

Spring 2019
W 6:30pm-9:20pm
COR B129

Geography 301

Environmental Impact Assessment

Tentative course outline subject to change. See course spaces site for updates.

Sean Broadbent, PhD
sbroadbent@uvic.ca

Office: DTB B222

Office hours: By
appointment

Course Overview

This course investigates our attempts to predict and mitigate the adverse impacts of major development projects in this time of great socio-ecological upheaval. The focus is primarily on formal environmental impact assessment, especially the BC provincial process, but we will explore other forms of assessment in other contexts. Although we will engage in the fundamentals of environmental impact assessment, the intention is not to train students in assessment techniques. Rather, the course provides a foundation on environmental impact assessment and adopts a critical, interdisciplinary approach. The course draws upon many disciplines, including geography, ecology, law, and Indigenous studies to interrogate environmental decision-making, unpack the complex political/cultural context within which it takes place, and explore how the practice could be improved.

Instructor-led discussions of theory and engaging case studies - past and present - are supplemented by guest speaker presentations with a wide range of perspectives. Students will undertake an assignment designed to inspire research specifically useful for the BC Environmental Assessment Office (EAO). 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.

Student Assessment

Students will be assessed on the following:

1. **Quizzes (2)** (10% each; 20% total) – multiple choice questions.
2. **In-class Exercises (3)** (5% each; 15% total) – participation in multiple in-class exercises on EA topics.
3. **Group Assignments (2)** (15% for group paper; 20% for group paper and presentation; 35% total) – EA-related topics to be determined.
4. **Final Assignment (30%)** – researching and preparing a research/information note making useful recommendations to BC EAO about current EA practice.

Policies:

1. Late policy – 10% penalty per day late. Contact instructor before any test if you must miss (for legitimate, documented reason).
2. Plagiarism – zero tolerance (see UVic's [academic integrity policy](#))
3. Accessibility – please meet with instructor and the [Resource Centre for Students with a Disability](#) early if you may need accommodation
4. Do your part to ensure an engaging classroom. Be punctual, respectful, compassionate and attentive.

Note on Course Experience Survey:

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, 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. 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.

“The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.”

Note on Marks

A-level marks (80%+) reflect exceptional (beyond expectations), outstanding, or at least highly competent efforts. B+/B level marks (73-79%) reflect good or at least acceptable efforts (usually above the class average). B-/C+ level marks (65-72%) represent average efforts, showing some understanding but deficient in some way. C/D level marks (50-64%) represent passable but largely insufficient efforts, while F marks (<50%) represent failing the course. The UVic Undergraduate grading scale is available at: <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-09/undergrad/info/regulations/grading.html>

Course readings

The course is designed around a number of important readings that will be posted on the Course Spaces site. There is no textbook requirement. Reading - and engaging with the readings (highlighting, underlining, taking good notes etc.) - is absolutely essential for your enjoyment of and success in this course.

Learning expectations

1. I encourage you to think deeply about why you are here and what you want to get out of your experience at UVic in the short time you'll be here. Use this time wisely to develop important skills in professional writing, oral communication, critical thinking*, problem solving, organization, perseverance, and initiative.
2. I consider such skill development and good habit formation as being at least as important as content mastery in this course. While I want you to learn important things about environmental assessment, I also want you to develop particular skills and habits, which employers will be expecting.
3. Effective learning involves recognizing how the course material is directly relevant to your life. Rather than think of classes as irrelevant drudgery that you have to get through, think of them as unique opportunities for personal transformation.

*Note: critical thinking is often misrepresented as cynical, pessimistic, or “being against things”. In this class it should rather be understood in terms of healthy skepticism with received wisdom recognizing that things could /should be otherwise; ceaseless, piercing questioning of status quo “common sense”; trying to make important linkages and connections; recognizing and evaluating multiple perspectives and the values and assumptions underlying each (including our own); evaluating evidence and arguments (while recognizing power relations in knowledge claims), arriving at defensible positions on issues and working towards a more respectful, inclusive, just, and fair world.