

SII199H1F: Understanding and Debating Environmental Issues Fall 2011

Last Updated: Sept 6, 2011

Time: Wed 2-4
Location: RL 14081
Instructor: Karen Ing, ES2098, karen.ing@utoronto.ca, 978-4863
Course Website: Blackboard
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Overview

The study of environment offers unique challenges since it is inherently interdisciplinary involving the intersection of science, society, politics, culture, and values. The complexity of this area of study combined with a multitude of competing interests means that one can easily become overwhelmed with the bombardment of new and often conflicting information.

The purpose of this seminar is to introduce students to two different ways of understanding the issue of environment:

1. understanding, by academics and others, of both the physical nature of the issue and the actions *being taken* by governments and others, and
2. debating, in the form of political conflict over what *should be done* about different environmental issues.

In addition, the course aims to introduce and provide opportunities for students to practice skills necessary for a successful undergraduate experience, e.g. the development of critical thinking, writing skills, and oral presentations.

The course consists of detailed examination of three current environmental issues: energy, ecosystem services, and water. For each, we will first examine the physical facts of the case and then the social and political aspects. From this foundation, students will then be required to seek out and evaluate other information sources and communicate their new found knowledge back to the class. Drawing on the breadth of knowledge and perspectives presented, students will then debate what should be done about the issue.

Required Readings

Relevant readings for the course have been assembled in a SII199H 2011 Course Reader, which is available for purchase at the University of Toronto Bookstore for \$68.75.

Course Evaluation and Assignments

Finding and Evaluating Information Sources (due Oct 12/Nov 2/Nov 23)	
- 10% for paper, 5% for presentation	15%
Position Paper on Energy (due Oct 19)	20%
Position Paper on Ecosystem Services or Water (due Dec 6)	30%
Final Test (In-class Nov 30 th)	25%
Class Participation	10%

Note: because class discussions are integral to the course, attendance and participation is an important component of your personal success in the course. Therefore an attendance record will be maintained through a sign in sheet which will be factored into the participation grade.

Lecture & Reading Schedule

Date	Lecture Topic	Course Reader pages
Sep 14	Intro – Learning Styles	1-7
Sep 21	Energy – Fossil Fuels & Information Literacy	9-37
Sep 28	Energy – Conventional Alternatives	39-64
Oct 5	Energy – the debates & Fundamentals of Writing an Academic Essay	65-110
Oct 12	Energy – student led discussions	
Oct 19	Ecosystem Services – what are they?	111-134
Oct 26	Ecosystem Services – valuation & case studies	135-197
Nov 2	Ecosystem Services – student led discussions & debates	
Nov 9	Water – physical facts	199-225
Nov 16	Water – challenges and opportunities?	227-270
Nov 23	Water – student led discussions & debates	
Nov 30	Final Test / Final discussions	

Note: Important Dates

Sept 25th – last day to add or make section changes to F courses

Oct 19th – Assignment due

Nov 3rd – last day to drop classes

Nov 7-8 – November Break, no classes

Nov 15th – Assignment due date

Dec 9-20 – exam period

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS:

Information Sources – 15%

Due Oct 12/Nov 2/Nov 23 in class, 4-5 double space pages

Each student must sign up for one of the three student led discussion dates (Oct 12/Nov 2/Nov 23). In preparation for leading discussions on their chosen date, a student also hands in their “Finding and Evaluating Information Sources” assignment on that date.

This assignment is modelled on an annotated bibliography, which is a useful first step in tackling any research effort. Typically an annotated bibliography is a list of citations of books, articles, documents, electronic sources, etc. with each entry containing a brief description and evaluation

of the citation. The annotation should inform a reader on the range and depth of the document, discuss its sources, validity, quality and accuracy.

The Details

Based on the environmental issue you signed up to research, locate **three** sources of information published within the past five years. Two of the three sources must come from the University of Toronto library system: one must be a peer reviewed journal article and the other a book found on the shelves from any of the campus libraries. The third source can be from anywhere else including the internet, newspaper, promotional brochures, etc...

For EACH source provide the full citation at the top of the page. Use either the MLA (www.mla.org) or APA (www.apastyle.org) style throughout. For a brief description of the two styles visit www.writing.utoronto.ca

Write a minimum of 3 paragraphs for each:

- The first paragraph should be a brief description of the process you used to locate the source, e.g. keywords, particular database, search engine, library location, browsing, etc...
- the second paragraph should describe the contents or main arguments of the source, assessing its potential audience, level of difficulty, and range of coverage
- the final paragraph should be a critical evaluation on the quality and relevance of the source for an academic audience and a lay audience. Your evaluation may consider the credentials of the author/institution (for websites); the date of the work (recent or outdated); the publisher (reputable in the field?); the reputation of the journal and the range of other articles in the issue; the audience (popular, educated, scholarly); etc...

Finally, write a brief paragraph comparing and contrasting the three different sources of information.

Learning objectives: familiarity with the UofT library system, research skills, critical evaluation of information sources

Position Paper #1: Energy: Due Oct 19th, worth 20%

Position Paper #2: Ecosystem Services or Water: Due Dec 6th, worth 30%

Length: 2500 words or approximately 7-8 double spaced pages

There will be two opportunities in this course for you to develop skills in writing an academic research paper. Because of the course topic and format, we will model these essays as position papers.

