University of Toronto, School of the Environment
ENV 1001: Environmental Decision-Making: Interdisciplinary Perspectives
Winter 2024: Dr. Hanna E. Morris
Wednesday 12-3pm (Eastern time zone), hybrid

Contact Information:
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Course Overview:

Description: ENV1001 is the core course for the graduate Collaborative Specialization in Environmental Studies at the School of the Environment. This course addresses the topic of "environmental decision-making," which we understand broadly as the challenging process of how humans engage with the natural world, and the many iterative (and sometimes invisible) decisions we make about how to organize human societies and activities. While decision-making is itself a field of study, this course takes a more flexible interpretation of the term, involving choices about, and affecting, the environment.

Drawing on insights from across a range of disciplines—throughout the humanities, social sciences, and natural and applied sciences—and with attention to fields beyond academia, we consider multiple perspectives on the environment. Our investigation will be carried out through bi-weekly guest lectures, student presentations, group projects, and individual written assignments.

In this Winter term portion of ENV1001, we will have a focus on exploring ways of interpreting, understanding, defining, and responding to complex environmental crises. We will explore different ways of knowing (what assumptions are made about the world that shape the kinds of decisions proposed and implemented), conflicting interests and information (at multiple scales), and decision-making models and policymaking processes (including recent policymaking interventions inspired by movements for a Green New Deal and youth-led calls for a "just transition" and a "just future"), along with questions of uncertainty and what democratic decision-making means.

Students should emerge from the course with a broader perspective on environmental and social challenges, enhanced communication skills across disciplines, and additional experience working in diverse teams. In addition, students should leave the course more confident about

the options for interdisciplinary collaboration. Our central goal in the course and the Collaborative Specialization program is to enable conversations to take place within and beyond the classroom about the challenges of human-environment relationships, with new ideas on creative and just approaches to social and political decisions. Ultimately, students will develop analytical skills, critical insights, practical strategies, (and inspiration!) for thinking about and doing interdisciplinary environmental research.

Structure: Weekly 3-hour classes. The course is aligned with the School of the Environment's Environment Seminar Series, so six of the twelve weeks of class will have an invited guest lecturer. These seminars will be open to the public. Any changes to the schedule will be announced by email and posted on Quercus (UofT's online course platform). Please note that this is a seminar course, rather than a lecture course; active classroom engagement is expected (and crucial to the value of the course!). Please also note that there is quite a bit of reading and other work outside of our weekly classes—full engagement and preparation will make our class sessions better.

Assignments (details at the end of the syllabus)

- **Weekly participation: 25% (continuous)**
    - Attendance, active listening & engagement each week

- **One-time guest seminar speaker facilitation: 20% (varying deadlines)**
    - Pre-seminar posting of reflection paper and discussion questions on Quercus
    - In-class, post-seminar facilitation of small group discussion on Zoom

- **Individual written assignment: 20% (due March 4th by 12pm EST)**

- **Group project: 35% (due April 10th at 12pm EST) (Final presentations will be held during the last day of class on April 3rd and will be worth 10% of the group project grade)**

In case of unexpected challenges (guest speaker cancellations, student illness, other emergencies, etc.), grading policies may change as follows:

- Deadlines may be moved (as a class or individually; extensions are possible)
- Guest speaker facilitation may be altered to involve shorter/longer student-facilitated discussions, including without a seminar speaker (with discussions to be based on assigned readings and possible supplementary video material)
- Individual students facing challenges may be exempted from group projects, with alternate assignment options and/or grades redistributed to other assignments

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 be flexible. We are all learning new skills, practices, norms and – as the global pandemic has shown us – doing so amidst a series of personal, community, and global challenges. I hope that together we can foster a safe and engaging classroom, and I will rely on all of you to help create that environment.

Online course site:
We will have a course website (Quercus) for readings, course announcements, course materials, and discussions. We will use Zoom when online. Please check in frequently with the Quercus site. Please also be patient with our online tools, as we will encounter glitches and challenges. If/when communication on the site goes awry, please feel free to use email for assignments, questions, etc.

