

# ENV199H1S: Understanding and Debating Environmental Issues Winter 2023

Last Updated: January 2, 2023

**Time:** Wed 2-4  
**Location:** BA2139  
**Instructor:** Karen Ing, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, School of the Environment, ES2098, [karen.ing@utoronto.ca](mailto:karen.ing@utoronto.ca), 416-978-4863  
**Course Website:** Quercus  
**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 course is to introduce students to current environmental issues through readings and discussions to develop an understanding of the issue to serve as a foundation in debating what should be done about said issue.

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: climate change, energy, 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

Course readings have been drawn from a variety of sources, but are all electronically accessible with links posted.

## Course Evaluation and Assignments

Finding and Evaluating Information Sources (due Feb 8/Mar 8/Mar 29)

- 10% for paper, 5% for presentation	15%
Position Paper on Climate Change (due Feb 12)	25%
Position Paper on Energy or Water (due Apr 9)	30%
Final Test (In-class Apr 5 <sup>th</sup> )	20 %
Class Participation (attendance & discussions)	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 which will be factored into the participation grade.

## Lecture Schedule

Date	Lecture Topic
Jan 11	Intro; What is education for?
Jan 18	Climate Change - Background Information Literacy
Jan 25	Climate Change – Policy Challenges
Feb 1	Climate Change – Future and Debates Fundamentals of Writing an Academic Essay
Feb 8	Climate Change – student led discussions
Feb 15	Energy – Fossil Fuels
Feb 22	<b>Reading Week</b>
Mar 1	Energy – Conventional Alternatives & debates
Mar 8	Energy – student led discussions
Mar 15	Water – Background
Mar 22	Water – challenges and opportunities debates
Mar 29	Water – student led discussions
Apr 5	Final Test / Final discussions

## Important Dates

Jan 9 – start of term  
 Jan 22 – last day to enrol in S courses  
 Jan 22 – first day to select a CR/NCR option for S courses  
 Feb 20 – Family Day  
 Feb 20-24 – Reading Week  
 Mar 19 – last day to cancel S courses  
 Apr 6 – classes end  
 Apr 11-28 – exam period

## ASSIGNMENT DETAILS:

### Information Sources – 15% (10% written assignment; 5% presentation)

Due Feb 8/Mar 8/Mar 29, 4 double space pages

Each student must sign up for **one** of the three student led discussion dates (Climate Change – Feb 8; Energy – Mar 8; Water – Mar 29). 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**

### The Written Component

Based on the environmental issue you signed up to research, select a subtopic within this broad area and locate **three** sources of information published within the **past five years** on this topic. 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 within the campus library system. The third source can be from anywhere else including the internet, newspaper, promotional brochures, etc...

Source 1: a **peer reviewed** journal article from the University of Toronto library system

Source 2: a book found from any of the campus libraries at UofT

Source 3: from anywhere you want as long as it is on topic

For EACH source provide the full citation at the top of the page. Use the APA ([www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org)) style throughout. For a brief description of the APA styles visit [www.writing.utoronto.ca](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca)

Write a minimum of 3 paragraphs for **each** source:

- 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 concluding paragraph comparing and contrasting the three different sources of information.**

### The Presentation

Prepare a short (~10 min) presentation on the topic of your information sources assignment. The presentation should include key findings from the sources you located to illustrate new understanding you have gained as part of your research effort. You should end the presentation by presenting a discussion or debate question on your topic.

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

**Position Paper #1: Climate Change: Due Feb 12<sup>th</sup>, worth 25%**

**Position Paper #2: Energy or Water: Due Apr 9<sup>th</sup>, 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 assigned readings in the course, **include a minimum of 5 other** references.

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

- figure out what is at issue, select a debate within the issue
- identify the various positions within this debate, e.g. the pros and cons
- 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. It is important here to also include acknowledgement and consideration of the opposing side to demonstrate you have weighed all evidence in reaching your position.
- 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

In this course, you are being asked to use the APA citation method for all your assignments. ([www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org)).

## **COURSE POLICIES**

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. UofT does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

### **Technology Requirements**

Specific guidance from the U of T Vice-Provost, Students regarding student technology requirements is available here:

<https://www.vicprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/tech-requirements-online-learning/>

Advice for students more broadly regarding online learning is available here:

<https://onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/getting-ready-for-online/>

This is an in-person seminar course and these sessions will not be recorded.

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.

### **Graded Material**

Any disputes or questions on graded material must be brought to the attention of the TA/instructor within 2 weeks of return or posting, otherwise will be considered final.

### **Submission of assignments:**

We will be using a plagiarism detection program within the online assignment function in Quercus for submission of the written assignments in this course. Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool website for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their material to be included as source documents in the University's plagiarism detection tool 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 University's plagiarism detection tool service are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

If a student does not wish to submit to the online plagiarism tool, the student **MUST** advise the instructor immediately as alternate arrangements for screening the assignment must be arranged.

To avoid late penalties, assignments must be submitted to the Quercus Assignment function before **midnight on the posted due date**.

When submitting your assignment on Quercus, the file should be saved in a single file, with an extension of .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf. The title of your file should follow the format: “LastnameFirstname.doc”

In formatting your assignment it should:

- Include the following information on the front page: the assignment title (feel free to be creative, but representative), the course title and number, your name and student number
- Be double spaced, using 12 point font, in black ink with 1” (2.5cm) margins;
- include page numbers

### **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 Absence Declaration Tool on ACORN.

Please note the declaration must cover the period of time you missed, e.g. the week before the assignment/essay is due, etc.

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

### **Academic Integrity**

**The following is taken from the Faculty of Arts and Science Academic Integrity website (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students>):**

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto’s *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Copying material word-for-word from a source (including lecture and study group notes) and not placing the words within quotation marks.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.

- Including references to sources that you did not use.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including
  - working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work,
  - having someone rewrite or add material to your work while “editing”.
- Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own without your permission.

On tests and exams:

- 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 doctor’s notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the *Code*. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. 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, seek out additional information from me, or from other available campus resources like the [U of T Writing Website](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca). If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work, please speak to me or seek the advice of your college registrar.

See also the handout “How Not to Plagiarize,” Margaret Proctor, 2009, available online at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

### **Evaluation criteria**

The primary criteria used in evaluating written work are the following.

#### **Form:**

Defined as freedom from spelling and grammatical errors. Students are expected to include thorough, accurate and consistent references in any academic referencing style that includes page numbering which is included in the document “Standard Documentation Formats” available at: [www.utoronto.ca/writing/document.html](http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/document.html)

#### **Writing style:**

Defined as clarity, succinctness, appropriate diction and tone.

#### **Structure:**

Defined as coherence of the organization of the paper. The logic of the structure is determined by the purpose, which is to test a hypothesis, answer a research question or defend a thesis statement.

**Precision and accuracy:**

Precision means saying exactly and specifically what you mean, avoiding vague generalities. Accuracy refers to absence of major factual errors.

**Analysis:**

Student essays are expected to include critical distance, reflection and originality of thought. The written assignments will be evaluated on the defensibility of their analysis in terms of their use of evidence and logical coherence.

**ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS**

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility: if you require accommodations for a disability, or have any other accessibility concerns about the course, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) as soon as possible.

[disability.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:disability.services@utoronto.ca) or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> .

**ADDITIONAL SERVICES and SUPPORT**

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](#)
- Full library service through [University of Toronto Libraries](#)
- Resources on conducting online research through [University Libraries Research](#)
- Resources on academic support from the [Academic Success Centre](#)
- Learner support at the [Writing Centre](#)

Information for [Technical Support/Quercus Support](#)