JGE331H1F

RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL THEORY

COURSE SYLLABUS, FALL TERM 2023

Department of Geography and Planning
and School of the Environment
University of Toronto

Instructor:
Scott Prudham
Professor
Department of Geography and Planning
and School of the Environment

Course Meetings:
Thursdays, 11:00 to 13:00

OVERVIEW

Contemporary anthropogenic environmental changes constitute some of the most pressing challenges we face. There is (hopefully?) widespread agreement on this. But what are the underlying causes of these challenges, what do we do about them, and what conceptual frames help us to answer these questions? What are the predominant ideas that influence the way we interpret and respond to environmental problems (e.g., through environmental policy and management prescriptions) and where did these ideas originate? And how do the answers to these questions turn on the way we understand the relationship between nature (human and non) on the one hand and culture and society on the other?

This course is intended to help develop your critical capacity to consider, to understand, and to act in relation to contemporary environmental problems and policy approaches based in part on engaging with the provenance of some of the most important ideas that animate (sometimes implicitly) contemporary environmentalism and environmental policy prescriptions. We will also attempt whenever possible to develop both the explicit and implicit geographical aspects of these ideas and prescriptions.

Resource and Environmental Theory: Big Ideas

One of the founding principles of the course is that there are conceptual underpinnings to the ways we both understand and respond to environmental problems. This includes, importantly, the conceptual foundations for both problem framing and problem resolution. Often the former begets the latter. Yet, too often, these conceptual foundations and their provenance are taken for granted or under-examined as opposed to being named and critically interrogated. Consider, for instance, where the basic idea of setting aside land (or areas of the sea) as parks and protected areas came from? Not a simple question and one whose answers may well surprise you. Or consider the
origins of a concept like biodiversity. It is actually a fairly recent idea. We aim to discuss the complex “lives” of some of these conceptual paradigms, to think about their geographical implications (again, explicit and otherwise) and to develop critical appraisals of them.

Where possible, we will be reading primary and canonical texts. They may not always be the “first” or original texts to articulate the idea(s) we are trying to interrogate, but they will be texts that engage with those ideas explicitly. That means we do not use textbooks or excerpts from textbooks; we do not use popular summaries or paraphrases; we do not use readings from newspapers or magazines; we do not rely on summaries or abridged versions; we try to avoid “second hand” references to the key ideas we wish to interrogate; and we do not rely on policy papers that make use of the idea(s) in question (though we will engage with the influence of the ideas on policy and on established doctrines or ways of thinking). Some of the readings will seem a bit anachronistic in style and content. Many will make for challenging reading. But I believe it will be to your benefit to go to the source (or one of them!) whenever possible, rather than taking someone else’s word for it.

Unfortunately, we only have eleven weeks to work with (not counting the first course meeting) so we must make choices. Inevitably, there are some important ideas and paradigms we will not be dealing with. Hopefully you will be able to take what you learn in this course and apply it to other paradigms, theories, and assumptions that circulate in environmentalism, environmental policy, and nature/society debates, if not more widely.

Course Objectives

This course has several objectives:

1. To recognize and understand some of the core ideas and theories, and the principles and assumptions (often implicit) underpinning dominant frames through which we interpret, explain and respond to contemporary environmental changes and related policy debates.
2. To develop a perspective on environmental issues and problems that looks not only to their biophysical or “natural” dynamics, but also their social dimensions, and how the social and biophysical dimensions are integrated or co-determined.
3. To develop critical thinking and reading skills, with emphasis on the close interrogation of assigned readings. Particular emphasis will be placed on developing a capacity to read scholarly writing on relevant issues and to identify the conceptual architecture of those writings.
4. To identify and consider geographical aspects of the ideas and paradigms we discuss.
5. To develop some facility to write about course related themes in an independent, critical, and informed way.
6. To become better citizens of this planet.

Course Instructors

Instructor: Scott Prudham, Professor, Department of Geography and Planning, and the School of the Environment. Office: Room 5007, Sidney Smith Hall.

- home page: scottprudham.ca
- email: scott.prudham@utoronto.ca If you email me, please make an effort to ask questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no”. If you have a question that requires more detail and dialogue, we will need to make an appointment to talk. I cannot and will not get into
substantive discussion with you about course related topics by email, the main reason being that I know from experience that it is fraught to do so and likely to cause more problems (for both of us) than it solves. Thank you for respecting this. If you need my advice or have substantive questions on topics related to the course, then we should talk. Please make a note of my office hours.