Deadlines and late penalties:
I anticipate all assignments will be submitted on time. However, some of you may find yourselves with valid conflicts and challenges, especially in light of your diverse programs and courses of study, and the exceptional challenges of this particular time (illness, caregiving duties, housing and financial insecurity, technological connectivity challenges, etc.). Please contact me as early as possible if you anticipate being unable to meet deadlines. Please also contact your group members if you run into challenges during the group project. As this is a seminar class, attendance is the bedrock of the course, enabling us to build a strong community and develop enriching conversations across weeks—still, we'll need to be flexible and understanding when conflicts and problems arise. If you know in advance you need to miss class, it helps me tremendously to be aware of these absences.

Backups and rough drafts:
You are strongly advised to keep rough drafts and backup copies of all assignments and essays you submit. 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 you have multiple copies of your work in the case of a hard drive failure or computer problem (this is important not only for this course, but also (especially!) for your research and thesis/dissertation projects).

Names:
If your 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 and be addressed in class) please let me know. I am not able to change official course lists, but I can certainly call you by your preferred name. Also, please let me know the pronouns you use (mine are she/her/hers).

Exceptions and Assistance:
The University has many resources to help students who need assistance for any number of reasons, both in and outside of the classroom, including library, academic, and health and counseling resources. Let's aim to work together as a class to help each other find academic support in the midst of challenges. The University remains committed to providing allowances for religious observances, as do I. A few helpful resources:

- https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/gradlife/Pages/Grad-Wellness.aspx
- https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Writing-Centre.aspx
- http://uoft.me/religiousaccommodation
- http://familycare.utoronto.ca/resources/

If you are struggling or you encounter unanticipated challenges or crises during the term (whether for academic and/or personal reasons), please seek the support you need as early as possible, as best you can. 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). 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.

Academic integrity:
The seriousness of academic integrity really cannot be stressed enough. Academic integrity remains **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. As graduate students, your academic integrity will be the foundation of your scholarly and practitioner careers.
All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, through the School of Graduate Studies. 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 from your instructor or other institutional resources. As some norms differ across disciplines and universities, please take a moment to familiarize yourself with UofT policies.

- https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/facultyandstaff/Pages/Academic-Integrity.aspx
- http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm
- www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students

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.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool 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 tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).

Class Schedule and Readings *(all readings are available on Quercus)*

Week 1: Jan 10: Introduction *(in-person)*

Key questions we will consider: What are "environmental crises"? What is "environmental decision-making"? What are the challenges associated with making decisions about how to respond to environmental crises? What does "interdisciplinary environmental research" entail / mean, exactly? What are the challenges and opportunities for doing interdisciplinary environmental research?

Readings:

- Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Introduction, pgs. 1-43.

Week 2: Jan 17: Kariuki Kirigia, UofT *(online)*

https://www.environment.utoronto.ca/people/directories/all-faculty/kariuki-kirigia

Note: In guest speaker weeks, we'll convene on Zoom for a public seminar. These sessions will involve a lecture and an instructor-moderated question-and-answer session during the first half of class. Following the public seminar, we will have a short break, and then our ENV 1001 class will reconvene promptly at 1:50pm in a separate Zoom session. This post-talk session will involve student-facilitated small-group discussions. **All Zoom links are available on Quercus.**

Readings:

- Riamit, K. O., & Kirigia, K. (2021). On Indigenous Organic Intellectuals: Struggles against Pastoral Land Dispossession in the Maasai Commons in Postcolonial Kenya. *'African Potentials' for Wildlife Conservation and Natural Resource Management: Against the Image of 'Deficiency' and Tyranny*, 149-171.

Week 3: Jan 24: Environmental Decision-Making in Times of Democratic Crisis *(in-person)*

Key questions we will consider: What are the threats of exclusionary and anti-democratic modes of governance in present-day environmental decision-making processes? How do end-of-the-world / apocalyptic visions shape proposed responses to environmental crises?

