

**PROVISIONAL – SUBJECT TO AMENDMENT**  
**POL384W: Global Environmental Governance from the Ground Up**  
**Professor Kate Neville**  
**Winter 2025, Thursdays 9-11am**

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

**TA:** Marlene

**Office hours:** Thursdays 2-3pm and by appointment

**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, although in exceptional circumstances could be held online through Zoom (e.g., in cases of instructor illness or inclement weather) – please monitor Quercus regularly. 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 are designed to incentivize your reading, attendance at and engagement with lectures, and to help you develop skills in critical reading, research, and analytic writing; further details will be provided for each, and they are subject to amendment.

**1. Written in-class participation assignments – choose your own weeks** **4%**

- *Submit responses for 4 weeks of in-class questions through the term – these are a chance for you to reflect on the course material and practice writing. These must be submitted on Quercus by the end of the day on Thursday, the same day as the class.*
- *If you anticipate course attendance and in-class writing may be difficult for you and/or you need accommodations, you can opt to have this 4% added to the weight of your final essay – to help me plan my time, please let me know your choice by week 3 of term – you do not need to be registered for accommodations to have this alternate option*

**2. Shared lecture notes – choose your own weeks** **1%**

- *Post class notes on Quercus for two weeks of your choice during term (0.5% for each set); these must be submitted by the end of day on Friday following the class on Thursday*
- *If you cannot attend classes or take notes during classes, please contact me for an alternate option -- please let me know if you need accommodations by week 3 of term – you do not need to be registered for accommodations to have an alternate option*

- *This assignment is designed to ensure everyone has course notes for all/most of the classes through the term. If you can participate in this, please do!*

**3. Short critical linking assignment – (due week 3) 15%**

- *In this assignment you will identify a current event that relates to environment governance and find an academic article that addresses some aspect of this event*
- *In a 400-500-word paper, plus references, you will summarize the current event and your chosen article, and explain what the article helps you understand about the event*
- *This assignment will help you to identify peer reviewed publications, use library resources to find new articles, and make connections between empirical events and academic analyses. You can engage with themes relevant to our class and apply these to practical examples in the current moment.*

**3. Expanding the syllabus – reading analysis essay (midterm) – (due week 6) 35%**

- *Find a relevant peer-reviewed article to add to one of the first six weeks of term; in 700-800 words, plus a reference list, summarize the new reading and explain the theoretical connections between it and the assigned readings of that week*
- *This assignment will strengthen the skills you have in identifying peer reviewed publications, summarizing scholarly articles, and making connections across readings, which will help you prepare for your final paper.*

**4. Final paper – (due week 12) 45%**

- *2500-3000 word final research/review paper. Further details tbd.*

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

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

**Week 1:** Jan 9: From the ground up? Non-state environmental governance?

**Week 2:** Jan 16: Is it up to us? Individuals and environmental responsibility

**Week 3:** Jan 23: Power in numbers? Collective action and environmental protest

**Week 4:** Jan 30: How to build coalitions? Activism across/beyond borders

**Week 5:** Feb 6: What provokes protest? Questions of environmental (in)justice

**Week 6:** Feb 13: How are environmental challenges defined? Science and knowledge systems

**READING WEEK:** Feb 20: no class

**Week 7:** Feb 27: Not in my backyard? Environmental racism and site fights

**Week 8:** March 6: Likes or strikes? Non-state governance in an online world

**Week 9:** March 13: Sub-state actors: cities and communities

**Week 10:** March 20: Private actors: corporations, investors, and finance

**Week 11:** March 27: What role for law? Legal action and law-breaking

**Week 12:** April 3: Challenging economic systems and imagining other futures?

**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 assigned readings for each class—occasionally three—and these are often challenging. Readings are required and should be completed before class.

**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, most importantly, to help our teaching team manage the grading workload. 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, late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 2% per day (including weekends).

