WELCOME TO THE COURSE!
What stories and narratives influence our thinking about the environment, our relationships with the land, waters, and all life on the planet as a society and as individuals? How might change in this relationship with the planet come about?
This course addresses these two queries, building on social change theory and social cognitive theory. As suggested by artist, activist and political thinker Ricardo Levins Morales¹, the stories and narratives we embrace, along with the beliefs and values embedded within them, form the soil that, like good rich compost, nourishes the projects, initiatives, institutions and organizations we build for a more just and sustainable society. Of course, the reverse is also true: toxic narratives, beliefs and values, like toxic or baren soils, can hinder or prevent the growth of pro-environmental-social behaviour. At the same time, social cognitive theory tells us that transformation of attitudes and beliefs ensue from taking action and building greater of agency.² To continue the above metaphor, by purposefully planting certain seeds, even in poor soil, we can eventually have a positive effect on the health of that soil. Where these two theories align is in their agreement on the power of storytelling.

Today, film represents a powerful medium to convey stories of people effecting change, and/or pro-environmental/social narratives and ideas in a more immediate and relevant way. Films are an important medium within the intersection of environment and culture for exploring current ecological concerns with a view to fostering a more just and sustainable future.

Through journal reflections, class discussions and guided critical thinking exercises, and a paper, students in this first-year foundation course will be able to build confidence and enthusiasm for further study in environmental studies, within a small-group seminar setting.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

As part of a first-year foundation course, ENV196 aims to:

1. provide you with multiple opportunities to participate actively in academically rigorous class discussions and foster your ability and comfort in expressing your ideas and arguments orally and in a logical manner;
2. support you in thinking analytically and expressing your ideas clearly and effectively in your writing;
3. help you understand some of the processes of cultural change;
4. develop an enthusiasm for future studies on the environment;
5. to create an educational atmosphere that is respectful, challenging, engaging, and informative while fostering collegiality and teamwork skills in the process.

COURSE MATERIAL
All required readings will be available freely through our Quercus portal. You will be required to purchase/obtain a blank journal-type entry book.

HOW THE COURSE IS ORGANIZED & EXPECTATIONS FOR CLASS PREPAREDNESS
The small-class structure will allow for weekly discussions, so you are expected to attend all lectures, participate actively, and arrive to class having read the required material beforehand. Students are expected to spend, on average, 5 to 6 hours a week preparing for class for both (readings) and/or researching and carrying out assignments.

We will begin classes watching the film together, allowing for questions, and comments throughout, followed by discussion. Some classes will involve group and one-to-one work as well as short quizzes.

All students will have opportunities to:
- make small presentations in front of class,
- collaborate with peers on projects and writings, and
- meet one-to-one with me to discuss work and progress.

Quercus
Students are responsible for keeping informed about the course and its content via the course website on Quercus (https://q.utoronto.ca/) and syllabus (found on Quercus). All documents and resources required for the course, except for the course textbook, will be accessible through this website.

EVALUATION AND GRADING SCHEMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Engagement</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal Reflection</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two short quizzes (5% each)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research (draft) paper peer review</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper final</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group presentations on “A Movie for Our Time”</td>
<td>10%</td>
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ASSIGNMENTS

Class Engagement:
With the idea that we learn from one another (me included), class discussions will be essential. They will be open collegial and respectful, in both small and large group formats. You will be expected to actively participate in class discussions, ask questions and generally be inquisitive. To this end, you are expected to attend every class (see Attendance, Due Dates and Lateness) and to have completed the readings before class time so as to engage more proficiency in class discussions. Attendance will account for up to half the whole class engagement mark.
Journal Reflection (to be handed in twice: Feb 14 [for initial assessment] and April 4 (for final assessment):
You will write in a journal throughout the course, minimally once a week, though more often than that is welcomed. Please purchase your own journal for documenting your reflections and observations. You will reflect on one or more aspects of weekly readings and/or the film of the week (making sure to convey them clearly and precisely), incorporating your thoughts and emotions on the aspect(s) in question. You will also include one (1) of readings from Week 1 (Levin’s video mentioned on page 2 of this syllabus is also acceptable) that present a theoretical framework on narratives. Suggested prompts for reflections are found on the weekly class outline. You are invited to participate as actively and creatively as possible with the readings/films: for example, writing your thoughts outside in nature, among the trees and including pictures and/or original art. The aim of this exercise is threefold: to have you engage deeper with critical attention (not the same as critique) the films, readings, along with various theories covered throughout the course; to have you engage both the analytical and creative side of your brain; and to allow me to assist you in fostering skills in critical and creative thinking. There is no minimum page count as all write differently and book sizes can differ. Consider less than 250 words/week too little, more than 500 words/week too much. Evaluation will be based not so much on length but on clarity and precision in describing aspect(s) in question, evidence of critical/creative thinking on that aspect, writing style & mechanics.

