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**COURSE OUTLINE**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

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**LECTURES:**

Mondays & Thursdays, 10:00-11:20, in room COR A229

**Office Hours:** Thursdays, 15:00-17:00

**Office Location:** DTB B210

**Contact:** [camo@uvic.ca](mailto:camo@uvic.ca)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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 and Canadian federal processes, but we will explore other forms of assessment in other contexts. Indeed, we will commence the course grappling with the notion of assessment (measurement and evaluation) itself. The intention of the course is not to train students in technical assessment techniques, although we will introduce these. Rather, 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.

**KEY THEMES:** assessment, measurement, sustainability, environmental management, BC, Canada, environmental politics, political ecology

**REQUIRED AND / OR RECOMMENDED TEXT(S)**

There are no required texts for this course. A series of required readings (journal articles, book chapters, actual assessment documents and other sources) will be available online (for example through the UVic Library or posted on [CourseSpaces](#)) and should be read thoroughly and brought to your class.

Reading effectively is absolutely essential for success in this course. Along with lecture material, assigned readings will be tested on the midterm and final. Be mindful that simply reading without engaging with the material is essentially useless in that the material has no chance of moving from short to long term memory. It is critical to mark up, highlight, take notes and critically reflect while reading. Invest time and effort and you will be rewarded. Canadian football player Pinball Clemons counsels that: "We all must suffer one of two pains in life: either the pain of [focus and] discipline or the pain of regret." Commit this term to discipline and focus.

## EVALUATION

You will be evaluated on the following required elements:

|                                 |  |     |
|---------------------------------|--|-----|
| Due Jan 30 <sup>th</sup>        | <b>Assignment #1 EA Case Study</b> – group research assignment exploring EA case studies (see separate handout for details)  | 20% |
| On Feb 13 <sup>th</sup>         | <b>Midterm</b> - multiple choice questions and short written responses testing your comprehension of course material   | 25% |
| Due Mar 26 <sup>th</sup>        | <b>Assignment #2 Briefing Note</b> – group research and professional writing assignment making useful recommendations to BC EAO about current EA practice (see separate handout for details) | 25% |
| Scheduled by registrar in April | <b>Final Exam</b>  | 30% |

## GRADING SYSTEM

As per the Academic Calendar:

| Grade                              | Grade point value | Grade scale                 | Description  |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>A+</b><br><b>A</b><br><b>A-</b> | 9<br>8<br>7       | 90-100%<br>85-89%<br>80-84% | <b>Exceptional, outstanding and excellent</b> performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.         |
| <b>B+</b><br><b>B</b><br><b>B-</b> | 6<br>5<br>4       | 77-79%<br>73-76%<br>70-72%  | <b>Very good, good and solid</b> performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area. |
| <b>C+</b><br><b>C</b>              | 3<br>2            | 65-69%<br>60-64%            | <b>Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory.</b> These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.  |
| <b>D</b>                           | 1                 | 50-59%                      | <b>Marginal</b> Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.  |
| <b>F</b>                           | 0                 | 0-49%                       | <b>Unsatisfactory</b> performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.   |
| <b>N</b>                           | 0                 | 0-49%                       | Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.  |

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course presents an opportunity to learn about environmental management, but more importantly an opportunity to develop certain skills and cultivate good habits. Specifically, disciplined and focused students will leave this course...

1. ...better understanding the challenges of measuring and evaluating complex social and environmental phenomena.
2. ... better understanding the historical, political, and cultural context within which formal environmental assessment has evolved and how it works in theory and practice specifically in BC and Canada
3. ... with enhanced capacity to critically assess the process of assessment and suggest promising pathways for reform and specifically to recognize the limitations of project-based environmental assessment and the importance of more comprehensive socio-environmental governance
4. ... with an understanding of the centrality of Indigenous peoples' role in environmental governance in the context of reconciliation and resurgence
5. ... being able to communicate professionally through briefing note assignment
6. ... having further developed habits in terms of discipline, focus, intentionality, consistency, organization, confidence, courage, conscientiousness, empathy, and dedication.