Late submissions will not be accepted for the written in-class participation assignments (end of day on the day of class) or for lecture notes (end of day on the day after class). You can choose which weeks to submit these assignments, and alternate options for these assignments are available as needed.

For the other papers (week 3 reflection paper, week 6 midterm essay, week 12 final paper), some students may find themselves with valid conflicts and challenges. If you can't meet the deadlines, please speak with me and/or your TA in advance, as best you can, about alternate arrangements and accommodations. Please be in touch as early as possible, as this allows us all to plan more clearly.

### **Additional 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 most weeks will be posted by your peers, 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, 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 may only check email once a day and may not check on 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

**A note on language learning models, generative artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies:**

Please note that I expect all work you submit for this course will be developed and written

entirely by you. Part of the aim of this class is for you to develop critical thinking, creative analysis, and writing skills, which include identifying research topics, generating research questions, creating essay outlines, drafting essays and other text, and revising your writing with consideration of style, tone, and content. While there are advanced new large language models that can generate outlines, text, citation lists, and other materials, I expect that you will not use these tools for creating or drafting your assignments (outlines, arguments, or text).

Part of our work together in thinking about non-state actors' participation in environmental governance will involve a look at new and emerging technologies. These tools are powerful, changing rapidly, and have consequences we don't yet fully understand. There are challenging questions about intellectual property, implicit biases, skewed data and misinformation, corporate ownership and control, and environmental consequences. I expect you will not use these tools in this class, but instead will use our class content and materials to help you form your own critical assessments of these systems and their governance, so you can choose how to engage with various forms of technology in the future.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1. From the ground up? Non-state environmental governance? – Jan 9**

In this introductory week, we consider definitions that will underpin discussions and analyses throughout the course, with a focus on non-state environmental governance and transformation. We interrogate the central (and contested) concepts of the state, civil society, and governance.

#### *Readings*

- Whetung, Madeline. 2019. (En)gendering shoreline law: Nishnaabeg relational politics along the Trent Severn Waterway. *Global Environmental Politics*, 19(3): 16-32.
- Hale, Thomas. 2020. Transnational actors and transnational governance in global environmental politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23: 203-220.

### **Week 2. Is it up to us? Individuals and environmental responsibility – Jan 16**

This week, we investigate individual and collective action in global environmental governance.

#### *Readings*

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

### **Week 3. Power in numbers? Collective action and environmental protest – Jan 23**

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.

#### *Readings*

- Méndez, Michael. 2020. Chapter 1, pp. 1-32 in *Climate change from the streets: How conflict and collaboration strengthen the environmental justice movement*. Yale University Press.
- Svensson, Anders, and Mattias Wahlström. 2023. Climate change or what? Prognostic framing by Fridays for Future protesters. *Social Movement Studies*, 22(1): 1-22, DOI: 10.1080/14742837.2021.1988913

### **Week 4. How to build coalitions? Activism across/beyond borders – Jan 30**

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.

#### *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.

**Week 5. What provokes protest? Questions of environmental (in)justice – Feb 6**

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, distant, and/or invisible ways, and the challenges this creates for mobilization.

*Readings*

- Nixon, Rob. 2011. Introduction (pp. 1-44) in *Slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor*, Harvard University Press.
- 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.
- Khullar, Dhruv. 2022 (Aug 1). Living through India’s next-level heat wave. *The New Yorker*, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/08/01/living-through-indias-next-level-heat-wave>

**Week 6. How are environmental challenges defined? Science & knowledge – Feb 13.**

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.

*Readings:*

- Wylie, Sara, Nicholas Shapiro, and Max Liboiron. 2017. Making and doing politics through grassroots scientific research on the energy and petrochemical industries. *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*, 3: 393-425, DOI:10.17351/ests2017.134
- Ureta, Sebastian, Javiera Barandiaran, Maite Salazar, and Camila Torralbo. 2023. Strength out of weakness: Rethinking scientific engagement with the ecological crisis as strategic action. *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, 11(1), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.2023.00072>.