Readings:

- Lilley, S., McNally, D., Yuen, E., & Davis, J. (2012). "Introduction: The Apocalyptic Politics of Collapse and Rebirth" in *Catastrophism: The Apocalyptic Politics of Collapse and Rebirth*. Oakland, CA: PM Press, pp. 1-14.

- O'Connell, M. (2018, February 15). Why Silicon Valley billionaires are prepping for the apocalypse in New Zealand. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/feb/15/why-silicon-valley-billionaires-are-prepping-for-the-apocalypse-in-new-zealand

- ******Ray, S.J. (2021, March 21). Climate Anxiety is an Overwhelmingly White Phenomenon. *Scientific American*. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-unbearable-whiteness-of-climate-anxiety/

- Solnit, R. (2010). "Prelude: Falling Together" in *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster.* New York, NY: Penguin Books, pp. 1-10.

  **This op-ed can serve as an example for how to format your individual assignment due March 4th

Week 4: Jan 31: Scott Frickel, Brown University *(online)*

https://www.brown.edu/academics/sociology/people/scott-frickel

Readings:

- Frickel, S., & Tollefson, J. (2022). When Environmental Inequality Racialized: Historical Evidence from Providence, Rhode Island. *Socius*, *8*.

- Arancibia, F, Arza, V, Verzeñassi, D and Frickel, S. 2022. Building Participatory Knowledge Infrastructure Against the GMO Agribusiness Regime: The Case of Los Campamentos Sanitarios. *Citizen Science: Theory and Practice*, 7(1), 1–13.

Week 5: Feb 7: Thea Riofrancos, Providence College *(online)*

http://www.theariofrancos.com/

Readings:

- Riofrancos, T. (2023). The Security–Sustainability Nexus: Lithium Onshoring in the Global North. *Global Environmental Politics*, *23*(1), 20–41.

- Riofrancos, T. (2022, February 7). Shifting Mining from the Global South Misses the Point of Climate Justice. *Foreign Policy.* https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/07/renewable-energy-transition-critical-minerals-mining-onshoring-lithium-evs-climate-justice/?tpcc=recirc_latesto62921

- Riofrancos, T. (2017) Extractivismo unearthed: a genealogy of a radical discourse. *Cultural Studies*, 31(2-3), 277-306.

**Week 6: Feb 14: Film screening of *Dhaka's Story of Development and Disaster*
 and dialogue with director Mara Mahmud** *(in-person)*

Winter Term Reading Week: Feb 21 – no class

Week 7: Feb 28: Writing Workshop *(in-person)*

Individual Assignment Due on Monday March 4th by 12PM (noon) EST (uploaded to Quercus)

Week 8: March 6: Rebecca H. Hogue, incoming UofT assistant professor *(online)*

https://www.rhhogue.com/about

Readings:

- Maurer, A., & Hogue, R. H. (2020). Introduction: Transnational Nuclear Imperialisms. *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 11(2).

- Hogue, R. H., & Maurer, A. (2022). Pacific women's anti-nuclear poetry: centring Indigenous knowledges. *International Affairs (London)*, *98*(4), 1267–1288.

Week 9: March 13: The Production of Environmental "Knowledge" and "Subjectivities" *(in-person)*

Key questions we will consider: How and why are certain experiences and environmental expertise deemed "legitimate" or not? What are the dynamics of power involved in determining whose experiences and expertise matter in producing and recognizing "legitimate" environmental "knowledge" as "rational" "subjects"? What is the role of settler colonialism, culture, development and global economic institutions, nationalism, and notions of time and "progress" in shaping what is considered "legitimate" environmental expertise, knowledge, and "solutions" to environmental crises?

Readings:

- Escobar, A. (1995) "The Making and Unmaking of the Third World through Development" in Rahnema, M. and Bawtree, V. (Eds.). (1997). *The Post-Development Reader*. London, UK: Zed Books, pp. 85-93.

- Vergès, F. (2017), Racial Capitalocene: Is the Anthropocene Racial? In: Verso Blog. Available at: https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3376-racial-capitalocene

- Hawthorne, C., and Lewis, J.S. (2023). "Black Geographies: Material Praxis of Black Life and Study" in *The Black Geographic: Praxis, Resistance, Futurity*, pp. 1-24.

