

**POL384W: Global Environmental Governance from the Ground Up**  
**Professor Kate Neville**  
**Winter 2024, Thursdays 9-11am**

**Prof:** Dr. Kate Neville; email: kate.neville@utoronto.ca

**TA:** tbd

**Office hours:** tbd

**Course Description:** With a focus on citizens, non-governmental organizations, corporations, and grassroots collectives, this course uses analytic tools from international relations and comparative politics to understand patterns of environmental protest and resistance over time. The course also considers the rise of private environmental governance (by companies and other for-profit organizations). Through scholarly and popular readings, students will examine the ways in which individuals and communities are inspired or provoked to act, strategies they use to voice concern, and divisions within and across social groups. Drawing on case studies of protests and social movements from around the world, this course allows students to move beyond borders and nation-states in understanding global environmental governance.

**Learning objectives:** The goals of this course are three-fold: 1) to understand core concepts of the course and demonstrate this knowledge (*content*); 2) to develop critical analysis skills by reading academic papers and book chapters and reflecting on these articles and arguments (*reading and analysis*); and 3) to improve abilities in research and writing (*communication*).

**Course format, assignments, & website:** The course is offered in person. The format involves readings, assignments, and 12 two-hour classes over 13 weeks (note: no class during the winter Reading Week). Readings will be available online through Quercus/the library. Assignments provisional, subject to amendment:

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|---|------------|
| <b>1. Critical reading reflection</b> – ( <i>week 4</i> )   | <b>15%</b> |
| <b>2. Environmental campaign analysis</b> – ( <i>week 7</i> )   | <b>30%</b> |
| <b>3. Term paper</b> – ( <i>week 12</i> )<br>( <i>Research/review paper with possible presentation component</i> )          | <b>45%</b> |
| <b>4. Shared lecture notes</b> – <i>find your assigned week on Quercus</i><br>( <i>Post notes for 3 weeks during term</i> ) | <b>5%</b>  |
| <b>5. In-class reflection assignments</b> -<br>( <i>Submit required in-class written participation exercises</i> )          | <b>5%</b>  |

**Grade flexibility and notes on assignment weight:** In case of unexpected challenges (student illness, caretaking emergencies, other contingencies), grading policies may be changed as follows: deadlines may be moved (as a class or individually; extensions are possible, within UofT limits and rules); alternate assignments can be arranged to address accommodation needs (even if accommodations are not formally documented), including having grades redistributed.

**Readings:** The readings are central to this course. They offer you multiple perspectives on environmental governance, and they provide both theoretical richness and empirical examples. There are generally 2-4 assigned readings for each class, and these are often challenging. Some additional materials will be in multimedia format for variety and engagement (e.g., video material). These readings and assignment materials are required and should be completed before class.

**Course outline by week (may be amended):**

**Week 1:** Jan 11: Introduction – non-state environmental governance

**Week 2:** Jan 18: What provokes protest: environmental (in)justice

**Week 3:** Jan 25: Individuals and environmental responsibility

**Week 4:** Feb 1: Collective action and environmental protest

**Week 5:** Feb 8: Activism across/beyond borders

**Week 6:** Feb 15: Environmental racism and the contradictions of environmental movements

**READING WEEK:** Feb 22: no class

**Week 7:** Feb 29: Science and knowledge systems

**Week 8:** March 7: Virtual governance: non-state actors in an online world

**Week 9:** March 14: Sub-state actors: Cities and communities

**Week 10:** March 21: Private authority: Corporations, investors, and finance

**Week 11:** March 28: Law and law-breaking

**Week 12:** April 4: tbd

**Assignment submission & late policies:** Please submit assignments electronically through Quercus (or by email, if there are technological glitches with the system) before midnight (Eastern time zone) on the day they are due. Please submit your assignments in Word if possible.

Deadlines are set to help you plan out your term work, and to help me manage my grading workload during the term. Rather than seeing these deadlines and late penalties as punitive, I hope you'll see them as providing guidance (and incentives) to meet these timelines.

In general, I anticipate that all assignments will be submitted on time. In general, late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 2% per day (including weekends). However, some students may find themselves with valid conflicts and challenges, especially in these times. So, if you can't meet the deadlines, please speak with me in advance, as best you can, about alternate arrangements and accommodations. Please be in touch as early as possible, as this allows us both to plan more clearly.

