

**University of Toronto**  
**School of the Environment**  
**ENV411 Sustainability Thinking – Winter 2024**

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## **General Information**

Lecture: Tuesdays 12:00-2:00 pm

Location: See Quercus / Acorn for details

Tutorials: TUT0101, Tuesdays 2:00 – 3:00pm  
TUT0102, Tuesdays 2:00 – 3:00pm  
TUT0201, Tuesdays 3:00 – 4:00pm  
TUT0301, Tuesdays, 4:00 – 5:00pm

### **Course instructor**

Michael Classens

[michael.classens@utoronto.ca](mailto:michael.classens@utoronto.ca)

Office: See Quercus for details

Office hours: Wednesday, 10:00am – 11:00am or by appointment

### **Teaching Assistants**

Asana Farshchi

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Aden Fisher

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## **Course description**

This course is designed to provide a capstone experience that emphasizes various dimensions of sustainability from interdisciplinary perspectives. Students will have the opportunity to consider several structural conditions that reproduce fundamental social and environmental unsustainabilities in the contemporary context, including colonialism, white supremacy and capitalism. The course will also provide students with opportunities to reflect on their own experience and knowledge, and work collaboratively to mobilize critical sustainability perspectives beyond the classroom.

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of this class, you should have confidence in your ability to:

- Understand and describe the conjoined character of the ‘natural’ and ‘social’ worlds
- Understand and describe the structural conditions underpinning unsustainability
- Understand and describe how issues of equity intersect with sustainability issues
- Design and deliver a presentation on complex ideas in an engaging way to your peers and others

## Evaluation

*\*Note – all written work should be submitted through Quercus.*

Gratitude in learning – 10  
Annotated bibliography and outline – 20  
Draft colloquium presentation – 10  
Colloquium presentation – 10  
Final output – 25  
Collegiality and collaboration – 10  
Learning journal – 15

## Assignments

**Gratitude in learning – 10%**

**Due: January 23**

Realizing more sustainable worlds requires fundamental change in multiple registers. One important element in this context includes reformulating conventional relations within the academic sphere. So often academic work is extractive, invisibilized, and exploitative. The teacher-student dichotomy, the distance between reader and writer, and the transactive character of contemporary education can all inhibit fostering meaningful connections in this realm. Reflecting on your postsecondary learning experience, you will write a one-page (250 word) letter to someone who has made a significant contribution to how you understand the world. This could be an author whose work moved you, a teaching assistant, a course instructor, a student – anyone who has contributed meaningfully to your learning in the postsecondary context. Be specific – with an example or two – about how this person impacted you. Submit your letter through Quercus. I also encourage you to send your letter to its intended recipient (in an email or otherwise), though this is not required.

**Annotated bibliography and outline – 20%**

**Due: February 13**

Regardless of the format you choose, (see details below), you will prepare an outline and annotated bibliography to support your final paper or project. The outline should be no more than 500 words (*not inclusive of the annotated bibliography*), and it should (i) clearly identify the format of the final output (conventional paper, literature review, grant proposal, program review, etc.), (ii) provide a summary of the topic area, and (iii) include a brief outline of the thesis/sections/sub-headings/etc., as applicable. You will also provide a list of at least 5-7 sources, consisting of academic articles, book chapters, policy documents, newspaper articles, and the like, relevant to the topic, and include a brief annotation (3-4 sentences) for each reference. The specifics of the outline and annotated bibliography will be contingent on the form of the final project you choose. Your final paper or project can be focused on anything you'd like, as long as it is related to sustainability broadly defined.

**Draft colloquium presentation – 10%**

**Due: The week of March 4 or March 11**

In preparation for the colloquium (see below), we will hold two rehearsal colloquia (either the week of March 4 or March 11) in tutorial. Students, working in pairs, will give a 3 min presentation on a sustainability-related issue of their own choosing (please be sure to keep your presentation to no more than 3 mins – this is harder than you might think! We'll discuss some strategies in class).