Quizzes:
Two (2) short quizzes will be held in class on Tuesday 14 February and Tuesday, 4 April. The quizzes will run 20-minutes, short answer to concepts and issues covered in readings and class. This will be a low-stress exercise: a prep sheet with possible topics covered on the quiz will be handed out one class prior. The goals of the quizzes are to allow me to gauge your comprehension of concepts and issues covered; and to hone your test-study skills in a low-pressure format.

Group presentations on A Movie for Our Time:
Within small groups, you will have an opportunity to pitch your own film to a producer (the rest of the class), a movie very much needed for our time. The film should have a narrative that will engage the Canadian population on an environmental issue, with the over all goal of effecting pro-environmental behaviour. The presentations will take place in our last class, Apr 4 where each group will have ten (10) minutes to make their pitch to the rest of the class (the producer), including 3 aspects 1) plot line, 2) description of main/important characters and 3) what theories or concepts covered throughout the course support the movie’s assumptions (refer to Week 1 readings). The aims of this exercise are as follows: to help foster teamwork; to allow you to demonstrate how well you have synthesized material covered in class; to foster oral presentation skills
(remember, you will need to be enthusiastic as Hollywood producers can be tough!!); and to hone your creative prowess.

Research paper (proposal and paper):

1. Initial Research Paper Proposal (due as hard copy in class 6, Feb 14)

   With the goal of ensuring your research topic is viable and sources adequate, you will prepare a one-page research proposal (with 11-12 pt. font and margins no smaller than .75 inches). The proposal will describe in 100 to 150 words (excluding sources cited) the research question to be addressed, a brief description of the plan of approach to the topic, along with a list of a minimum of four to six (4-6) academic sources [cited correctly in MLA, APA or Chicago format]. See Research Paper below for more details. Evaluation will be based on clarity, evidence of critical thought put into proposal, writing style & mechanics.

2. Research (draft) paper peer review (between weeks 9 and 11)

   With the goals of honing your skills in peer editing, and fostering collegial academic exchange of knowledge, each student will share their draft paper (does not have to be the final, polished version) with a peer who has one week to comment (very briefly and concisely) to your draft, addressing four (4) questions: 1) Does the paper conform to the assignment parameters [if not why]? 2) Is the argument logical and coherent (in other words, do conclusions follow logically from premises) [if not, in what manner?]? Are facts/claims sufficiently supported [with one-two examples maximum where this is not the case]? What two [only 2] aspects of the writing/style might require improvement? Note: it is the peer marker who receives the mark for this. To be uploaded to Quercus and comments presented to student author no later than March 27. Note, as well, that should you not hand-in your paper to your fellow peer for marking (between weeks nine and eleven), or you give the reviewer less than 48 hours to review the paper, you, its author, will lose 4 to 5% from your final paper mark. The peer marker student with no paper will be given another student’s paper to review.

3. Research Paper:

   Soft due date: before class 12
   Hard due date: one week after last class (April 11, 11:59 pm)
   To be handed in on Quercus using Ouriginal
   Format: five to six double-spaced pages (with 11-12 pt. font and margins no smaller than .75 inches).

   The goal of you writing this paper is to have you conduct research on an issue of your choice that is covered in class readings and/or films related to the environment, and to present an argument in well-written essay format in a coherent and logical manner for effecting pro-environmental change.

   Think of it as producing and defending a thesis statement and the possible implications of your argument for a just and sustainable world. You are to
employ reliable sources (those that have been peer-reviewed by other experts in the field prior to publication) and cite proficiently using APA, MLA or Chicago formatting. Topics will be chosen in consultation with me.

