

**University of Toronto**  
**POL 413-2213: Global Environmental Politics**  
**Dr. Kate Neville, Assistant Professor, Political Science & School of the Environment**  
**Fall 2018, Wednesday 4-6pm, room tbd**

**Contact information**

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**Course overview**

**Description:** With our planet's population now more urban than rural, more than 30 years of above average global surface temperatures, and changing geopolitical relationships that shape migration, military engagement, and markets, the world is in constant turmoil. But beyond the *fact* of flux, what are the *politics* of these ecological and social challenges and changes? Some transformations generate environmental and social harm, while others promote a shift to greater equity and sustainability. In light of these tensions, this course on global environmental politics takes as its focus the politics of transformation. Our framing questions are the following: how and with what consequences are humans transforming our planet? How do we identify and define transformation in a constantly changing world? What transformations are chosen versus forced, and by/for whom? What pathways are there for political and social transformation, and with what roles for communities, governments, and the private sector?

Designed as a seminar class, students will take turns leading discussions as we explore multiple perspectives on these questions. Through this course, with an international relations lens, we will investigate the nature of—and responses to—global environmental challenges and change, considering both analytic and normative questions and assumptions. By identifying transformations taking place (and their drivers), we will be able to assess different possibilities for responsive transformations, with consideration of the consequences of these varying options. The first two weeks set out the core theoretical challenges of transformation, looking at the fields of IR and GEP, and the nature of the “environment.” Next, the course is divided into three main sections, where case studies are used to interrogate theoretical concepts in the literature: transformations in production, technology, and the economy; transformations in labour, justice, and resistance; and transformations in borders, governance, and public-private authority. In the process, we will examine a number of key areas of study of the field of global environmental politics, including transnational governance, political economy, environmental justice, and intersections with Indigenous political thought.

**Objectives:** The goals of this course are four-fold: 1) to expand your knowledge of the politics of the global environment (*learning content*); 2) to enhance your critical analysis skills through reading, peer reviews, and critical book reviews (*undertaking analysis*); 3) to strengthen your abilities in varied forms of verbal and written communication, through leading class discussions, as well as writing multiple types of assignments (*enhancing communication*); and 4) to question normative assumptions in discussions of environmental challenges, with a view of making visible otherwise-invisible voices and concerns (*decentering assumed ideas and practices*).

## **Overview:**

### **Introduction**

**Week 1:** Sept 12: Global environmental politics: Planet politics and a challenge to IR

**Week 2:** Sept 19: Shifting baselines: Trouble in a changing world

### **Transformations in production, technology, and the economy**

**Week 3:** Sept 26: Production and consumption: changing patterns of trade and exchange

**Week 4:** Oct 3: Environmental optimism and technological fixes

**Week 5:** Oct 10: Investment and finance: Growing distance and abstraction in commodity chains

### **Transformations in labour, justice, and resistance**

**Week 6:** Oct 17: Environmental justice: Invisible consequences and sacrifice zones

**Week 7:** Oct 24: People vs the planet: The social costs of environmentalism?

**Week 8:** Oct 31: Strategies of performance and protest and questions of just transitions

**Reading week:** Nov 7: NO CLASS

**Week 9:** Nov 14: Peer review session

### **Transformations in borders, governance, and public-private authority**

**Week 10:** Nov 21: Blurred borders and governance arrangements

**Week 11:** Nov 28: Pathways to decarbonization and urban transformation

**Week 12:** Dec 5: Reframing the problem: Alternate economies and the logic of sufficiency

## **Assignments (see end of syllabus for further details)**

### **I: Participation, 20%**

Active participation, weekly discussion question responses, and one week of posting seminar notes (deadline variable for notes).

### **II: Critical reading reflection and discussion, 20%**

variable deadlines

Each student will be assigned to one week in the course to provide a critical reading summary (500-800 words) prior to class, including discussion questions. These students will also be responsible for guiding in-class discussions that week.

### **III: Unplugged challenge and reflection paper, 15%**

week 4

500-1000 word reflection piece on 24-hours of screen-free life.

