



University
of Victoria

GEOGRAPHY 301 A-01 /
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 461 A-01
SECOND TERM, JAN-APR 2021
MON & THU 10:00-11:20 (PST) in COR B112
DR. CAMERON OWENS

COURSE OUTLINE
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

In grateful acknowledgement of the Lək̓ʷəŋən & W̱SÁNEĆ peoples upon whose territories we are able to live and learn.

Contact

Before reaching out, please **review the course outline**, as much valuable information is included here.

You can reach me at: camo@uvic.ca (preferred) or 250-721-7330

Due to the large volume of emails I receive, I am not always able to respond immediately. Please do not leave important matters to the last minute.

I host office hours on Mondays from 15:00-17:00 or by appointment.

Course Description

This course investigates our attempts to predict, evaluate, and mitigate the adverse impacts of development in this time of great socio-ecological precarity. The course draws on many disciplines, including geography, environmental studies, law, political science, and Indigenous studies to interrogate environmental decision-making, unpack the complex political/cultural context within which it takes place, and explore how the practice works and 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 engage with scholarly work, government reports, and documentary videos. As part of the course, students will have the opportunity to conduct research specifically useful for the BC government, drafting technical research briefing notes or develop resources helpful for environmental educators. 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 engaged students.

Required text and other materials

The following text is required and available through the UVic bookstore or online as an eText [here](#):

Noble, B. 2020. *Introduction to Environmental Assessment. A Guide to Principles & Practice Fourth Edition.* Toronto: Oxford

Additional required readings and other materials (journal articles, book chapters, actual assessment documents and other sources, videos, podcasts etc.) will be available online (through Brightspace). Reading (or watching, listening) effectively is absolutely essential for success in this course. Along with lecture material, assigned materials will be tested through quizzes and on the final. Be mindful that simply reading without engaging with the material is useless as material has no chance of moving from short to long term memory. It is critical to mark up, take notes and critically reflect while reading. Invest time and effort and you will be rewarded.

Evaluation

You will be evaluated on the following required elements:

Assignments 1) undertaking a meta-analysis that essentially assesses assessment (due Jan 24), 2) providing summaries of contemporary environmental case studies (due Feb 14) and 3) completing a briefing note for the BC Environmental Assessment Office OR developing a video, photo-essay “educational tool” on a particular dimension of EA practice (due Apr 7).	10% 10% 15% = 35%
Quizzes 5 online multiple-choice style quizzes testing reading comprehension, due on Feb 3, Feb 28, Mar 10, Mar 17, Mar 28	5% x 5 = 25%
Final Exam – open-book exam testing your comprehension of all course materials (scheduled by the registrar in April)	35%
Course engagement (ongoing)–At the end of term you will submit a short, honest summary reflecting on the quality of your engagement in the course based on your participation in and/or online forum discussion.	5%

What do my marks indicate?

Familiarize yourself with UVic’s grading system. While more precise feedback will be given, marks align with the qualitative description in the table below. Thus, an 85% should be read as “outstanding performance”, a 75% should be read as having a “good grasp of the subject matter,” and a 65% as satisfactory.

As per the Academic Calendar:

Grade	Grade point value	Grade scale	Description
A+ A A-	9 8 7	90-100% 85-89% 80-84%	Exceptional, outstanding and excellent 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-	6 5 4	77-79% 73-76% 70-72%	Very good, good and solid 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.
C+ C	3 2	65-69% 60-64%	Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.
D	1	50-59%	Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.
F	0	0-49%	Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.
N	0	0-49%	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.