**Colloquium presentation – 10%****Due: March 26 / April 2**

Building on the draft colloquium presentation, you will give your 3 min presentation to the entire class during lecture period. You should focus on effectively communicating – in 3 mins – the key points, learnings, insights, and the like, in compelling and engaging ways to a diverse audience. *For the final presentation please submit your presentation materials via Quercus.*

**Learning journal – 15%****Due: March 26**

Reflection is a key part of learning. In order to encourage you to reflect on your learning experience in this class, and throughout your time as a postsecondary student, I ask that you keep a learning journal throughout the course and make at least FOUR TOTAL entries of approximately 200 words each. You do not need to submit each entry – submit your consolidated reflections on March 28<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of the journal is to document and reflect on whatever aspects of this course or your degree were most impactful, problematic, resonant and/or challenging for you. There are learning reflecting resources on the Quercus page, and we'll discuss these in class.

**Final paper – 25%****Due: April 2**

There are at least two options for the final project. In either case, you should use the annotated bibliography and outline to build toward your final project.

- 1) A conventional academic paper focused on a topic relevant to the course themes. The subject of the paper can be motivated by course readings, your own experience and observations, a news article or local issue that piqued your interest – whatever inspires you. The paper should be 2,000 – 2,500 words.
- 2) An alternative output – such as a detailed grant proposal, a literature review (either academic or grey literature), a program scan, a policy scan, an art piece, or some other mutually agreeable format (if you decide to do an alternative output, you're strongly encouraged to discuss with me or your teaching assistant).

Whatever format you choose, note that this year, we'll be curating a public event with some campus partners to display your work. So, I'd very much encourage you to include some visual element to your final project (even, for example, if it's just a few key sentences from your essay). We'll discuss this more in class and tutorial.

**Collegiality and collaboration (10%)****Due: April 2**

I hope we can challenge the individualism held in such high esteem in many academic spaces by creating a collegial and collaborative co-learning environment in our time together. Toward these ends, I want to reward participating in ways that exemplify support, mutual aid, and gratitude. You can demonstrate this in a variety of ways – if you’re unsure whether something will ‘count’, you can email either me or the TA. A few examples of possible activities:

- Taking notes during class and sharing them on Quercus.
- Sending a classmate a relevant resource/article/book chapter.
- Undertaking an act of mutual aid (e.g. proofreading someone’s work, showing them how to use a piece of software, talking through a concept/research challenge, etc. with someone, etc.)

Aim for 5-7 collegial activities during the semester and log them in a word document (2-3 sentences per activity). Submit this log at the end of the semester and briefly reflect on your activities (the total output should be no more than 500 words).

## Schedule

*\*Note: This schedule is subject to change*

- Lecture will be held every week, on Tuesday, from January 9, 2024 to April 2, 2024 (with the exception of February 20, 2023, which is reading week).
- Tutorials will be held 6 times, including the weeks of January 22, January 29, February 12, March 3, March 10, and March 17. Check your schedule for day/time/room details.

Date	Topic/readings	Deadlines/to do
Week 1 January 9, 2024	<b><u>Introduction and overview</u></b>  <b>Read</b> The syllabus	
Week 2 January 16, 2024	<b><u>The world as a (hopeful) classroom</u></b>  <b>Read</b> Hooks, B. (2003). <i>Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope</i> . Routledge. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach 1 – pgs 1-12</li> <li>• Teach 2 – pgs 13-24</li> </ul> Gilmore, R.W. (2011). What is to be done? <i>American Quarterly</i> 63(2): 245-265.  <b>Optional</b> Cairns, K. (2021). Feeling environmental justice: Pedagogies of slow violence. <i>Curriculum Inquiry</i> , 1–20. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2021.1985925">https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2021.1985925</a>	
Week 3 January 23, 2024	<b><u>Scrutinizing sustainability</u></b>  <b>Read</b> Sumner, J. (2007). Chapter 4, “Searching for sustainability: Past and present. In <i>Sustainability and the civil commons: rural</i>	<b>Tutorial 1: On reflection</b>  <b>Due</b> <b>Gratitude in learning</b>