**Sources** found in **Required Readings** – *other than those from Week 1* – are not allowed (except in consultation with me for my approval). All Suggested Readings and those found at the end of this syllabus are allowed.

The **evaluation criteria** used in evaluating written work (in order of descending importance) are the following:

- **Analysis** – analysis will be evaluated in terms of success in using evidence in the form of data (comparison, examples, statistics, and testimony) to construct a logical argument which convincingly supports your research question.
- **Precision and accuracy** – precision means saying exactly and specifically what you mean, avoiding ambiguity and vague generalities. Accuracy refers to absence of major factual errors.
- **Structure** – this is how the paper is organized; each paper should be written as a focused essay that addresses the research question in a coherent manner. Avoid tangents.
- **Writing style** – writing style should be appropriate for an academic publication. Beyond that, style will be evaluated primarily in terms of clarity.
- **Mechanics** – defined as freedom from punctuation, spelling and grammatical errors. You are expected to include thorough, accurate and consistent references (according to reference instructions above)

**OUTLINE OF WEEKLY CLASS VIEWINGS AND READINGS**

**Week 1 (Jan 10)**
Introduction to the course, one another and how it is structured. We will go over the theoretical frameworks for this course, which will involve a class exercise (*outdoors – so dress appropriately*). There are no required readings or viewings for this first class. **The readings below will be incorporated throughout the course.**

**Suggested readings (to be utilized throughout the course and your paper should you wish):**

- Common Vision. “Hold This Space: A minds and hearts approach to engaging young people with climate change.” Available at: https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NERC-160622-HoldThisSpaceCommonVision.pdf
https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1320645111.

https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/abcd5a.

https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300248890-010.

**Week 2 (Jan 17)**  
To begin our exploration, we will look at excerpts of *Mindwalk* to foster discussion on new scientific and philosophic understandings of life and the world around us. How might the way we understand the world influence how we relate to it?  
**Required reading:**  

**Suggested readings:**  

**Week 3 (Jan 24)**  
We explore what past considerations of the meaning of life and what living a meaningful life might entail today, and why that might be significant in our quest for a just and sustainable future. How would you address someone who asked you, What is our purpose as a species here on Earth?  
**Required reading:**  

**Suggested readings:**  

**Week 4 (Jan 31)**
We explore consumption as it has become a way of life within our culture and compare this with stories of ‘people’ effecting change, finding meaning in sufficiency and liberation. How does consumption impact your life?


**Required reading:**

**Suggested reading:**

**Week 5 (Feb 7)**
Sometimes, narratives, beliefs and values can be manipulated, and people deceived by them. What actions might allow for new paradigms to come into being within society?


**Required reading:**

**Suggested readings:**

**Week 6 (Feb 14) Research proposals due [hard copy, in class] and initial journal review**
This week we change pace. We begin with a short 1st *Short quiz* (20 minutes). After, there will be exercises (tied to the journalling project and/or mindfulness) and individual student discussions with me about your research writing proposal and journals.

*Reading Week of Feb 20, no class*

**Week 7 (Feb 28)**
We explore the concept of place, the human relationship and duties to place. Your current time at UofT aside, does it matter to you where you live? Why might that matter?
**Featured video:** *Avatar*. James Cameron, Jon Landau, Mauro Fiore, Sam Worthington, Zoë Saldana, Stephen Lang, Michelle Rodriguez, et al.. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Film Corp., 2009.

**Required reading:**

**Suggested reading:**

**Week 8 (Mar 7)**
We explore challenges and benefits of taking action where justice matters. Have you protested, been defiant of authorities (in a peaceful manner, hopefully) for a cause bigger than you? Does such defiance matter? Why or why not?


**Required reading:**

**Suggested reading:**

**Week 9 (Mar 14)** *Research draft paper peer-review process begins*
We explore our own human nature when life becomes difficult with economic hardships, for example, and situations seem hopeless. How do you suppose you will face societal hardships that you might experience in your own future?