Weekly calendar*

Week	Date/Topic	Readings / Homework (submit materials before class (at 10:00 am on due date))
Week 1	Jan 10 – Course Introduction	
	Jan 13 – Intro to environmental assessment	Noble (2020) text: Ch 1 ; Gibson (2005) excerpt
Week 2	Jan 17 – Assessing Assessment – Intro to Assignment #1	Stone (2012) “Numbers” + Heuts & Mol (2014) “What is a good tomato” + Economist (2014) “Summary of the Livability Ranking”
	Jan 20 – The context for environmental assessment	McKibben (2019) “Falter” (excerpt); Olsynski & Bankes (2019) “Setting the Record Straight on Jurisdiction”; Beattie (1995) “Everything you already know about EIA (but don’t often admit)”;
Week 3	Jan 24 – Assessing Assessment II – The Philosophy of Evaluation	Assignment #1: Assessing Assessment
	Jan 27 - EA in Canada: key historical case studies	Noble (2020) text: Ch 2 + Gibson (2002) “EA in Canada” + case studies
Week 4	Jan 31 –EA in Canada: key historical case studies II	Prep for informal group presentations
	Feb 3 – Indigenous Peoples & environmental assessment video study: Amazay: A Film About Water	Quiz #1: Indigenous consultation & engagement Noble (2020) text: Ch 10 + TBD
Week 5	Feb 7 – Indigenous Peoples & environmental assessment video study: Amazay: A Film About Water II + Intro to Assignment 2	
	Feb 10 – Guest speaker on environmental law	
Week 6	Feb 14 – Indigenous Peoples & environmental assessment: Blueberry First Nation and other cases	Assignment #2: Contemporary case studies
	Feb 17 – Indigenous Peoples & environmental assessment; guest speaker	
Week 7	Feb 21 – Reading Break	
	Feb 24 – Reading Break	
Week 8	Feb 28 – EA Process in focus: Pre-Project Planning & Public Engagement + Determining the Need for Assessment	Quiz #2: Pre-project planning & public engagement Noble (2020) text: Ch 3&4
	Mar 3 – Guest speaker on BC EA process	
Week 9	Mar 7 – Public engagement in EA	
	Mar 10 – Scoping, Baseline Assessment, Impact Prediction & Characterization	Quiz #3: Scoping & Impact Prediction Noble (2020) text: Ch 5-6
Week 10	Mar 14 – Guest speaker on health impacts	
	Mar 17 –Managing Project Impacts + Significance Determination	Quiz #4: Managing Impacts & Significance Determination Noble (2020) text: Ch 7-8 + Owens & Rutherford (2019)
Week 11	Mar 21 - Managing Project Impacts + Significance Determination	
	Mar 24 – Compliance & Enforcement; potential guest speaker	Noble (2020) text: Ch 9
Week 12	Mar 28 – Towards better practice: sustainability assessment, Indigenous-led assessment + processes beyond project-based EA	Quiz #5: Other forms of assessment Noble (2020) text: Ch 11, 12 & 14
	Mar 31 – Guest speakers on cumulative effects assessment & land use planning	Readings: TBD
Week 13	Apr 4 – Guest speaker TBD	Readings: TBD
	Apr 7 – Looking back, Looking forward	Assignment #3: EA Educational tool due

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

Learning Outcomes

This course presents an opportunity to deepen your understanding of 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 eco-social 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. ... reading comprehension and research skills developed through assignments.
6. ... being able to work effectively in a group environment undertaking research and effectively communicating findings.
7. ... being able to communicate professionally through briefing note assignment
8. ... having further developed habits in terms of discipline, focus, intentionality, consistency, organization, confidence, courage, conscientiousness, empathy, and dedication.

Course policies and other important info

Where do I find info about the Geography department?

- Geography Department website: uvic.ca/socialsciences/geography/
- Geography Department Chair: geogchair@uvic.ca
- Geography Undergraduate Advising: geogadvising@uvic.ca

How should I behave in the course?

I will do everything I can to create an effective, engaging learning environment. I invite you to be part of something special. Please be punctual, respectful, compassionate, and attentive.

What is the policy on late assignments?

Assignments will be accepted up to 3 days late with a 10% penalty per day applied.

What is the policy on plagiarism and academic honesty?

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 other resources on writing see the [Centre for Academic Communication](#).

How is the course made accessible to all students?

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 RCSD 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.

How is the university committed to safety and sexualized violence prevention and response?

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

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. 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

Web: uvic.ca/svp

How do I give feedback on the course?

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.

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/

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/

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/. 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 (IACE) 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