## **Policies and Expectations**

***In general:*** In this course, you can expect that I will strive to be fair, respectful, prepared, responsive, and enthusiastic. In return, I anticipate you will be respectful of your classmates and of me, be prepared and on time for classes, and meet deadlines for assignments. I hope that together we can foster a safe and engaging space for thinking about big questions, and I will be relying on all of you to help create that space.

I expect that everyone will attend and participate actively in class. Active participation includes both contributing your ideas (questions, comments, analyses, insights) and listening to the contributions of others (without distraction). I anticipate that while in class, you'll turn silence your text/social media/email notifications, avoid scrolling on other websites, limit activities unrelated to the course as much as possible, and do your best to be present and attentive. If you need to step out of class for any reason, please leave and return quietly.

*If you have to miss class: Since lecture notes for online classes will be posted by your peers each week, you should be able to catch up on missed material by consulting these notes. You will still be expected to do the course readings. I am also happy to discuss lecture material and readings during my office hours.*

***Backups and rough drafts:*** You are strongly advised to keep rough drafts and backup copies of all assignments and essays you submit for this class. Also, please take a minute at the start of the term to set yourself a backup strategy. Whether it's a backup external hard drive, a web-based cloud service like Dropbox or Google Drive, or some other option, it's important that you have multiple copies of your work in the case of a hard drive failure or computer problem.

***Names:*** If the name on the official course registration list does not, for any reason, match the name by which you would like to be addressed, please let me know. I am not able to change official course lists, but I can certainly call you by your preferred name. Please let me know the pronouns you use (mine are she/her).

Professional titles are a sign of respect in the academic world, but there are varying degrees of formality among scholars. I encourage you to start by calling all your professors by "Prof" or "Dr." [Last Name]; they can indicate if they'd be open to more informal exchanges. Some students like a more informal exchange, while others feel most comfortable with a formal distinction between their course instructors and their peers and friends. I tend to be open to a less formal environment, but also want to make sure all students feel comfortable. For our course, please use a formal title (Dr. or Prof) for me – e.g., "Prof. Neville," or "Prof. Kate," whichever suits you best.

***Email and communication:*** I'll do my best to respond quickly, but please note that I usually only check email once a day and may not check on evenings and weekends.

I will hold weekly office/student hours, and I will be very glad to meet with you during those times, or to set up appointments when needed. When you reach out by email, please:

- include the course code (POL384) in the email subject heading;
- write from your University of Toronto email account;
- treat emails as a professional form of communication—I anticipate you'll use proper grammar, sentences, and professional greetings and sign-offs, and you can expect the same from me.

**Writing and Research Support:** Research and written communication are core aspects of this course. As third-year students, I anticipate you have had experience in writing analytical research papers and engaging in scholarly research; that said, we can all benefit from ongoing work to improve our skills in these areas. I encourage you to make use of the resources available in these areas, for instance, at the Writing Centres: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres>.

**Exceptions and Assistance:** The University has many resources to help students who need assistance, including: Accessibility Services, Students for Barrier-free Access, the Hart House Accessibility Fund, financial assistance, library resources, academic resources, health and counseling services, and peer mentoring systems. The University also is committed to providing allowances for religious observances. If you anticipate needing help with your coursework for academic and/or personal reasons, or you encounter unexpected challenges or crises during the term, please seek the support you need. This may include challenges with physical and mental health, securing food or housing, dealing with loss and grief, parenting or other care-giving, and more. If you do not know the options, do not hesitate to ask. If you find yourself in a difficult situation, even if you have not yet gone through all the official channels, it is best to let me know right away that you are seeking assistance and may need accommodations (you do not need to disclose the details of your situation to me).

I know that these services are usually overtaxed. I also recognize it can be difficult to secure support, especially when you are facing acute or chronic crisis conditions. If there are ways we can amend course requirements to help you learn and succeed in this course, I am open to discussions (without requiring specific details of your situation)—please try to contact me in advance to let me know you require or would benefit from accommodations, and we can see what might be possible.

A few helpful resources:

- Accessibility Services: <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>
- Health & Wellness: <http://healthandwellness.utoronto.ca/>
- Writing centres: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres>
- Religious accommodations: <http://uoft.me/religiousaccommodation>
- Positive space (LGBTQ+ resources): <http://positivespace.utoronto.ca>

**Academic integrity:** Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously, seeing these as serious academic offenses.

The seriousness of academic integrity really cannot be stressed enough. When you use ideas, evidence, or direct words from another scholar, you must cite that scholar. This is about giving credit where it is due, and also about helping readers of our work find out how our ideas were developed and where we found evidence to support our claims.