	<p><i>communities in the age of globalization</i>. University of Toronto Press, (pp. 76-92).</p> <p>Blühdorn, I. (2016). <i>Sustainability—Post-sustainability—Unsustainability</i> (T. Gabrielson, C. Hall, J. M. Meyer, &amp; D. Schlosberg, Eds.; Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199685271.013.39">https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199685271.013.39</a></p> <p><b>Optional</b>  Seasons, M. (2021). The Equity Dimension of Climate Change: Perspectives From the Global North and South. <i>Urban Planning</i>, 6(4), 283–286.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v6i4.4998">https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v6i4.4998</a></p>	
Week 4 January 30, 2024	<p><b><u>The exhibitions and activism: socio-ecological knowledge mobilization</u></b></p> <p><b>Read</b>  Spring, Lauren and Darlene Clover. (2021). Museums, socio-ecological thinking, and activist pedagogies of imagination. <i>Studies in Adult Education and Learning</i> 27(1): 63-78.</p> <p>Lyons, Steve, and Kai Bosworth. (2019). Museums in the climate emergency. In <i>Museum Activism</i>. 174-185.</p>	<b>Tutorial 2: On annotation</b>
Week 5 February 5, 2024	<p><b><u>Pollution &amp; colonialism</u></b></p> <p><b>Read</b>  Liboiron, M. (2021). <i>Pollution is colonialism</i>. Duke University Press.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction – pgs 1-38</li> <li>• Chapter 1 – pgs 39-79</li> </ul>	
Week 6 February 13, 2024	<p><b><u>The Anthropocene? And climate coloniality</u></b></p> <p><b>Read</b>  Baldwin, A., &amp; Erickson, B. (2020). Introduction: Whiteness, coloniality, and the Anthropocene. <i>Environment and Planning D: Society and Space</i>, 38(1), 3–11.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775820904485">https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775820904485</a></p> <p>Todd, Z. (2013). Indigenizing the Anthropocene. In <i>Art in the Anthropocene</i> (pp. 241–254).  <a href="https://openresearchlibrary.org/viewer/bd918efc-f018-4d3e-bcd3-6e7994a09298/12">https://openresearchlibrary.org/viewer/bd918efc-f018-4d3e-bcd3-6e7994a09298/12</a></p>	<p><b>Due</b>  <b>Annotated bibliography and outline</b></p> <p><b>Tutorial 3: 3-minute thesis</b></p>
February 20, 2024 <b>READING WEEK NO CLASS</b>		
Week 7 February 27, 2024	<p><b><u>The slow violence of unsustainability</u></b></p> <p><b>Read</b></p>	

	<p>Nixon, R. (2011). "Introduction", in <i>Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor</i> (pp. 1-44). Harvard University Press.</p> <p>Kate J Neville &amp; Sarah J Martin (2022): Slow justice: a framework for tracing diffusion and legacies of resistance, <i>Social Movement Studies</i>, 1-21. DOI: 10.1080/14742837.2022.2031955</p>	
Week 8 March 5, 2024	<p><b><u>Waste, Capitalism, &amp; Sustainability</u></b></p> <p><b>Read</b></p> <p>Giles, D. B. (2021). A Mass Conspiracy to Feed People: Food Not Bombs and the World-Class Waste of Global Cities. Duke University Press.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction: Of Waste, Cities, and Conspiracies (pp. 1-23)</li> <li>• The Anatomy of a Dumpster: Abject Capital and the Looking Glass of Value (pp. 31-54).</li> </ul>	<b>Tutorial 4: Draft colloquium presentations &amp; feedback</b>
Week 9 March 12, 2024	<p><b><u>Queering sustainability</u></b></p> <p><b>Read</b></p> <p>Gaard, G. (2020). Toward a queer ecofeminism. In R. Stein (Ed). New perspectives on environmental justice. Rutgers University Press (pp. 21-44).</p> <p>Kagan, S. (2020). Introduction: Queer Convivialist Perspectives for Sustainable Futures. <i>World Futures</i>, 76(5-7), 267-286. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/02604027.2020.1777834">https://doi.org/10.1080/02604027.2020.1777834</a></p>	<b>Tutorial 5: Draft colloquium presentations &amp; feedback</b>
Week 10 March 19, 2024	<p><b><u>Community, economy, sustainability</u></b></p> <p><b>Read</b></p> <p>Vgontzas, N. (2021). <i>Toward Degrowth: Worker Power, Surveillance Abolition, and Climate Justice at Amazon</i> (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 3981869). Social Science Research Network. <a href="https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3981869">https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3981869</a></p> <p>Graham, J. K. G., &amp; Roelvink, G. (2010). An Economic Ethics for the Anthropocene. <i>Antipode</i>, 41(s1), 320-346. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00728.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00728.x</a></p>	<b>Tutorial 6: Final paper</b>
Week 11 March 26, 2024	<b>Colloquium 1</b>	<b>Due Learning reflection</b>
Week 12 April 2, 2024	<b>Colloquium 2</b>	<b>Due Final paper</b>