### **IV: Staged book review essay 45%**

- a) choice of books (ungraded) week 6
- b) draft book review essay (5%, emailed and by Quercus) week 9
- c) feedback to peer(s) 10% week 10
- d) final book review essay (~3000 words) 30% week 12

## Policies and Expectations

### *In general*

As a seminar class, this course is heavily focused on reading and on discussion—I will not be lecturing, and so your experience depends significantly on what you and your classmates bring to each class in terms of preparation and thought. 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 class, 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.

You are expected to complete each week's required readings and actively contribute to class discussions. The reading load is heavy, as expected for an upper-year undergraduate seminar and for a graduate course, but I anticipate these readings will inform and enrich your discussions. Active participation includes both contributing your ideas (respectfully asking questions, providing comments and examples, seeking clarification, adding to and amending the points of others) and listening to the contributions of others (attentively, without distraction). It might be helpful to keep the following questions in mind in preparing for class:

- What are the central points or arguments being made in the readings?
- What evidence and methods have they used to support their arguments?
- How do the week's readings relate to other material examined in the course?

***Format, readings, and Quercus:*** Classes are two-hour sessions, with readings and assignments outside of class hours. We will maintain a course website (Quercus) site for course announcements, course materials, and discussions. Please check in frequently with this site. Readings for this course will be available online through Quercus. Quercus is a new platform, so please have patience as we all learn the system. I expect all students to check the site regularly. All assignments will be submitted through Quercus (for your draft paper you will *also* bring a hard copy to class).

### ***Deadlines and late penalties***

I anticipate that all assignments will be submitted on time, and that examinations will be written when scheduled. However, some students may find themselves with valid conflicts and challenges. In these cases, it is best to speak with me in advance about alternate arrangements and accommodations. I am less likely to be sympathetic on the eve of a deadline or once a deadline has passed. In general, late assignments and term papers will be penalized at a rate of **5% per day**, including weekends (unless otherwise noted in the assignment description – note that your draft term paper and your critical reading reflection for your facilitation session will not be accepted late).

Some students find that they must wait to contact and secure approval from Accessibility Services for various concerns: in these cases, you should still contact me in advance, to let me know you might require accommodations for assignments.

### ***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. No extensions will be provided due to computer problems.

### ***Email and communication***

I will hold weekly office hours, and I will be very glad to meet with you at those times to discuss readings, assignments, and more. I have also listed my email address in the contact information at the start of the syllabus; however, please consider several things when reaching out to me by email:

- You are expected to write from your University of Toronto email account;
- For more substantive concerns, please come to my office hours;
- I will do my best to respond to your messages, but please don't expect a rapid response. I will not be responding daily to emails and may not check my email on evenings and weekends. As such, please plan ahead if you need to reach out to me;
- If you write to request an extension or accommodation the night before an assignment is due, I am unlikely to accommodate your needs or offer assistance;
- Please treat emails as a professional form of communication: I expect proper grammar, sentences, and greetings/sign-offs in your messages; you can expect the same from me.

### ***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 (and under which you would like to submit assignments and sign emails) please let me know. I am not able to change official course lists, but I can certainly address you by your preferred name. Also, if you have pronouns by which you would like to be addressed, please let me know. In general, how you sign your emails is how I will address you in email replies, so if you have a preferred name/nickname, please use that.

### ***Exceptions and Assistance***

The University has many resources to help students who are in need of assistance for any number of reasons, both in and outside of the classroom, including library resources, academic resources, and health and counseling services. The University also is committed to providing allowances for religious observances.

If you are struggling or anticipate needing help with your coursework for academic and/or personal reasons, or you encounter unanticipated challenges or crises during the term, please seek the support you need as early as possible. If you do not know the options, do not hesitate to ask. If you will need accommodation from me for any reason, in the classroom or on coursework and assignments, please let me know as soon as you can. A few helpful resources:

- <http://life.utoronto.ca/just-for-you/for-students-with-a-disability/>
- <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>
- <http://healthandwellness.utoronto.ca/>
- <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres>
- <http://uoft.me/religiousaccommodation>
- <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/gradlife/Pages/Grad-Wellness.aspx>
- <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Writing-Centre.aspx>

Some students find themselves facing challenges unexpectedly. 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 university assistance and may need accommodations (you do not need to disclose the details of your situation to me). There is more flexibility and forgiveness ahead of time than afterwards.

### ***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.

*Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.*

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, including Writing at the University of Toronto.