- Office hours: Thursdays 14:00 – 16:00, SSH 5007 or by prior appointment.

Teaching Assistant, Hernán Bianchi Benguria, doctoral student, Department of Geography and Planning.

- email: hernan.bianchibenguria@mail.utoronto.ca.
- office hours: by appointment.

**Pre-Requisites**

Successful completion of least one of the following courses is required to take this course:

GGR100H1/JEG100H1/GGR107H1/ENV221H1/ENV222H1/GGR222H1/GGR223H1

Students who have yet to complete any of the courses listed will NOT be permitted to take JGE 331. Some exceptions will be made based on previous course experience on a case-by-case basis at the sole discretion of the instructor. Students who have not completed at least one of the listed pre-requisite courses, or who have doubts about their preparation, should speak to the instructor as soon as possible. Caution: students who have not completed at least one of the listed pre-requisite courses will be removed from JGE331 unless given explicit permission by the instructor to take the course. Please also note that GGR331 is an exclusion; if you passed that course, you cannot take this one.

**Course Meetings**

Thursdays, 11:00 to 13:00. Location: see ACORN.

**Course Reading Material**

All of the course readings, unless otherwise noted, are available electronically through the U of T Library (see the schedule of topics and readings in a separate document posted to the course web site in Quercus).

**U of T Quercus**

The topic and reading schedule is posted in the Quercus course web site in a separate document. You should download it and keep it handy. Assignments will also be posted on the course web site. Completed assignments should only be submitted via the course web site.
Use the course web site to your advantage. The syllabus (i.e., this document) is always there for your reference. Additional information and announcements, guides to assignments etc. will also be placed there. Lecture slides will be posted on the course web site by Wednesday evening each week, i.e., the evening prior to lecture. You may wish to make use of the slides to assist you in making notes.

Please note that to communicate properly and to use the course web site in Quercus properly, you must use your official U of T email address and UTOR id to login.

Please do not ever send me email from within Quercus using the email tool there. I do not read that email. If you need to send me an email, use my utoronto email address. Thank you.

**Course Format**

Each week, you should do the following and in this exact order:

1. Complete the assigned reading(s) for the week.
2. Review the lecture slides posted by the end of Wednesday prior to in-person lectures on Thursday.
3. Attend lectures, Thursday, 11:00 to 13:00; consider preparing in advance any questions you would like to discuss during the lecture.
4. Complete the weekly quiz by the end of each Sunday (i.e., by 23:59 EST/EDT). Weekly quizzes cannot be completed after they expire at 23:59 EST/EDT on Sundays. There will be no exceptions to this rule for any reason.

**Assignments and Grading**

This class does not require a great deal of writing or research work on your part. That is because I want you to focus on reading carefully and thinking critically and actively about what you read. I do, however, have fairly high expectations of the quality of written work that you do submit. As a matter of policy, I do not read between the lines when it comes to engaging with your writing, and I instruct the TAs not to do so. We do not project into your prose our own knowledge of the subject (though we will take issue on that basis when appropriate) in order to guess what you are trying to say. Put differently, if we feel that you are being unclear or vague or imprecise in your phrasing, we will not guess your meaning. So, you should write with an “imagined” non-specialist audience in mind, not us!

If you are concerned about your writing, I highly recommend that you make an appointment with one of the Writing Centres (see below) as soon as possible to consult with people there on how to improve your writing in this course and in your other courses.

In addition, one of the core emphases in this class, aside from learning the substantive content, is to help you to develop the capacity to read more carefully and critically. It is a major focus and one of the reasons that I have not assigned a research paper in the course. It is very important to complete the assigned readings each week and to follow along with the lecture materials on a regular basis. The lectures do build on the assigned readings, but the assigned readings in this course may be
difficult at times for many of you. In some cases, I have assigned readings that express views quite different from what you will get from me in the lecture materials (e.g., I may disagree rather vehemently with some of the assigned readings and I will explain why), so you need to read the assigned readings and prior to lecture each week and come to class (it does matter) ready to talk about them. They should add depth to your understanding of the material. Completing the readings, coming to the lecture, and actively participating in discussion during the lecture session will help you to complete the quizzes and the assignments.