A position paper requires you to present your position on an issue as supported by the research you introduce. You should guide the reader to your position through a critical and reasoned thinking process. Your paper should clearly demonstrate that you have weighed a wide range of

information and knowledge on the issue with information derived from a breadth of sources. Aside from the readings in the reader, include a minimum of 5 other references.

To guide you through this process, consider the following steps:

- figure out what is at issue
- formulate your own position after careful weighing of the evidence
- compose a thesis that states your own position
- use evidence from your research, and reasoning to support and develop your thesis
- conclude by restating your position and emphasizing its support

The format for each of your position papers should be as follows:

- Introduction:
 - subject and importance of subject
 - purpose, including an explicit research question
 - format: explanation of the function of each section
- Body
 - Three to five sections, possibly with sub-sections in each
 - use section headings
 - sections must add up to a coherent whole, as you will explain in the format sub-section
- Conclusion
 - answer your research question, by analysis of data provided in the sections
- Alphabetical list of works cited

COURSE POLICIES

Submission of written assignments:

All written assignments must:

- Be double spaced, using 12 point font, in black ink with 1" (2.5cm) margins;
- include page numbers
- be submitted in hard-copy (paper), i.e. no electronic submission will be accepted.

In addition all assignments are due **in class** on the due dates noted for each assignment, except for the final research paper which can be dropped off in the Centre for Environment drop box outside ES1049.

Late Penalties:

The late penalty on all assignments will be 2.5% of the assignment grade per day late, including weekends and will only be waived with the accompaniment of a completed University of Toronto Student Medical Certificate which can be found in your Registration Handbook and Timetable or at:

<http://www.healthservice.utoronto.ca/pdfs/medcert.htm>.

Please note that the certificate must cover the period of time you missed, *e.g.* the week before the assignment/essay is due, *etc.* and must supply sufficient detail and appropriate support to warrant any special consideration.

Assignments will NOT be accepted a week past the due date even if accompanied by a medical certificate unless prior approval has been obtained from the instructor.

Late assignments must be handed into the Centre for Environment drop box outside ES1049. Please ensure you sign in your assignment using the sign-in sheet attached to the drop box. Any assignments received after 5pm in the drop box is recorded as being received on the following business day, this includes weekends.

Accessibility Needs:

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> .

Plagiarism:

Please note that plagiarism is a serious offense under university regulation, and carries serious consequences. If you have questions or concerns about writing style and format, you may find the excellent resources of the U of T Writing Centre helpful: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca>

According to the University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters:

1. It shall be an offence for a student knowingly:
 - a) to forge or in any other way alter or falsify any document or evidence required for admission to the University, or to utter, circulate or make use of any such forged, altered or falsified document, whether the record be in print or electronic form;
 - b) to use or possess an unauthorized aid or aids or obtain unauthorized assistance in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work;
 - c) to personate another person, or to have another person personate, at any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work;
 - d) to represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism;
 - e) to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere;
 - f) to submit for credit any academic work containing a purported statement of fact or reference to a source which has been concocted.

For a fuller description please see the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters at: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>

Logging in to your Blackboard Course Website

Like many other courses, this course uses Blackboard for its course website. To access our SII199H website, or any other Blackboard-based course website, go to the UofT portal login page at <http://portal.utoronto.ca> and log in using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module,

where you'll find the link to our SII199H course website along with the link to all your other Blackboard-based courses.

Activating your UTORid and Password

If you need information on how to activate your UTORid and set your password for the first time, please go to www.utorid.utoronto.ca. Under the "First Time Users" area, click on "activate your UTORid" (if you are new to the university) or "create your UTORid" (if you are a returning student), then follow the instructions. New students who use the link to "activate your UTORid" will find reference to a "Secret Activation Key". This was originally issued to you when you picked up your Tcard at the library. If you have lost your Secret Activation Key you can call 416-978-HELP or visit the Help Desk at the Information Commons on the ground floor of Robarts Library to be issued a new one. **The course instructors will not be able to help you with this.** 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can also answer any other questions you may have about your UTORid and password.

Email Communication with the Course Instructors

At times, the course Instructors may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all UofT students are required to have a valid UofT email address. You are responsible for ensuring that your UofT email address is set up AND properly entered in the ROSI system. You can do that by using the following instructions:

To submit the information to activate your UTORid and password (see above), you will need to click the "Validate" button. Follow the instructions on the subsequent screens to receive your utoronto.ca address. Once you have your UofT email address, go to the ROSI system (www.rosi.utoronto.ca), log in and update the system with your new UofT email address.

You can **check your UofT email** account from

1. The UofT home page <http://www.utoronto.ca>: From the Quick Links menu on the top right, choose "my.utoronto.ca". Enter your UTORid and password, and when the Welcome page opens, click "WEBMAIL".
2. Email software installed on your computer, for example Microsoft Outlook or Mozilla Thunderbird. Visit the Help Desk at the Information Commons or call 416-978-HELP for help with the set up.

Forwarding your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

You are responsible for:

1. Ensuring you have a valid UofT email address that is properly entered in the ROSI system
2. Checking your UofT email account on a regular basis.