**READING WEEK – NO CLASS – Feb 20****Week 7. Not in my backyard? Environmental racism and site fights – Feb 27**

This week, we continue our investigation of environmental justice, turning specifically to issues of environmental racism. We also turn back to questions of collective action, with a critical lens on race, environmental movements, and place-based resistance and conflict.

*Readings:*

- Taylor, Dorceta. 2011. Introduction: The evolution of environmental justice activism, research, and scholarship. *Environmental Practice*, 13(4): 280-301, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1466046611000329>
- Temper, Leah, Sofia Avila, Daniela Del Bene, Jennifer Gobby, Nicolas Kosoy, Philippe Le Billon, Joan Martinez-Alier, Patricia Perkins, Brototi Roy, Arnim Scheidel, and Mariana Walter. 2020. Movements shaping climate futures: A systematic mapping of protests against fossil fuel and low-carbon energy projects. *Environmental Research Letters*, 15: 123004.



**Week 8. Likes or strikes? Non-state governance in an online world – March 6**

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. We also consider

*Readings*

- Dahlberg-Grundberg, Michael, and Johan Örestig. 2017. Extending the local: Activist types and forms of social media use in the case of an anti-mining struggle. *Social Movement Studies*, 16(3): 309–322, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2016.1268955>
- Van der Ven, Hamish, Diego Corry, Rawie Elnur, Viola Jasmine Provost, and Muh Syukron. 2024. Forum: Generative AI and social media may exacerbate the climate crisis. *Global Environmental Politics*, 24(2): 9-18.

**Week 9. – Private actors: Corporations, investors, and finance – March 13**

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 investigate the roles of ownership and finance in shaping supply chains and environmental outcomes.

*Readings*

- 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>
- Clapp, Jennifer, and Joseph Purugganan. 2020. Contextualizing corporate control in the agrifood and extractive sectors. *Globalizations*, DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2020.1783814
- Gunningham, Neil. 2017. Review essay; Divestment, nonstate governance, and climate change. *Law and Policy*, 39(4): 309-324.

**Week 10. – The dynamics of market-based strategies for environmental governance – March 20**

We continue our examination of corporate actors in non-state governance this week, considering the benefits and limits of private governance and market-based mechanisms for creating environmental change. We consider corporate-NGO partnerships, concerns about the co-optation of sustainability, and investor-activism.

*Readings*

- Alger, Justin, Jane Lister, and Peter Dauvergne. 2021. Corporate governance and the environmental politics of shipping. *Global Governance*, 27: 144–166.
- LeBaron, Genevieve, and Jane Lister. 2022. The hidden costs of global supply chain solutions. *Review of International Political Economy*, 29(3): 669-695.
- Campling, Liam, and Elizabeth Havice. 2018. The global environmental politics and political economy of seafood systems. *Global Environmental Politics*, 18(2): 72-92.

**Week 11. What role for law? Legal action and law-breaking – March 27**

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.

*Readings –*

- Pineda, Erin R. 2021. Civil disobedience, and what else? Making space for uncivil forms of resistance. *European Journal of Political Theory*, 20(1): <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885119845063>
- Berglund, Oscar. 2023. Disruptive protest, civil disobedience & direct action. *Politics*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02633957231176999>

**Week 12. Challenging economic systems and imagining other futures? – April 3**

In this final week, we consider questions of systems of political economy and their relationships with environmental justice, along with imaginative possibilities for the future.

*Readings*

- Rodríguez-Labajosa, Beatriz, Yáñez, Ivonne, Bond, Patrick, Greyl, Lucie, Munguti, Serah, Ojo, Godwin Uyi, and Overbeek, Winfridus. 2019. Not so natural an alliance? Degrowth and environmental justice movements in the Global South. *Ecological Economics*, 157: 175-184.
- Shaw, Karena. 2021. Chapter 15: Flashpoints of possibility: What resistance reveals about pathways toward energy transition, in *Regimes of Obstruction*, ed. William Carroll, AU Press.