- <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>
- <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/facultyandstaff/Pages/Academic-Integrity.aspx>
- <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 instructor permission
- 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

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. 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 centre when working on your assignments and papers.

## **More detailed class topics and readings**

### ***PART I: INTRODUCTION***

#### **WEEK 1 (September 12): GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS: PLANET POLITICS AND A CHALLENGE TO IR**

This week, we set the stage for the term, beginning with a look at international relations and the study of global environmental politics. What are global environmental challenges? What is international relations? Where are we positioned—physically as well as intellectually—as we start this course? Is our study of global environmental politics up to the contemporary challenge?

##### **Required reading:**

- Burke, Anthony, Stefanie Fishel, Audra Mitchell, Simon Dalby, and Daniel J. Levine. 2016. Planet politics: A manifesto from the end of IR. *Millennium*, 44(3): 499-523.
- Dauvergne, Peter, and Jennifer Clapp. 2016. Researching global environmental politics in the 21st century. *Global Environmental Politics*, 16(1): 1-12.
- Simpson, Leanne. 2008. Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg diplomatic and treaty relationships. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 23(2): 29-42.

##### **Optional reading:**

- Green, Jessica, and Thomas Hale. 2017. Reversing the marginalization of global environmental politics in international relations: An opportunity for the discipline. *PS*, April: 473-479.
- Neville, Kate J., and Matthew Hoffmann. 2018. GEP research in a time of crisis. In: *A research agenda for global environmental politics*, Dauvergne, Peter, and Alger, Justin, eds., Edward Elgar.

#### **WEEK 2 (September 19): SHIFTING BASELINES: TROUBLE IN A CHANGING WORLD**

In this week, we consider how to position our study of transformation by placing environmental and social change in a longer historical context. How do we understand transformation in a constantly changing world? To analyze this underlying question, we consider different worldviews and philosophical perspectives, including Indigenous perspectives, on the nature of environment, land, and wilderness, and the narratives that accompany them.

##### **Required reading:**

- Davis, Heather, and Zoe Todd. 2017. On the importance of a date, or decolonizing the Anthropocene. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 16(4): 761-780.
- Harrington, Cameron. 2017. The ends of the world: International relations and the Anthropocene. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 44(3): 478-498.
- McKinnon, J.B. 2013. Illusions of nature. Chapter 1, pp. 1-16, in *The once and future world*, Random House Canada.

## ***Part II: TRANSFORMATIONS IN PRODUCTION, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE ECONOMY***

### **WEEK 3 (September 26): PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION: CHANGING PATTERNS OF TRADE AND EXCHANGE**

What is the role of consumption in shaping environmental change? This week, we look at changing patterns of production and consumption, and the consequent pollution, with a focus on the concepts of shadows and materiality.

#### Required reading:

- Dauvergne, Peter. 2010. Introduction: The ecological shadows of rising consumption, Chapter 1: An unbalanced global political economy, and Chapter 2: Dying of consumption. Pp. 1-32 in *The shadows of consumption: Consequences for the global environment*, MIT Press.
- Liboiron, Max. 2015. Redefining pollution and action: The matter of plastics. *Journal of Material Culture*, 1-24.
- Swanson, Heather Anne. 2015. Shadow ecologies of conservation: Co-production of salmon landscapes in Hokkaido, Japan, and southern Chile. *Geoforum*, 61: 101-110.

#### Optional reading:

- Maniates, Michael F. 2001. Individualization: Plant a tree, buy a bike, save the world? *Global Environmental Politics*, 1(3): 31-52.
- Dauvergne, Peter. 2018. Why is the global governance of plastic failing the oceans? *Global Environmental Change*, 51: 22-31.

### **WEEK 4 (October 3): ENVIRONMENTAL OPTIMISM AND TECHNOLOGICAL FIXES ~ *unplugged assignment due (15%)***

Technological transformations are rewriting the planet and its politics; is scientific innovation enough to solve our problems? This week, we consider whether technological advances can resolve environmental challenges, considering innovation and system design. Still, we recall last week's concerns about the externalities and ecological shadows of resource-based activities, and even of proposed environmental solutions.