If you use someone else's words, these must be in quotation marks, with the page number indicated. If you use someone else's data, the citation must also include the page number for that information. If you use someone else's ideas, summarized or paraphrased in your own words, you must cite that source. Changing a few words, or substituting synonyms is not the same as paraphrasing: you must substantially change the way in which an idea is expressed. Please consult the library resources and seek help from the librarians and/or writing centres when working on your assignments and papers.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources.

- <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>
- <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources>
- <http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/>

Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement
- Using someone else's words without using quotation marks
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor (please note that this includes not only full assignments, but also copying sections from an assignment handed in for another course)
- Making up sources or facts
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.
- Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University

Please note that I expect all work you submit for this course will be developed and written by you. While there are advanced new large language models that can generate outlines, text, citation lists, and other materials, relying on these for your assignments will not enable you to develop the critical thinking, creative analysis, and writing skills that we're aiming to build in this course. I expect that you will not use these tools for creating or drafting your assignments (outlines, arguments, or text).

**Course Schedule**

**Please note: the reading list has not been finalized; the order of classes and the specific key concepts/questions are also subject to amendment.**

**Week 1. Introduction – non-state environmental governance – Jan 11**

In this introductory week, we tackle a number of key definitions that will underpin discussions and analyses throughout the course, with a focus on the core theme of non-state environmental governance and transformation. The focus here is on interrogating the central (and contested) concepts of the state, civil society, and governance.

- Key concepts: environmental governance; states; non-state actors; transnational governance; “Nishnaabeg internationalism”
- Questions: How can different modes of governance bring about effective change? What are the four transformation processes that Scoones deems vital to a sustainable future? How can individuals and groups work from outside government to influence or shape environmental governance? How is environmental governance shaped and challenged by the borders of contemporary nation-states?

*Readings*

- Whetung, Madeline. 2019. (En)gendering shoreline law: Nishnaabeg relational politics along the Trent Severn Waterway. *Global Environmental Politics*, 19(3): 16-32.
- Scoones, Ian. 2016. The politics of sustainability and development. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 41: 293-319.

**Week 2. Individuals and environmental responsibility – Jan 18**

We investigate the ideas of *responsibility* and *possibility* this week, considering individual and collective action in global environmental governance.

- Key concepts: collective action; individualization of responsibility; democratic imagination; sustainable consumption
- Questions: Who is responsible for environmental degradation, and what roles do individuals play in environmental action? Is individual environmental action sufficient for addressing the challenges of climate change? What role does imagination play in environmental governance? How is consumption connected with power?

*Readings*

- Maniates, Michael F. 2001. Individualization: plant a tree, buy a bike, save the world? *Global Environmental Politics*, 1(3): 31-52.
- Anantharaman, Manisha. 2018. Critical sustainable consumption: a research agenda. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 8: 553–561.

**Week 3. Collective action and environmental protest – Jan 25**

This week builds on last week’s discussions of collective action, drawing on political science and political sociology to gain a theoretical foundation for understanding these processes. Here, we examine the characteristics of contestation to better grasp how groups mobilize, voice claims, respond to challenge and change, and sustain movements over time.

- Key concepts: mobilization; social movements; protest cycles; resource mobilization; political opportunities; hegemony

- Questions: What is needed to catalyze mobilization? What are some of the different theories of mobilization? How might an environmental movement change over time?

#### Readings

- Ford, Lucy H. 2003. Challenging global environmental governance: Social movement agency and global civil society. *Global Environmental Politics*, 3(2): 120-134.
- Carter, Angela V., & Fusco, Leah M. 2017. Western Newfoundland's anti-fracking campaign: Exploring the rise of unexpected community mobilization. *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 12(1), 98-120.

#### Video:

- Watch recorded School of the Environment seminar by Tzeporah Berman: “Action is the antidote to despair” – pay particular attention to her comments on “follow the power” and on the role of individual consumer action vs. political participation – link to be posted.

### Week 4. Virtual governance: non-state actors in an online world – Feb 1

In this week of our course, we turn our attention to how the virtual technologies influence non-state environmental governance. We consider the rise of information and communication technologies in shaping information flows, production and consumption, and social mobilization, as well as the challenges with virtual organizing of collective action.

- Key concepts: social media; social networks; public space; virtual participation
- Questions: Can collective action take place without in-person association? Does meaningful protest have to happen in person? How can social movements adapt to new constraints on their gatherings? How can social media be used as a tool for organizing? How do different state contexts influence access to and surveillance of social media platforms? What are some of the downfalls of the use of social media for this purpose? Is “clicktivism” the only option in an online world?