**Required reading:**

**Suggested reading:**
Week 10 (Mar 21)
We explore notions of exco-anxiety amid the preponderance of grim outlooks. Do you experience eco-anxiety? What is your operational definition of hope?


**Required reading:**

**Suggested reading:**

Week 11 (Mar 28)
What story in the end will we tell ourselves, convey to others? What if we had ample time to test all narratives? Is there one narrative we should be seeking? How might we know?


**Required reading:**

Week 12 (Apr 4)
This week we change pace once more. We begin with 2nd Short quiz. Groups will present their pitch to class on A Movie for Our Time. We wrap up the course with discussion and exchange; journals are due.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance, Due dates and lateness**
Missed quizzes will require you to hand in an added Reflection Paper on Readings (critical thinking still required, though marked at quiz percentage, assigned by me).

As for other assignment deadlines, I understand this is a first-year course and that, for some of you (gauging from what past students tell me), high school did not prepare you sufficiently for the rigors of university. Here, lateness counts, and unless you have a valid reason (I have other things due is not valid, illness is), you will lose marks. Note: this whole course has been designed to help you to do the work early, in steps, on time and with help. Should you be late, however:
• A penalty of 1%/day for papers late by one day, 2%/day for papers late by two days, 3%/day for papers late three days until the fourth day onward, where a late penalty of 4%/day will take effect.

Should you have to miss class (for illness), your attendance mark will suffer unless you contact me within 24 hours for instructions on a mini assignment I will send in lieu of class engagement marks for that class.

Accessibility
The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the (online) classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible:
https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task_levels/accessibility-andacademic-accommodations/

The University is committed to developing an accessible learning environment that provides reasonable accommodations to enable students with disabilities to meet the essential academic requirements of the University’s course and programs. Please be aware of the academic accommodation policies and resources page on the Provost’s website:
https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/students/academic-accommodation/

Audiovisual material
Films will be watched in class; however, as all films are freely available online throughout our library, films can be re-watched for review purposes.

Audio recordings of lectures/discussions
Due to the small-group structure of this course with multiple exchanges by many students, class recordings will not be allowed.

Academic Integrity
“The University of Toronto is committed to the free and open exchange of ideas, and to the values of independent inquiry. Academic integrity is fundamental to our university community’s intellectual life. What does it mean to act with academic integrity? U of T supports the International Center for Academic Integrity’s definition of academic integrity as acting in all academic matters with honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. For an Indigenous perspective on these values, you might also like to read more about the Seven Grandfathers approaches to academic integrity.

In our Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, the University has identified academic offences that run counter to those values, and that are in opposition to our mission to create internationally significant research and excellent academic programs. This code outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic
offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:
- Using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

On quizzes:
- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else’s answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor’s notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me or other available campus resources like the College Writing Centres (https://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science/), the Academic Success Centre, or the U of T Writing Website https://writing.utoronto.ca/.

Use of Ouriginal
“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).”

Online Communication policy
Please use email as a professional tool of correspondence that communicates in a respectful manner. Allow up to 48 hours for me to respond. Always place the course name and number "ENV196" in the subject heading of your email. You may address me as Professor Appolloni, Dr. Appolloni, or Simon, just not “Mr. Appolloni,” please.
Medical certificates and Documentation Supporting Extensions
Students do not need to use the University’s official Verification of Student Illness or Injury Form as the documentation requirement for medical-based or any other extension requests. Students will, however, be required to submit an Absence Declaration online via ACORN, and, at the same time, **must inform instructors & TAs of their absence**, in order to request accommodation. This also applies to non-medically-related absences.

With the presence of Covid-19, procedures regarding health and wellness and this virus have changed from normal procedures. Students are directed to consult the **COVID-19 Information for University of Toronto Students** at [https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/](https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/)

Technological Issues
This course requires the use of computers, and of course **sometimes things can go wrong** when using them. You are responsible for ensuring that you maintain regular backup copies of your files, use antivirus software (if using your own computer), and schedule enough time when completing an assignment to allow for delays due to technical difficulties. Computer viruses, crashed hard drives, broken printers, lost or corrupted files, incompatible file formats, and similar mishaps are common issues when using technology, and are not acceptable grounds for a deadline extension. Please also consult the site below for information regarding online learning: [https://onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/getting-ready-for-online/](https://onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/getting-ready-for-online/)