## **GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT INFO**

- Geography Department website: [uvic.ca/socialsciences/geography/](http://uvic.ca/socialsciences/geography/)
- Undergraduate Advising: [geogadvising@uvic.ca](mailto:geogadvising@uvic.ca)

## **COURSESPACES**

You will access the [CourseSpaces](#) site to access readings and also for important announcements, instructor notes, your grades, and additional information. If you are not familiar with CourseSpaces please come see me.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT BEHAVIOUR**

UVic Geography prides itself on being one of the top programs in the country. You are expected to take seriously your time as a scholar in our program. Do your part to ensure an engaging classroom. Be punctual, respectful, compassionate, and attentive.

## **POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments will be accepted up to 3 days late with a 5% penalty per day applied.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

It is every student's responsibility to be aware of the university's policies on [academic integrity](#), including policies on **cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized use of an editor, multiple submission, and aiding others to cheat**.

If you have any questions or doubts, talk to me, your course instructor. For more information, see: [uvic.ca/learningandteaching/cac/index.php](http://uvic.ca/learningandteaching/cac/index.php).

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a documented disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the [Centre for Accessible Learning](#) (CAL) as soon as possible. The CAL staff is available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

## **POSITIVITY AND SAFETY**

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

## **COURSE EXPERIENCE SURVEY (CES)**

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.

## **SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE AT UVIC**

UVic takes sexualized violence seriously, and has raised the bar for what is considered acceptable behaviour. We encourage students to learn more about how the university defines sexualized violence and its overall approach by visiting [uvic.ca/svp](http://uvic.ca/svp). If you or someone you know has been impacted by sexualized violence and needs information, advice, and/or support please contact the sexualized violence resource office in Equity and Human Rights (EQHR). Whether or not you have been directly impacted, if you want to take part in the important prevention work taking place on campus, you can also reach out:

Where: Sexualized violence resource office in EQHR; Sedgewick C119

Phone: 250.721.8021

Email: [svpcoordinator@uvic.ca](mailto:svpcoordinator@uvic.ca)

Web: [uvic.ca/svp](http://uvic.ca/svp)

## NOTES ON SELF-CARE:

A note to remind you to take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone.

Counselling Services - *Counselling Services can help you make the most of your university experience. They offer free professional, confidential, inclusive support to currently registered UVic students.* [uvic.ca/services/counselling/](http://uvic.ca/services/counselling/)

Health Services - *University Health Services (UHS) provides a full service primary health clinic for students, and coordinates healthy student and campus initiatives.* [uvic.ca/services/health/](http://uvic.ca/services/health/)

Centre for Accessible Learning - *The CAL staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations* [uvic.ca/services/cal/](http://uvic.ca/services/cal/). *The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.*

Elders' Voices - *The Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement (LACE) has the privilege of assembling a group of Elders from local communities to guide students, staff, faculty and administration in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.* [uvic.ca/services/indigenous/students/programming/elders/index.php](http://uvic.ca/services/indigenous/students/programming/elders/index.php)

## WEEKLY CALENDAR

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Unit 1: Introduction   | Jan 6 – Course Introduction<br>Jan 9, 13 - Context of global environmental and social concern |
| Unit 2: Philosophies of Assessment                                     | Jan 16, 20, 23  |
| Unit 3: EA Overview & Historical Context                               | Jan 27, 30, Feb 3, 6, 10<br>Assignment #1 due on Jan 30                                       |
| Midterm  | Feb 13  |
| Unit 4: EA in BC & Canada: Practice, Critique & Reform                 | Feb 24, 27, Mar 2,5,9,12  |
| Unit 5: Pathways Forward for Comprehensive Socio-Ecological Governance | Mar 18, 21, 23, 26, 30, Apr 2<br>Assignment #2 due on Mar 26                                  |
| Final Exam   | Scheduled in April  |

## DISCLAIMER

The above schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.