#### Readings

- DeLuca, Kevin, Brunner, Elizabeth, & Sun, Ye. 2016. Constructing public space: Weibo, WeChat, and the transformative events of environmental activism in China. *International Journal of Communication*, 10: 19
- Boulianne, Shelley, Lalancette, Mireille, & Ilkiw, David. 2020. “School Strike 4 Climate”: Social media and the international youth protest on climate change. *Media and Communication*, 8(2): 208-218.

### Week 5. Activism across/beyond borders – Feb 8

This week focuses on intersections of the local and global politics of protest, and at multiple scales of environmental governance. We will look at the ways in which networks and alliances can diffuse information and norms, amplify local voices, mobilize resources, and transcend domestic interests—but also prove challenging. Drawing on academic expertise and practitioner experience in the climate movement, our guest speaker will address questions of solidarity and conflict within environmental movements.

- Key concepts: local/global interactions; scale; transnational advocacy networks; linkages
- Questions: How do transnational advocacy networks work? What might influence the extent to which a TAN will be able to exert material and moral pressure on a state? How

do NGOs gain/lose authority, and why might their authority differ at different scales?

### Readings

- Keck, Margaret E., & Sikkink, Kathryn. 1998. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-38) in *Activists beyond borders: advocacy networks in international politics*, Cornell University Press.
- Fuentes-George, Kemi. 2016. Introduction (pp.ix-xl) in *Between preservation and exploitation: Transnational advocacy networks and conservation in developing countries*, MIT Press.
- Carruthers, David, & Rodriguez, Patricia. 2009. Mapuche protest, environmental conflict and social movement linkage in Chile. *Third World Quarterly*, 30(4): 743-760.

## **Week 6. What provokes protest: environmental (in)justice – Feb 15**

This week, we focus on the catalysts of social action on environmental issues and consider economically and socially marginalized communities. Questions of long-standing grievances will be addressed, along with the ways in which environmental harm is often enacted in slow, cumulative, and largely invisible ways, and the challenges this creates for mobilization and response.

- Key concepts: slow violence; NIMBYism; pathways of exposure; colonial legacies; dispossession
- Questions: Why is environmental degradation hard to recognize and address? How are social histories linked to environmental contamination and exposure? How can attention be raised to address slow-moving, causally-complex environmental problems? How can conservation be understood as contributing to violence?

### Readings

- Nixon, Rob. 2011. Introduction (pp. 1-44) in *Slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor*, Harvard University Press.
- Sandlos, John, and Keeling, Arn. 2016. Toxic legacies, slow violence, and environmental injustice at Giant Mine, Northwest Territories. *Northern Review*, 42: 7-21.
- Witter, Rebecca, and Satterfield, Terre. 2019. Rhino poaching and the “slow violence” of conservation-related resettlement in Mozambique’s Limpopo National Park. *Geoforum*, 101: 275-284.

## **READING WEEK – NO CLASS – Feb 22**

## **Week 7. Environmental racism and environmental movements – Feb 29**

This week, we continue our investigation of environmental justice, turning specifically to issues of environmental racism, especially in the contemporary contexts of climate change, pandemics, and public health. We also turn back to questions of collective action, with a critical lens on race and the environmental movement.

- Key concepts: environmental racism; vulnerability; intersectionality
- Questions: How does race play into environmental governance? What are examples of institutionalized practices that disproportionately place the burden of environmental hazards on communities of colour? What is the impact of “whiteness” on environmental movements (in practice and in scholarship)?

*Readings*

- Cole, Luke W. and Foster, Sheila R. Preface & Chapter 6: In defense of Mother Earth. In: *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*.
- Bullard, Robert D. Environmental racism revisited. Chapter 5 in: *Dumping in Dixie, Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*.
- Curnow, Joe, and Helferty, Anjali. 2018. Contradictions of solidarity: Whiteness, settler coloniality, and the mainstream environmental movement. *Environment and Society: Advances in Research*, 9: 145-163.
- Washington, Harriet A., “How environmental racism is fuelling the coronavirus pandemic,” <https://www-nature-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/articles/d41586-020-01453-y->

**Week 8. Science & knowledge systems - Defining environmental problems – March 7**

In this week, we examine the role of science and other knowledge systems in environmental governance, and the ways in which environmental debates are framed and defined. We look at information as a tool in environmental controversies, and consider how it can be co-opted and contested, as well as the ways in which science is used/seen as a neutral arbiter or a politicized element of decision-making.