Note that sometimes, videos show best on Chrome extension. If students have more questions, please consult the U of T Vice-Provost site below for information regarding student technology requirements: [https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/tech-requirements-online-learning/](https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/tech-requirements-online-learning/)

**SUPPORT**
First year in university is demanding and it can be disorienting and daunting. Student experience can be even more daunting with everything online and the course instructor and TAs working remotely. **Know that while academic standards will remain high, I am willing to help you as much as I am able. Reach out!!**

The following are some important links to help you with academic and/or technical service and support
- General student services and resources at [Student Life](https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/)
- Full library service through [University of Toronto Libraries](https://www.library.utoronto.ca/)
- Resources on conducting online research through [University Libraries Research](https://www.library.utoronto.ca/)
- Resources on academic support from the [Academic Success Centre](https://www.academicuccesscentre.utoronto.ca/)
- Learner support at the [Writing Centre](https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/)
- Information for [Technical Support/Quercus Support](https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/)

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING OR VIEWING

The following books and/or resources can be found normally through our library system. Please check online.

Economics/commerce and environment

Ethics and environment

**Psychology (includes subject of eco-anxiety) and environment**


**Religion and environment**


Sustainability and environment

Science and environment

**Worldviews and environment**

**Documentaries and Environment**
Documentaries on the environment are too numerous to list here. Not all, despite their intentions, are completely factual, and some contain dated data. It is wise to approach all documentaries with a *hermeneutic of suspicion* (viewing the clip with some level of academic skepticism in order to reveal possible hidden meanings or undiscussed agendas). Below are samples of documentaries I have found worthwhile (I used the IMDB tag lines); let me know of others you found worth a look! The list is not, by far, comprehensive. Some might be of interest to you because of the tone concerning the environment they convey.

*Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*, directed by Jennifer Baichwal and Edward Burtinsky (2018); filmmakers document the impact humans have made on the planet in 20 countries.
*Baraka*, directed by Ron Fricke (1992); a collection of expertly photographed scenes of human life, religion and how we interact with life.
*Before the Flood*, directed by Fisher Stephens (2016); Leonardo DiCaprio looks at how climate change affects our environment and what society can do to prevent the demise of endangered species, ecosystems and native communities across the planet.
*[The] Biggest Little Farm*, directed by John Chester (2018); documentarian John Chester and his wife Molly work to develop a sustainable farm on 200 acres outside of Los Angeles.
*[The] Corporation*, directed by Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott (2003); looks at the concept of the corporation throughout recent history up to its present-day dominance.
Food Inc., directed by Robert Kenner (2008); an unflattering look inside America's corporate controlled food industry.

Kiss the Ground, directed by Joshua Tickell and Rebecca Harrell Tickell (2020); a revolutionary group of activists, scientists, farmers, and politicians band together in a global movement of "Regenerative Agriculture" that could balance our climate, replenish our vast water supplies, and feed the world.

[The] New Corporation: The Unfortunately Necessary Sequel, directed by Jennifer Abbott and Joel Bakan (2020); exposes how companies are desperately rebranding as socially responsible - and how that threatens democratic freedoms.

There's Something in the Water, directed by Elliott Page (2019); an example of environmental racism in Canada where Black and First Nations in Nova Scotia suffer disproportionate effect of environmental pollution.

This Changes Everything, directed by Avi Lewis (2015); narrated by Naomi Klein, this video looks at seven communities around the world with the proposition that we can seize the crisis of climate change to transform our failed economic system into something radically better.

[The] Race to Save the World, directed by Joe Gantz (2021); a documentary film following the lives of passionate and determined climate scientists, activists, and concerned citizens who are working to shift the world towards a clean energy future and to fight climate change before it's too late.

Sharkwater Extinction, directed by Rob Steward (2018); Filmmaker Rob Steward exposes the illegal fishing industry that threatens the survival of the world's sharks.

Water Warriors, directed by Michael Premo (2017); when an energy company begins searching for natural gas in New Brunswick, Canada, indigenous and white families unite to drive out the company in a campaign to protect their water and way of life.