city of Winnipeg to test academic, archival, cultural and mixed-media interventions. Students will be asked to reflect upon the stories that other academics, artists, journalists, politicians and policymakers tell about nature (in Winnipeg and beyond) and to consider how these approaches to narrative, analysis and explanation of human-environment relationships might impact their own research plans.

## Course Objectives

- To engage with multiple theories, methods and modes of analysis at the intersection of human society and the environment.
- To develop the research and writing skills needed to engage directly in environmental scholarship through the analysis of primary materials, government documents, grey literatures and archival data.
- To test how stories about nature are stories about power (who has it/doesn't have it? How is it exercised? How does it produce conflict and inequality?)

## Learning Outcomes

- Learn research skills and writing strategies for analyzing complex environmental conflicts, problems and opportunities in your city.
- 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 seminars; 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 behavior; 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**

There is no textbook for the course\*. All course materials will be available from the e-journals or e-book service provided through the UM Library portal. Any additional materials will be handed out in class or made available through UMLearn. The only exception to this is the Adele Perry book\* – it is widely available in Winnipeg bookshops and students will be responsible for purchasing a copy.

## **Lecture and Readings Schedule**

### **January 9 – Introducing Environmental Geographies**

#### **January 16 – Seminar 1: Telling stories about nature**

- William Cronon, 1992. “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative.” *The Journal of American History* 78.4: 1347-1376.
- J. B. MacKinnon, “Illusions of Nature” in *The Once and Future World: Nature as it was, as it is, as it could be* (Vintage Canada, 2014), 1-16.
- Alice Walker, “Everything is a Human Being” in *Living By the Word: Selected Writings 1973-87* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1988): 139-152.

#### **January 23 – Seminar 2: Understanding Nature in Winnipeg**

- Adele Perry, *Aqueduct: Colonialism, Resources and the Histories We Remember* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2016).
- Storyteller: Jonathan Peyton

#### **January 30 – How to do Environmental Geography Research**

- Dafoe Library Visit: Garbage Hill Example (Details TBA)
- Research Workshop with Grace Romund (Riddell Faculty Library Liaison)

#### **February 6 – Doing Environmental Research**

- Free Day! We’ll meet in the Library to get your projects up and running

#### **February 13 – Seminar 3: Environmental Geographies and Animals**

- Sean Kheraj, “Animals and Urban Environments: Managing Domestic Animals in Nineteenth-Century Winnipeg” in *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire:*

- New Views on Environmental History*. Eds. James Beattie, Edward Melillo, and Emily O’Gorman (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 263-288.
- Sean Kheraj, “How Canadian Used to Live with Livestock in Cities” in *Calgary: City of Animals*. Ed. Jim Ellis (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2017).1-9. [https://dspace.ucalgary.ca/bitstream/id/49321/9781552389683\\_Chapter01.pdf;jsessionid=D80764B1AFA1B3A5825C42FC0241E397](https://dspace.ucalgary.ca/bitstream/id/49321/9781552389683_Chapter01.pdf;jsessionid=D80764B1AFA1B3A5825C42FC0241E397)
  - Storyteller: Liam Kennedy-Slaney (MA Student – Geography)

### **February 20 – Reading Week: No Classes!**

### **February 27 – Doing (More) Environmental Research**

- Free Day 2! We’ll meet in the Library for research and we’ll talk about your proposal and annotated bibliography assignment.
- Assignment #1 Due

### **March 6 – Seminar 4: Environmental Geographies and Film**

- Mabel Gergen, Sara Smith and Pavithra Vasudevan, 2018. “Earth Beyond Repair: Race and Apocalypse in Collective Imagination” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0263775818756079>
- Storyteller: Natalie Baird (MEnv Student – EnvSt: *to be confirmed*)

### **March 13 – Doing (Even More) Environmental Research**

- Free Day 3! You’re in the homestretch now! I’ll be on hand to help out with research and writing questions.

### **March 20 – Seminar 5: Environmental Geographies of Energy**

- Edward Struzik, “A Red Alert for the Future Arctic” *The Conversation Canada* (January 1, 2018) <https://theconversation.com/a-red-alert-for-the-future-arctic-89122>
- Sean Kheraj, “The Complicated History of Building Pipelines in Canada” *The Conversation Canada* (May 30, 2018) <https://theconversation.com/the-complicated-history-of-building-pipelines-in-canada-97450>
- Toby Davine et al., 2017. “Place-making at a national scale: Framing tar sands extraction as “Canadian” in *The Globe and Mail*” *The Canadian Geographer* 61.3: 428-439.
- Storyteller: Mya Wheeler (PhD Student – NRI)

### **March 27 – Doing (SO SO SO Much) Environmental Geography**

- Free Day 4! Your research will be mostly completed at this stage. We’ll meet to being structuring your writing and narrative.

### **April 3 – Seminar 6: Environmental Geographies and Land/Agriculture**

- Readings TBD
- Storyteller: Hannah Bihun (MA Student – Geography)

## Written Assignments

**Seminar Facilitation & Annotated Bibliography (25%):** Each student will be required to take the lead of a seminar week. This can be done alone or in pairs. Students should be prepared to lead/facilitate discussion in relation to that week's theme. This may be done as a conventional seminar approach or it may be done creatively.