- Roy, S. (2022). "Preface" and "Introduction" in *Changing the Subject: Feminist and Queer Politics in Neoliberal India*, pp. xi-25.

Week 10: March 22: Danielle Zoe Rivera, UC Berkeley *(online)*

https://ced.berkeley.edu/people/danielle-rivera

Readings:

- Rivera, D. Z. (2022). Disaster Colonialism: A Commentary on Disasters beyond Singular Events to Structural Violence. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *46*(1), 126–135.

- Rivera, D.Z., Jenkins, B., Randolph, R. (2022). Procedural Vulnerability and Its Effects on Equitable Post-Disaster Recovery in Low-Income Communities. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 88(2), 220-231.

- Check-out Dr. Rivera's Lab's AMAZING website and climate justice syllabus project: https://www.just-environments.org/

Week 11: March 29: Final Project Workshop (*in-person*)

*Week 12: April 3: Final Project Presentations *(in person)*

Group project will be due April 10th by 12pm (noon) EST uploaded by one group member to Quercus

Assignment Details

Facilitation Assignment (20%)

You will each be assigned a week with a guest speaker for facilitation responsibilities.

There are two parts to this:

1) Pre-seminar: posting a reflection paper and discussion questions: due by 12pm Eastern on *Tuesday* before your assigned Wednesday seminar. Post this on the Quercus discussion board on the thread of the relevant seminar speaker.
> Please post a one-page (~400-500-word) reflection paper on the readings and theme of the week (stated seminar topic or theme) with two or three discussion questions. In this paper, you might choose to reflect on the questions that arise for you from the reading, how the theme fits with other readings from our course, and/or how your work in your home program relates to the topic of discussion. You're welcome to read more widely, based on the description of the seminar, and bring in knowledge you have from other classes, research, or work you've done or learned about. If you refer to external/additional readings, please provide enough detail about that source to enable your peers who have not read the supplementary material to understand your reflections. The discussion questions may be ones I incorporate into the moderated discussion with the speaker in the seminar session; they may also be used to help guide your post-seminar small group discussions. Everyone should read their peers' papers/questions before class!

2) After the seminar, in our Zoom classroom: facilitation of small group discussion: right after the seminar
> After the public seminar, we'll have a short break and then reconvene promptly at 1:50pm in a separate Zoom room just with our class for small group discussions. As a facilitator, you'll moderate the discussion with small groups (we might switch group composition midway through the session, perhaps more than once, to mix up discussions and add different perspectives -- please be prepared for the format of these to change slightly over the term as we learn how to work together in the most generative ways!) In general, you'll have 5-6 peers in your small groups, and you'll be tasked with moderating the discussions, asking questions to catalyze discussion, drawing links between your peers' comments and questions, and generally leading the discussion. You'll also be asked to report back to the full class on key insights from these discussions -- questions that might be relevant to the class as a whole, comments that were surprising or illuminating, points of agreement or divergence, etc. You'll be asked for a self-assessment of your moderation of these sessions, so you will need to think critically and carefully about moderation styles, what generates good conversations, and how to engage with your peers across perspectives and fields.

Some tips on facilitating/moderating:
What does 'moderating' mean?
- If you have ever attended a panel discussion at a conference, a debate or a webinar, you have seen a moderator. The moderator's main role is to keep the conversation lively, on topic and balanced.
- A moderator needs to "read the room." If occasionally someone wanders off, it's okay to encourage them back to the main theme or questions. But if everyone starts leaving the conversation en masse, it means the question or theme is no longer taking them in a direction they want to go, and it's okay to change course.

