



GEOG 301/ ES 461 - Environmental Assessment

FALL 2015 COURSE INFO

Dr. Cameron Owens camo@uvic.ca (250) 721-7330
Office Hours: TBD

Course Schedule: M & R: 8:30-9:50 - Room: COR B135



OVERVIEW

This course investigates our (largely frustrated) attempts at predicting and mitigating the adverse impacts of development in this time of great socio-ecological upheaval. The focus is primarily on formal environmental impact assessment, especially the BC provincial and Canadian federal processes. Disturbing trends in Canadian environmental policy are highlighted in our reading “The War on Science” (focusing on the the current government’s assault on science, science communication, environmental policies and environmental organizations). Beyond revealing the shortcomings of current assessment processes, the course explores opportunities for developing more robust forms of assessment. We take an interdisciplinary approach drawing upon geography, political science, cultural theory, ecology and law to critically interrogate environmental decision-making and unpack the complex political /cultural context within which it takes place. Instructor-lead discussions of provocative readings, theory and engaging case studies - past and present - are supplemented by guest speaker presentations and videos. Given the pressing socio-ecological challenges we face, such a course, focusing as it does on the practicalities of environmental decision-making and how to improve it, should be of great interest to students. Note: The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.

COURSE MATERIALS

Readings Essential readings in the forms of journal articles, book chapters and other sources will be posted on the course Course Spaces site (<http://coursespaces.uvic.ca/>) and should be read thoroughly and brought to class. The following text for this course are mandatory and available at the UVic Bookstore:

Turner, C. 2013. *War on Science: Muzzled Scientists and Wilful Blindness in Stephen Harper’s Canada*. Vancouver, BC: Greystone Book

Reading effectively is absolutely essential for success in this course. Be mindful that simply reading without engaging with the material (i.e. marking, highlighting, frequent re-reading, taking notes and critical reflection) is essentially useless (i.e. the material has no chance of moving from short to long term memory).

Note on Course Spaces: You will access the Course Spaces site (which has replaced Moodle) not only for required readings but also for important announcements, instructor notes, your grades and additional information.

ASSESSMENT

- 1. Participation Mark** - students will be evaluated on their contributions to class discussion, online forum, attendance at relevant extracurricular events and field trip participation. (10%)
- 2. Midterm** - students will complete a test comprised of multiple choice and short written answers on Thurs, Feb 6th (30%)
- 3. Group Project** - students will work in a group undertaking a visual essay associated with environmental assessment (TBD) (30%)
- 4. Final Take-Home Exam** - on the last day of class (April 2nd) students will be given a take home exam to be completed and submitted to the Geog 209 dropbox next to the Geography office (TPN B 205) by 6pm on April 9th. (30%)

NOTES ON GRADING

Grading practices and procedures are guided by University policies specified in the Calendar. The Department is concerned about the potential problem of grade inflation and wishes to ensure equity in grading standards among colleagues. Instructors do not grade to a pre-established curve, and there are no set requirements for the distribution of grades in any course. Grades are not official until they have been approved by the Chair. In cases in which grades for a course are substantially outside normal ranges, the Chair may ask the instructor to justify or revise those grades. Instructors submit grades online, and those grades are available to students online as soon as they have been approved by the Chair. If the grades for a course are not available online, it means that the grades have not yet been approved by the Chair, and any grades posted elsewhere are unofficial and subject to change. Note: grades are aligned with qualitative indicators (see below). If you receive a 7/10 on an assignment, for example, this does not necessarily indicate that you are missing 3 points but rather that you are performing at a B- level.

Grading Scale: A+ (90-100%); A (85-89%); A- 80-84% **Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance.** Normally achieved by a small group of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.

B+ (77-79%); B (73-76%): Very good / acceptable work fulfilling expectations. These grades indicate a good or satisfactory grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area with no major weakness.

B- (70-72%); C+ (65-69); C (60-64%); D (50-59): Deficiencies in knowledge, understanding or techniques; Mastery of some relevant techniques or concepts lacking.

F (0-49): Failing grade. Unsatisfactory performance.

see <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2012/GRAD/FARe/Grad.html> for more details.

Grade Change Policy: Before asking for the instructor to review marking, please ensure that you have carefully consulted the key. Only then and with a specific question about grading should you approach the instructor.

COURSE POLICIES

Collegial Respect: Do your part to ensure a classroom environment conducive to learning. Arriving late, talking, texting, etc. all disrupt the flow of the class. Always be respectful to the instructor and colleagues. Note that the instructor receives a high volume of emails and may not always be able to respond in a timely manner. Be sure to plan ahead.

Late / Missing Work: If for a legitimate reason (i.e. verifiable serious illness or emergency) you miss completing an assignment on time you must notify the instructor **before** writing to make alternative arrangements. Failure to do so will result in a zero. Assignments will be accepted up to three days after the due date (with a 10% per day late penalty assessed).

Withdrawal: For information regarding withdrawal from class, please see: <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2011/FACS/UnIn/UARe/With.html> for dates and other information.

Academic Integrity: Please review <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2011/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcI.html> for university policy on academic integrity and useful information on avoiding plagiarism. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in an automatic "F" for that assignment or test and possibly the course for ALL individuals involved. Note: plagiarism detection software will be used in this class.

Accessibility: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Resource Centre for Students with a Disability (RCSD) as soon as possible. The RCSD staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations <http://rcsd.uvic.ca/>.

COURSE EXPERIENCE SURVEY

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.