

GEOG 7010 Environmental Geographies



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

Location: St. John’s College 125, Wed 2:30-5:15

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

Office Hours: Wed 1:30-2:30, Office: Sinnott 305

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 based in a political ecology approach to resource and environmental conflict, but will also broaden out to encompass allied analytical modes and interpretive strategies. Students will be asked to reflect upon the stories that other academics tell about nature and to consider how these approaches to narrative, analysis and explanation 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 understand how stories about the environment are stories about power (who has it/doesn’t have it? How is it exercised? How does this produce conflict and inequality?)

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.

Week 1 – Introducing Environmental Geographies

Week 2 – Questioning Environments

- William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995): 69-90.
https://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Cronon_Trouble_with_Wilderness_1995.pdf
- Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic” in *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford: OUP, 1949).
<https://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil3140/Leopold.pdf>
- Alice Walker, “Everything is a Human Being” *Living By the Word: Selected Writings 1973-87* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1988): 139-152.
- [Optional] Raymond Williams, “Ideas of Nature” in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 67-85.
<https://wcerion.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/williams-ideas-of-nature.pdf>

Week 3 – Political Ecologies: Nature/Power/Culture

- Karen Bakker, 2010. “The limits of “neoliberal natures””: Debating green neoliberalism” *Progress in Human Geography* 34.6: 715–735.
- Bigger, P., Dempsey, J., Asiyambi, A., Kay, K., Lave, R., Mansfield, B., Osborne, T., Robertson, M., Simon, G. 2018 “Reflecting on Neoliberal Natures: An Exchange” *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 1.1-2: 25-75.

Week 4 – Colonial Ecologies at the Crossroads

- Adele Perry, *Aqueduct: Colonialism, Resources and the Histories We Remember* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2016).
- William Cronon, “Rails and Water” in *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1992), 55-93.

Week 5 – The Nature of Stories

- William Cronon, 1992. “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative.” *The Journal of American History* 78.4: 1347–1376.
- Diana M. Liverman, 2009. “Conventions of Climate Change: Constructions of Danger and the Dispossession of the Atmosphere.” *Journal of Historical Geography* 35.2: 279–296.
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, 2009. “The Climate of History: Four Theses” *Critical Inquiry* 35.2: 197-222.
- Andrew Stuhl, 2013. “The Politics of the ‘New North’: Putting History and Geography at Stake in Arctic Futures” *The Polar Journal* 3.1: 94-119.

Week 6 – The Politics of Nature

- Jake Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2006).

Week 7 – Reading Break: No Class

Week 8 – Environmentalisms

- Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 2011).

Week 9 – Environmental Justice/Environmental Racism

- Laura Pulido, 2016. “Flint, Environmental Racism, and Racial Capitalism” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 27.3: 1–16.
- Deborah Cowen, “Infrastructures of Empire and Resistance.” *Verso Books*, January 25, 2017. <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3067-infrastructures-of-empire-and-resistance>
- Joan Martinez-Alier et al., 2016 “Is There a Global Environment Justice Movement?” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 46.3: 731-755.
- Leah Temper, 2018. “Blocking pipelines, unsettling environmental justice: from rights of nature to responsibility to territory.” *Local Environment* 24.2: 94-112.
- Shiri Pasternak and Tia Dafnos, 2018. “How does a settler state secure the circuitry of capital?” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 36.4: 739-757.

Week 10 – On Environments as Economies

- Jessica Dempsey. *Enterprising Nature: Economics, Markets and Finance in Global Biodiversity Politics* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016).

Week 11 – How do we know what we know about nature?

- Seminar on science, knowledge and nature with Jon Luedee (Post Doc, Environmental Studies at UW)

Week 12 – Freedom Week!

- This week has been left open for us as a class to choose our topic and readings, or to have a ‘research break’ before the final push for your major papers.

Week 13 – After Nature

- Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 2015).

Written Assignments

SHORT ASSIGNMENT (20%)

- Option A: **An Environmental Geographies entry into the Dictionary of Human Geography.** Students will develop an entry into the Dictionary of Human Geography; ideally this will be on a topic that is not currently in the DHG, but focused entries that supplement existing entries are fine. Students should consult the DHG for entry conventions; further info will be provided in class. Entries should be about 1250 words
- Option B: **A Topical Deep Dive.** Students will be asked to dig more deeply into the topics and readings from the pre-reading break portion of the course. Students have some flexibility in how this will be done: it could be following the work of a single author; broadening a particular topic, method of analysis, or analytical framework; looking more closely at a particular extractive/resource site or

practice. Students can define the parameters of the short study themselves. Practically, students will choose 8-10 readings that revolve around their chosen topic/site/analysis, etc. This should be in the form of a narrative essay and should be about 1500 words. Further information will be distributed in class.

MAJOR ASSIGNMENT PREP (20%) – Proposal and Annotated Bibliography.

Students will write a major assignment proposal and provide an annotated bibliography of the central sources that will be used in the essay, briefing note, or writing project. This should outline the central research question/problem/conflict, briefly outline the argument and hint at how you will ‘prove’ it (this will change a bit according to which major assignment option you choose). The proposal should be 500ish words and the annotated bibliography should contain 8-10 sources. Further information will be distributed in class.

MAJOR ASSIGNMENT (40%) – 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 suitable references to academic sources and be between 3500-5000 words.

- **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 approach with me* before beginning.

PARTICIPATION and REACTION PAPERS (20%): Participation is an essential component of a graduate education. This includes coming to class having read all of the assigned readings 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.

Students will be required to hand in 5 reaction papers over the course of the term. These should be about 300 words. They should be concise appraisals of the weekly readings. They may be synthetic or specific but they should demonstrate an analytical engagement with the main topic under discussion for that particular week. They should also include at least one question to prompt discussion in class. Reflections/reactions will be lightly marked or graded; if they are done well you will earn 2% toward your final grade each time one is submitted. These should be handed in before noon on the day of the class that you are writing about.

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

Important Dates and Mark Structure

- Short Assignment – February 13
- Major Assignment Prep – March 6
- Major Assignment – April 3 (last day of classes)
- Participation/Critical Responses – 5 times throughout the term

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

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

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). 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.