How can I be a good moderator?
- Be present, engaged, and attentive.
- Your goal is to facilitate the conversation: we want to reflect on seminar content, dive deeper in the specific topic, and hear people's original ideas, while also meeting peers!
    o If someone answers with a short, vague answer, you can say "Yes, thank you for sharing. We have a bit more time, would you be able to elaborate on that point?"
    o If someone goes off track, you can gently bring back the conversation "This is a very interesting point, but I think it's a little beyond our scope. Could we focus on the initial question, and maybe talk about your point at the end if we have time?"
- <u>Balance is crucial</u>: some folks speak more than others, even though everyone in the class has something interesting to say. Try to pay attention to who has already spoken a few times and who has never been able to speak. Notice if the conversation becomes dominated by a smaller group and do your best to restore balance.
    o It is okay for you to say: "Hey [peer name], I think you spoke a few times already. Let's go first to those who haven't spoken and get back to you afterwards!" - it's not rude, it's your "job"!
    o Use your judgment for when to intervene, and when to let things go. This can be hard to do, so do reflect afterwards on whether your judgment calls were effective.
- You don't need to know the answers. If a colleague asks a question, you can answer as a student, open it up to everyone to see if anyone has the answer, and say "It seems like none of us know the answer here, I'll write it down and bring it back to the whole group." Moderation works better if the moderator *doesn't* try to provide the answers.
    o Don't feel you need to fill all the silences. Sometimes people need space to think before they speak. But if the silence drags on, be prepared to offer another prompt to get things going again.
- You can establish a system that works for you: you might have those who want to speak raise their hand, or indicate that they'd like to intervene by putting a note in the chat, etc.... whatever works for you, and allows people to have a chance to speak without interrupting each other.
- You are not expected to be an 'expert' -- just an engaged peer who is making sure the conversation has a direction, is participatory, and is coherent.

Individual Assignment (20%)

Due: Monday, March 4 by 12pm (noon) EST (uploaded to Quercus)

This is a short individual written assignment focused on course content and interdisciplinary, public-facing communication. You may choose one of the following formats:

- A blog post for an interdisciplinary or policy-focused website (e.g., the Washington Post's Monkey Cage, the Center for Global Development's web series, the Wilson Center's New Security Beat, The Conversation, etc.)
- An op-ed for a newspaper or other media outlet
- An alternate format of your choice (such as a short podcast or video), with my permission

Please note that your assignment should be roughly 1,200 words. Shorter is fine, although usually more challenging! Blog posts for outlet's such as Washington Post's Monkey Cage are around 1,200 words or less. Op-eds for newspapers are shorter and generally 800-1000 words. If you need a few more words for your assignment, that's fine, but try not to go much over 1,2000 words (that should give you a sense of the scope of your piece). If you are writing an op-ed, stick to the lower word count.

You will write on decision-making themes related to the readings and/or seminar speaker presentations. You can interpret decision-making broadly, as we do in our course. **You must draw on at least two readings from our syllabus**. You may also choose to refer to the speaker or class presentations and additional outside sources. In your blog post or op-ed you will:

- Specify the outlet you are writing for
- Use the citation style that is appropriate to the outlet you choose. If no citations are generally used in the outlet you choose, e.g., in op-eds, please include footnotes or endnotes, so I can track your sources
- You will write in the style appropriate to your chosen outlet

Group Assignment (35%)

Due: April 10th by 12pm (noon) EST uploaded by one group member to Quercus

Option 1
Provide a description and analysis of an environmental decision made in the recent past. Please run your chosen topic by me. The topic can either be the decision itself or both the decision and its implementation. The research question to be addressed should include:
- why was the decision made (and implemented in the way it was)?
- how could it have been done differently?

Option 2
Create a proposal/plan for an online, in-person, or hybrid interdisciplinary conference or workshop on a topic of current concern. Please run your chosen topic by me.

For option 2, in addition to your proposal/plan, critically assess the benefits and drawbacks of convening the conference or workshop online, in-person, or as a hybrid. Please also consider questions of access and equity.

For either option, each group will turn in a shared project, and the projects will:

- Build your analysis or conference through an interdisciplinary lens/approach;
- Draw on course readings and key questions/themes in some form;
- Be 5,000-8,000 words long

You will also be required to **present your final projects on the last day of class** (April 3). This presentation will be 10% of your grade for the group assignment.