#### Required reading:

- Leach, Melissa, James Fairhead, and James Fraser. 2012. Green grabs and biochar: Revaluing African soils and farming in the new carbon economy. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2): 285-307.
- Shellenberger, Michael, and Ted Nordhaus. 2004. *The death of environmentalism: Global warming politics in a post-environmental world*. The Breakthrough Institute, [http://www.thebreakthrough.org/images/Death\\_of\\_Environmentalism.pdf](http://www.thebreakthrough.org/images/Death_of_Environmentalism.pdf)
- Wapner, Paul. 2010. Sacrifice in an age of comfort. Chapter 3, pp. 33-59, in *The environmental politics of sacrifice*, Michael Maniates and John M. Meyer, eds., MIT Press.

## **WEEK 5 (October 10): INVESTMENT AND FINANCE: GROWING DISTANCE AND ABSTRACTION IN COMMODITY CHAINS**

Shifts in the movement and operations of global capital have shaped environmental politics in complex ways, with investment tools delinking physical commodities from financial products, yet deeply dependent on the extraction and movement of these goods. This week, with a focus on agriculture and shipping, the readings explore the movement of commodities and the financial underpinnings of production, including the challenging and contested concept of “financialization.”

This week, too, we’ll set aside some time for small-group discussions of your book choices for the book review essay.

### Required reading:

- Clapp, Jennifer. 2014. Financialization, distance and global food politics. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(5): 797-814.
- Lister, Jane. 2015. Green shipping: governing sustainable maritime transport. *Global Policy*, 6(2): 118-129.
- Ouma, Stefan. 2016. From financialization to operations of capital: Historicizing and disentangling the finance–farmland–nexus. *Geoforum*, 72: 82-93.

## ***PART III: TRANSFORMATIONS IN ECOSYSTEMS, LABOUR, AND JUSTICE***

## **WEEK 6 (October 17): ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: INVISIBLE CONSEQUENCES AND SACRIFICE ZONES ~ *must submit book choices for review essay***

Building on week 3’s discussions of ecological shadows and displaced costs, and on last week’s exploration of growing distance in commodity chains, we delve further this week into questions of environmental justice. We look closely at the consequences of production for local people and places, considering who and what is being sacrificed for extraction and production, and what tools are available for resisting the invisibility of these impacts.

### Required reading:

- Nixon, Rob. 2011. Introduction. Pp. 1-44 in *Slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor*, Harvard University Press.
- Shade, Lindsay. 2015. Sustainable development or sacrifice zone? Politics below the surface in post-neoliberal Ecuador. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 2: 775-784.

## **WEEK 7 (October 24): PEOPLE VS THE PLANET: THE SOCIAL COSTS OF ENVIRONMENTALISM?**

Although environmental degradation has damaging effects on people (workers included), this week, we consider the ways in which action for the environment can sometimes come at the expense of those involved in labour. While this is often imagined as the loss of resource sector



jobs (forest protection vs logging jobs; renewable energy vs oilfield jobs), or as siting disputes in marginalized communities (windfarms or biofuels displacing farmers), we also consider the more hidden ways in which the costs of environmental improvements can be offloaded onto labour.

Required reading:

- Dauvergne, Peter, and Genevieve LeBaron. 2013. The social cost of environmental solutions. *New Political Economy*, 18(3): 410-430.
- Seagle, Caroline. 2012. Inverting the impacts: Mining, conservation and sustainability claims near the Rio Tinto/QMM ilmenite mine in Southeast Madagascar. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2): 447-477.
- Räthzel, Nora, and David Uzzell. 2011. Trade unions and climate change: The jobs versus environment dilemma. *Global Environmental Change*, 21: 1215-1223.

Optional reading:

- Barrientos, Stephanie, and Sally Smith. 2007. Do workers benefit from ethical trade? Assessing codes of labour practice in global production systems. *Third World Quarterly*, 28(4): 713-729.

## **WEEK 8 (October 31): STRATEGIES OF PERFORMANCE AND PROTEST AND QUESTIONS OF JUST TRANSITIONS**

Building on the analysis in week 6 of strategies for countering slow violence and environmental damage, keeping in mind the differential consequences of environmental action on different social sectors considered last week, we turn to creativity, adaptation, and uncertainty in advocacy for environmental change. Considering strategies of protest from street performance to the pairing of international and domestic law, we consider questions of how to mobilize change, with attention to just transitions and to counter-movements and repression.