Students are also responsible for an annotated bibliography. Students will choose 4-5 additional readings that supplement the assigned seminar reading. This annotated bibliography should A) concisely summarize the assigned readings, with an emphasis on describing, evaluating, and situating the work in relation to broader themes; and B) identify and annotate additional sources that help situate the assigned readings in a broader intellectual context. Students should use the annotated bibliography to explore relevant literatures related to the week's central topic and should provide a logic for why they have chosen the additional sources (about 4-5). Students are encouraged to discuss their ideas for the annotated bibliography with the instructor beforehand. I can provide ideas on additional sources and help refine your plans.

**Paper Proposal (10%):** Each student will hand in a paper proposal in the class before the reading break. Further elaboration of the proposal will be given in weeks 2-3 of class.

**MAJOR ASSIGNMENT (50%)** – You have a choice between four final assignment formats: a term paper, a policy brief, a creative or public piece of writing (i.e., a magazine article), or the 'freelance' option.

Each option should be accompanied by a 200-300 word explanation of your choice of assignment style and audience. This explanation should address why you believe it is the most suitable way to analyse, understand and stimulate 'audience interest' in the issue at hand. You may choose to develop the 'non-academic' options available; but remember, your major assignment must contain references to academic sources and be between 2500-3500 words (or roughly 12-16 pages).

- **OPTION A: Term papers** can explore any issue discussed in class; you may also propose to explore something related to class materials that we have not discussed directly in class (though you should clear this in person or in writing with the professor). A good term paper will identify and articulate a strong argument throughout the paper, engage with key sources in the academic literature, and be framed in relation to academic issues and debates. Don't be afraid to take a normative stance in your term paper – but be sure to back up your stance with research, a coherent analytical approach and empirical data taken from your academic sources (and beyond).
- **OPTION B: Policy briefing papers** will develop a practical, solutions-based approach to a problem or conflict discussed in class. Your policy brief should be addressed to a real or imagined leader (an MP or MLA, local government representative, CEO of a corporation, Band Chief, head of an ENGO, etc.) who has hired you to brief them on the policy and other political dimensions of a particular extraction/development/resource conflict case. You are a dispassionate/objective observer of the circumstances surrounding the case you have been asked to analyse. Your brief should (a) identify the recipient's interest

- in the issue, (b) pressing events or emerging issues, and (c) suggested courses of action.
- **OPTION C:** This is for those of you who wish to reach a wider audience. **Creative or public writing pieces** should be written in the style of imagined venue (if you are writing a piece for Orion magazine, adopt the idiom of this magazine; if you are writing for the Literary Review of Canada, ditto; if you are writing for Buzzfeed, consider choosing another option). The exception here is around referencing and citations - even if the venue does not typically provide academic and other references, please ensure you provide these (you might footnotes or endnotes, which are less distracting to the reader than in-text referencing). You might also consider how a visual component (photos, tables, graphs, illustrations, etc.) can add to your creative piece.
  - **OPTION D:** 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, syllabus development, interpretive dance (!), planning (though obviously not executing) a field trip, etc.) as long as it is broadly related to the course content – either to the larger course topics or to the interpretive frameworks that we have developed in class. 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. Students choosing this option should *confirm the topic and discuss with me* before beginning.

**[Optional] STORYTELLER RESPONSES** – Students can choose write two 300 word responses or critical reactions to the ‘storyteller’ visits. These are creative interventions that act as responses to some elements of the presentation by the people who will visit our class throughout the term. Students can take this opportunity to argue, critique, enhance or agree with the class discussion. Students may wish to highlight an element of the discussion but take it in another direction. This is a chance to be creative with the content of the course. It should be noted, however, that this ‘storyteller response’ is optional. The storyteller response option can be used to reduce the value of the major assignment: If you write the two responses, they will be worth 10% of your final grade, making the major assignment worth 40% of your final grade.

**Participation (15%)** - Participation is an essential component of a graduate and upper-level undergrad education. This includes coming to class having read all of the assigned reading carefully and critically. You should be prepared to offer your comments and questions to your colleagues for discussion. Please be mindful of balanced participation (ie. sometimes holding back if you tend to talk a lot, or finding other ways to contribute if you find it difficult to speak in the group). We will do our utmost to establish and maintain a respectful and generous tone in our seminar room.

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

- Seminar and Annotated Bib Assignment – Throughout the term
- Major Assignment Proposal – March 6
- Participation – Throughout the term
- Major Assignment – April 10
- Optional Storyteller Responses – Throughout the term

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

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

### **Possible Project Topics**

The Forks through history

Mosquitos and "Pest Control"

Winnipeg's Urban Rivers

- Urban Rivers as a 'Sink'
- 'Disappeared' Rivers

The Brady Landfill

Urban Oil Refineries

FortWhyte Alive

The Quarries

Controlling the Red River

- Floods (1950, 1997, 2009, etc.)
- Building the RR Floodway

Making Nature in New Subdivisions

Lead in St. B/NPD

Polar Bears and Assiniboine Park Zoo

Dutch Elm Disease and Urban Trees

Westview Park/Garbage Hill

Sustainability in City Planning

Urban Animals

The Health of Lake Winnipeg

- Lake Winnipeg Regulation
- Hog Farming and Water Pollution
- Algae Blooms and Zebra Mussels
- Water Pollution and Cottage Life

Winnipeg River as "Organic Machine"

- Early Hydro on the WPG River

Shoal Lake 40's Freedom Road

Rooster Town

Rapid Transit Planning (history/present)

Bird's Hill Park

Union Stockyards