- Key concepts: science; traditional knowledge; framing; toxicity; pollution
- Questions: How are risk and uncertainty relevant to environmental debates? How is language related to environmental governance?

*Readings:*

- Wylie, Sara Ann. 2018. Preface (pp. ix-xii) and Introduction (pp. 1-18) in *Fractivism: Corporate bodies and chemical bonds*, Duke University Press.
- Polfus, Jean L., Manseau, Micheline, Simmons, Deborah, Neyelle, Michael, Bayha, Walter, Andrew, Frederick, Andrew, Leon, Klütsch, Cornelya F.C., Rice, Keren, & Wilson, Paul. 2016. Łeghágots'enetę (learning together): The importance of Indigenous perspectives in the identification of biological variation. *Ecology & Society*, 21(2): 18-52.
- Liboiron, Max, Tironi, Manuel, and Calvillo, Nerea. 2018. Toxic politics: Acting in a permanently polluted world. *Social Studies of Science*, 48(3): 331-349.

**Week 9. Sub-state actors: Cities and communities – March 14**

This week, we will examine the role of municipalities, neighbourhoods, and city networks in environmental governance.

- Key concepts: non-state vs. sub-state actors; neighbourhood activism
- Questions: What does environmental justice mean for cities, as well as for the people living in urban contexts? What are the barriers that sub-state actors face when planning for climate change driven weather events? How have non-state actors addressed issues of climate injustice?

*Readings*

- Teelucksingh, Cheryl, Poland, Blake, Buse, Chris, and Hasdell, Rebecca. 2016. Environmental justice in the environmental non-governmental organization landscape of Toronto (Canada). *The Canadian Geographer*, 60(3): 381-393.

- Bulkeley, Harriet, Carmin, JoAnn, Castan Broto, Vanesa, Edwards, Gareth A.S., and Fuller, Sara. 2013. Climate justice and global cities: Mapping the emerging discourses. *Global Environmental Change*, 23: 914-925.

### **Week 10. Private authority: Corporations, investors, and finance – March 21**

This week we turn from grassroots action—including communities, NGOs, and sub-state actors—to the private sector as an actor in global environmental governance. We also investigate the role of finance in shaping supply chains. We consider the benefits and limits of private governance and market-based mechanisms for creating environmental change, looking at corporate-NGO partnerships and concerns about the co-optation of sustainability, and at investor-activism.

- Key concepts: corporate social responsibility (CSR); supply chains; certification; greenwashing; financialization; common ownership; shareholder resolutions; socially responsible investing; divestment
- Questions: What role do businesses play in environmental governance? Can they contribute to advancing sustainability? What are environmental certification systems, how do they work, and what are their benefits and drawbacks?

#### *Readings*

- Dauvergne, Peter, & Lister, Jane. 2012. Big brand sustainability: governance prospects and environmental limits. *Global Environmental Change*, 22(1): 36-45.
- Clapp, Jennifer. 2019. The rise of financial investment and common ownership in global agrifood firms. *Review of International Political Economy*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2019.1597755>
- Levy, Susie, Meisner Rosen, Christine, and Iles, Alastair. 2017. Mapping the product life cycle: Rare earth elements in electronics. *Case Studies in the Environment*, 1-9.
- Gelles, David. 2018. “Patagonia v. Trump: The outdoor retailer has supported grass-roots environmental activists for decades. Now it is suing the president in a bid to protect Bears Ears National Monument,” May 5, *The New York Times*.

### **Week 11. Law and law-breaking – March 28**

Law plays a complex role in environmental governance, as both a tool of the state and a tool to challenge the state. This week, our guest speaker will discuss environmental law reform and standard-setting, and we will consider law, advocacy, and activism in environmental governance. As there are sometimes blurry lines between these categories, we will also examine the strategies of law-making and law-breaking by those making environmental claims.

- Key concepts: democracy; standard-setting; law; civil disobedience; non-violent protest; (eco-)terrorism
- Questions: Is civil disobedience different from other forms of law-breaking? Is it ever justifiable to break the law for environmental reasons? Is “eco-terrorism” a worrying label for radical environmental activism and ecotage?

*Readings*

- Hirsch-Hoefler, Sivan, & Mudde, Cas. 2014. “Ecoterrorism”: Terrorist threat or political ploy? *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 37(7): 586-603.
- Pineda, Erin. Exerpt from *Seeing Like an Activist*

**Week 12. tbd – April 4**

- Key concepts: tbd
- Questions: tbd