Required reading:

- Matejova, Miriam, Stefan Parker, and Peter Dauvergne. 2018. The politics of repressing environmentalists as agents of foreign influence. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 72(2): 145-162.
- O'Neill, Kate. 2004. Transnational protest: States, circuses, and conflict at the frontline of global politics. *International Studies Review*, 6: 233-251.
- Jasanoff, Sheila. 2018. Just transitions: A humble approach to global energy futures. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 35: 11-14.
- Weinthal, Erika, and Kate Watters. 2010. Transnational environmental activism in Central Asia: the coupling of domestic law and international conventions. *Environmental Politics*, 19(5): 782-807.

## **READING WEEK: November 7: NO CLASS**

## **WEEK 9 (November 14): PEER REVIEW SESSION ~ Draft book review essay due**

Required reading: readings consist of a peer-reviewed published paper as well as several stages of its review process.

- Neville, Kate J., and Erika Weinthal. 2016. Mitigating mistrust? Participation and expertise in hydraulic fracturing governance. *Review of Policy Research*, 33(6): 578-602.
- To be posted: initial submitted paper, reviews, revised paper, response to reviewers

#### ***PART IV: TRANSFORMATIONS IN BORDERS, GOVERNANCE, AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE AUTHORITY***

### **WEEK 10 (November 21): BLURRED BORDERS AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS ~ *peer review due***

This week, we consider transformations in the international arena across multiple scales of environmental politics. We consider formal multilateral governance arrangements and changing intergovernmental agreements, and also look to government regulations, private governance, network-based, and sub-state approaches to setting rules and establishing environmental limits. For IR students, the limited focus on international environmental agreements and organizations might seem surprising; if you are interested in this vibrant and rich field of work within GEP, I encourage you to choose books for your review essay that engage with international institutions and treaties. Please note that Dr. Cheryl Teelucksingh (whose work we will read for next week's class) is speaking in the School of the Environment Seminar Series today (Nov 21) from 12-2pm.

#### Required reading:

- Andonova, Liliana B., and Ronald B. Mitchell. 2010. The rescaling of global environmental politics. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 35: 255-282.
- Betsill, Michele M., and Harriet Bulkeley. 2004. Transnational networks and global environmental governance: The cities for climate protection program. *International Studies Quarterly*, 48(2), 471-493.
- McAfee, Kathleen. 1999. Selling nature to save it? Biodiversity and green developmentalism. *Environment and Planning*, 17: 133-154.
- Van der Ven, Hamish. 2014. Socializing the C-suite: why some big-box retailers are "greener" than others. *Business and Politics*, 16(1): 31-63.

#### Optional reading:

- Andonova, Liliana B., and Matthew J. Hoffmann. 2012. From Rio to Rio and beyond: Innovation in global environmental governance. *The Journal of Environment and Development*, 21: 57-61.

### **WEEK 11 (November 28): PATHWAYS TO DECARBONIZATION AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION**

We turn this week to transformative political pathways and to local neighbourhoods, with a focus on carbon and climate change. In reading work on how to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, we consider the politics of decarbonisation, justice in urban adaptation, and imaginative possibilities for future community spaces and relationships.

Required reading:

- Bernstein, Steven, and Matthew Hoffmann. 2018. The politics of decarbonization and the catalytic impact of subnational climate experiments. *Policy Sciences*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-018-9314-8> or Bernstein, Steven, and Matthew Hoffmann. 2018. Decarbonisation: The politics of transformation. In: *Governing climate change: Polycentricity in action?* Andrew Jordan, Dave Huitema, Harro van Asselt, Johanna Forster, eds., Cambridge University Press.
- Hughes, Sara. 2013. Justice in urban climate change adaptation: criteria and application to Delhi. *Ecology and Society* 18(4): 48.
- Amar, Amardeep Kaur, and Cheryl Teelucksingh. 2015. Environmental justice, transit equity and the place for immigrants in Toronto. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 24(2): 43-63.
- Tozer, Laura, and Nicole Klenk. 2018. Discourses of carbon neutrality and imaginaries of urban futures. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 35: 174-181.