		Collegiality and collaboration
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## Course Policies

1. **A note on COVID-19:** It is important to recognize the likelihood that COVID-19 will substantively shape our time together in class, as well as our respective lives outside the classroom. The frustrating truth is that we cannot predict the specific impacts of COVID-19 in the coming academic year. However, I hope the following will help guide us.
  - I hope that we are able to conduct community-based research projects this year, and that you all will get to spend time ‘in the field’, so to speak. If this is not possible, we will adjust and find equally meaningful projects to work on and learn from.
  - The pandemic has and will continue to have unequal and differential impacts. I hope that we are all attuned to this fact and resist assuming how the pandemic is being experienced by others in the class.
  - Given the profound disruption of the global pandemic over the past 3+ years, many of us are rightfully beleaguered. Given this, I hope we can prioritize being kind, gentle and understanding with each other.
  - I expect that everyone in the class will follow the COVID-19 guidelines established by the university and do their utmost to keep their peers safe and healthy. Updates on COVID-19 protocols can be found here: <https://www.utoronto.ca/utogether>
2. **A note on the use of AI/ChatGPT:** I want us to consider our responsibilities to each other as members within a community of learning, and think about how using AI tools may impact/undermine that. I also want us to consider the hidden environmental impacts of all digital tools (particularly those that rely on very large servers). We should also keep in mind the invisibleized labour – often done by racialized people in the majority world – that maintains these digital infrastructures. Finally, drawing on Métis scholar [Max Liboiron](#), I want us to consider the *citational politics* of using AI. Who we cite in our work, who we chose to be in scholarly conversation with, is always a political choice. I want to acknowledge [Sarah Martin](#), whose inspiring thinking on AI I draw on here.
3. **Deadlines:** Please do your very best to submit your work on time. In this class, perhaps more than most, your peers will be relying on you to complete your work in a timely fashion. Late penalties of up to 2% per day may apply in cases where work is not submitted on time. If you need extra time for an assignment, please do not hesitate to ask – and please try to do so at least a week in advance of the deadline.
4. **Academic Integrity:** (<http://uoft.me/CodeofBehaviour>)  
 The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters 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).

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

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, the Writing Centre or the Academic Success Centre.

## **Institutional Policies**

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

On 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. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

1. Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
2. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
3. Making up sources or facts.
4. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:

1. Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
2. Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test.
3. Misrepresenting your identity.

In academic work:

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

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 (see <https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/>).

## **COPYRIGHT**

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## **ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. 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.

## **Support**

*Writing Support:* Writing support is available to all students year-round at Writing Centres: <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science/>. You can visit the writing centre for help with an writing projects.

**Writing Workshop Series:** <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus/>.

**English Language Learning:** <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>.

**Academic Success Centre:** [www.asc.utoronto.ca](http://www.asc.utoronto.ca)

*AccessABILITY:* ([www.accessibility.utoronto.ca](http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca)) Students with diverse learning styles and needs are very welcome in this course. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services immediately.

*Wellness:* Wellness refers to maintenance of a balanced life, stress reduction and prevention of serious health issues. You are encouraged to seek support early and often. Find out more here <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/health-wellness/>

Support is also available **24/7** for students within and outside of Canada at:

**U of T My Student Support Program (U of T My SSP)** at **1-844-451-9700** or, outside of North America, **001-416-380-6578**.

More info is available at: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/myssp/>

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](#)