**WEEK 12 (December 5): REFRAMING THE PROBLEM: ALTERNATE ECONOMIES AND THE LOGIC OF SUFFICIENCY ~ *final paper due***

In this week, we return to several core questions about of the human-nonhuman interface and intersections of gender, race, environment, and Indigeneity. We consider economic and mobility models that diverge from the dominant contemporary capitalist approach, especially the ideas of “enoughness” and reciprocity. In thinking through the philosophical underpinnings of a politics of transformation, we examine worldviews and language that position environmental protection not as sacrifice but as gain, something needed for security and the well-being of all—especially the marginalized.

Required reading:

- Kuokkanen, Rauna. 2011. Indigenous economies, theories of subsistence, and women: Exploring the social economy model for Indigenous governance. *The American Indian Quarterly*, 35(2): 215-240.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. 2017. Speaking of nature. *Orion Magazine*, March/April, <https://orionmagazine.org/article/speaking-of-nature/>
- Princen, Thomas. 2003. Principles for sustainability: From cooperation and efficiency to sufficiency. *Global Environmental Politics*, 3(1): 33-50.
- Solnit, Rebecca. The most radical thing you can do. *Orion Magazine*. <https://orionmagazine.org/article/the-most-radical-thing-you-can-do/>
- Speth, James Gustave, and J. Phillip Thompson III. 2016 (April 14). A radical alliance of black and green could save the world. *The Nation*.



## **Assignment details**

### **I: Participation, 20%**

In a seminar class, active participation is essential. Participation can take many forms; it involves both sharing our own thoughts and listening actively to the contributions of others. Thoughtful participation can include offering ideas of our own, building on the ideas of others, and reaching out in class to those who have not had as much space and time to speak. For this class, participation begins with preparing for class by reading the assigned texts and peer response papers, involves attending class and engaging thoughtfully in the seminar, and continues even after the class with reflections on discussions in the subsequent weeks. This grade therefore involves several components: class attendance (showing up for each other, being present during class); pre-class reflections on peer discussion questions on Quercus; and posting seminar notes for each other.

*Pre-class reflections (weekly):* To ensure that discussion facilitators have active engagement with the questions they pose in their reading reflections (see assignment II), all students will be responsible for posting short weekly reflections on their peer's discussion questions to Quercus in advance of Wednesday's class. These must be posted by midnight on the Tuesday before class.

*Post-class notes (one week of term):* For seminar notes, each student will sign up for a week during which to post notes that they take during the discussions in class. There will be ten weeks for which notes are posted (all weeks except week 1, the introductory class, and week 9, the week on peer review), so 1-3 students will be responsible for each week's notes (depending on final course enrollment). These do not need to be verbatim notes, but instead should capture key ideas from the seminar discussions and highlight connections with course readings. We do not have a final exam in this course, so these do not need to be study notes; instead, they offer a series of different perspectives on the class discussions, a record of ideas and conversations, and a resource for any students who need to miss a seminar class. You will sign up to take notes for a week where you are not the seminar facilitator. This participation exercise should not require much additional work, as it can be your raw notes from class (the style of notes can be wide-ranging, as long as it reflects the class discussions in some form). If you take hand-written notes, these can be uploaded as image files to Quercus.

### **II. Critical reading reflection and discussion – 20% - no late submissions accepted**

For each class, several students will be assigned critical reading reflections and responsibility for the class discussion (more than one student will be assigned to each class, so you will share discussion responsibilities). Your reading reflection must be uploaded to Quercus no later than midnight on the Sunday night before the week of class to which you are assigned. No late submissions will be accepted.

For your assigned week, you are responsible for providing the class with a critical summary of an assigned reading (300-500 words). Your summary should: 1) identify the central argument in the reading (a brief summary); 2) discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the article; and 3) raise 2-3 questions for the class discussion. You must be prepared to help lead discussion in class, by asking questions and making comments. For (2), on strengths and weaknesses, you may wish to consider the internal logic and strength of the argument (whether the reading is logically consistent, well-argued, supported by evidence, based on appropriate methods) and/or the contribution of the reading to the field (whether the argument is innovative,

speaks to other debates in the literature, offers critiques of other readings, etc.). In general, your written submission will be worth 10%, and your in-class discussion role 10%; however, your contributions will be taken in concert, and excellent contributions in one form could help offset less strong contributions in the other.

### **III. Unplugged challenge and reflection paper – 15%**

For this assignment, I offer a challenge: unplug from screens for 24 hours. You will choose a day of your choice over the first month of class to unplug from all screens (computers, tablets, phones, televisions, and other devices). For many, this will be a challenge and a sacrifice. For some, this may be a relief. You will write a 500-1000 word reflection on this exercise, linking your thoughts on the challenge with the concept of sacrifice, drawing on *at least one course reading* in the paper. You should write from your personal experience, using an analytic lens to understand the challenge in a broader context.

### **IV. Critical book review essay (multi-stage) – 45%**

This is a staged assignment that culminates in a 3000-3500 word book review essay, in the style of a book review essay for the journal *Global Environmental Politics*. For undergraduate students, you may choose two or three books for the essay; for graduate students, you must use three books in your essay. The books must relate to the themes of global environmental politics and transformation in some capacity.

A strong book review essay offers a clear and novel argument by the author, drawing on the reviewed books for evidence. Often, a review author will pose a research question that the books in the review essay offer different answers to. In the review essay, the author summarizes the key ideas from each book and identifies the connections and tensions across the books, offering an analysis of the central question based on these different perspectives. In general, review essays will be graded in three categories: synthesis, analysis, and writing:

- *Synthesis*: the quality of summary and description of the books in the review, drawing out relevant aspects of the book for the essay.
- *Analysis*: the use of evidence (primary or secondary data) to construct a credible analytical argument. The argument must be clearly stated in your paper and must be supported by evidence from the books you are reviewing. Your ideas should be organized in a coherent, logical manner. Your analysis should display: understanding of the theme you have chosen; insight into the perspectives of the books you are reviewing; and originality of thought.
- *Writing*: clarity of expression and mechanics of writing. This component of evaluation considers your writing style and structure. Note that organizing the paper into paragraphs and sub-sections can often help the reader follow the argument more closely. You will also be evaluated on the details of writing and formatting, including punctuation, spelling, tables and figures, referencing (according to the style of the journal *Global Environmental Politics*), and absence of factual errors.

#### a) Book selection – ungraded

In week 5 (October 10), you will bring your choice of books with you to class for a short discussion in small groups with your peers. In these small groups, you will explain the connecting theme that the books address, and you will offer each other comments and suggestions about the book choices, description of themes, and approach for analysis. You must

have your book choices approved by me no later than week 6 (October 17). You can submit your book choices in a short email submission or discuss them with me during office hours.

b) Submission of draft essay to peers – 5%

For this stage, in week 9 (November 14, after reading week), you are expected to submit a draft of your book review essay. The marks for this draft paper are based on you submitting a complete rough copy on time – these will not be accepted late. You are expected to provide a full draft of your paper to your peers. The more complete/polished a draft you can submit, the more useful the peer feedback will be. Each student will submit their paper to Quercus and email them to your assigned peers.

c) Peer review – 10%

The goal of this assignment, due week 10 (November 21), is to practice reading and critically evaluating other scholars' work. This will help your peers improve their writing and should also help you to better assess the quality of your own essays. For the reviews, you must write a brief synopsis of your peer's paper: what is their core argument, and how do they develop their case?

In your reviews, you should indicate to the writer the major strengths and areas for improvement of the paper. These areas might include novelty and sophistication of the argument, comprehensibility and conciseness of summaries, specificity and accuracy of evidence, clarity of thesis and organization of ideas, and mechanics of writing. Please ensure that you provide the author with both *positive* reinforcement and *constructive* criticism.

Undergraduate students will complete a review for one peer; graduate students will complete reviews for two different peers. Each peer review should be 300-500 words. Peer reviews should include comments on the following:

- Summary of argument: identify and rephrase the thesis of the essay
- Paper strength: comments on what the writer has done effectively, with specific examples
- Paper improvement: comment on areas where the writer could strengthen their work, with specific examples

d) Final book review essay – 30%

The final essay, due week 12 (December 5), will be 3000-3500 words. This final essay is a revised version of your draft paper, taking into account the feedback from your peers. The review essay will be in format of book review essays in the journal *Global Environmental Politics*, based on scholarly/academic books.