Evaluation in the course is based on two components:

1. Two critical reading assignments based on specified readings (to be specified) worth 25 percent each for a total of 50 percent of the course grade (see below; additional details for these assignments will be posted on the course web space in Quercus).
2. Eleven weekly quizzes worth 5 percent each for a total of 50 percent (we count your best ten), to be completed by 23:59 Toronto time each Sunday.

For important sessional dates, see the Faculty of Arts & Science sessional dates for Fall 2023.

**Critical Reading Assignments (two worth 25 percent each):**

On two occasions, you will be asked to read a piece that I assign and then to respond to some questions about the reading, putting into practice some of the skills we are (hopefully) learning in the course. This will entail, among other things, identifying what you think is the main argument or point of the article. You will also identify the basic organization of the argument, supporting evidence provided or empirical claims made in relation to the argument, and what key concepts are developed and used to support the argument. More details will be provided in class and via an assignment document posted on the course web site in Quercus.

The first assignment is due by electronic submission via Quercus not later than 23:59 EDT on Sunday, October 22nd, 2023. Assignments received after the deadline are late.

The second assignment is due by electronic submission via Quercus no later than 23:59 EST on Wednesday, December 20th, 2023. Assignments received after the deadline are late.

**Assignment Submission and Late Penalties**

Assignments must be submitted electronically by 23:59 EDT/EST on the due date via the course site in Quercus. Hard copies will not be accepted unless you have cleared that with me in advance. This is in part for your protection! If you experience technical problems with Quercus, then email me your assignment directly and cc yourself.

- Please submit your assignments in .doc format, .rtf format, or .pdf format.
- Name your files in the following manner: Lastname_Firstname_assignment (e.g., Prudham_Scott_assignment1).
- All assignments must be formatted with at least 2.5 cm margins on all sides, and must be double spaced.
- Pages should be numbered.
- Your name should be on every page of the assignment, as should the course name and code (number). I suggest using footers for this.

Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 5% of the value of the assignment (i.e., the total points, not your score) per day of lateness. Weekends count as one day (e.g., if an assignment is due Friday before 23:59 Toronto time and it is submitted Sunday before 23:59 Toronto time, that is one day late.

**Missed Term Work or Tests**

Students are expected to complete all assignments within the time frames and by the dates indicated in this outline. Exemption or deferral of an assignment or examination is only permitted for a medical or personal emergency or due to religious observance. Please notify me if you anticipate any problems in meeting the deadlines outlined here.

Standard forms of U of T documentation will be required for all extensions and absences. You may find guidance on how to declare an absence and to request consideration on missed course work [here](https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).

**Checking for Textual Similarities and Possible Plagiarism in Submitted Work**

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](https://uoft.me/pdt-faq)).

**Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

AI is here, seemingly to stay. We will not be pretending it does not exist. For one thing, I do not think doing so would be at all consistent with the spirit of inquiry and examination otherwise encouraged in this course. For another thing, doing so would be rather naïve and quite likely highly unfair to some students in the course.

That said, unauthorized or inappropriate use of generative AI tools for scholarly work at the University of Toronto may be considered an offence under the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).

In this course, please understand the following:

- If you use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, as learning aids or to help produce an assignment, then you must submit, as an appendix with your assignment, any
content produced by an artificial intelligence tool, and the prompt used to generate the content.

- Any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool must be cited appropriately. Many organizations that publish standard citation formats are now providing information on citing generative AI (e.g., MLA: https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/).
- If you choose to use generative artificial intelligence tools as you work through an assignment in this course, even as background preparation, then this use must be documented in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) was used, how it was used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work.

**Impediments to Academic Performance**

If you should encounter a situation that compromises your ability to perform to your potential in this course please notify me immediately. I am committed to your success in this course so please maintain an open line of communication with me.

**Video, Audio Recording, and Social Media Postings**

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences maintains the following policy as stated in the Academic Handbook for Instructors, section 4.5:

“Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. Students wishing to record lecture or other course material in any way are required to ask the instructor's explicit permission, and may not do so unless permission is granted. This includes tape recording, filming, photographing PowerPoint slides, course web site materials, etc. Such permission is only for that individual student’s. It is absolutely forbidden for a student to publish an instructor's notes own study purposes and does not include permission to “publish” them in any way to a website or sell them in other form without formal permission”. ([FAS Academic Handbook for Instructors](https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/))

Thus, you are NOT permitted to make or distribute any video or audio recordings of any aspects of in-class meetings or lectures on electronic devices, unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g., accessibility needs) and unless you have secured prior and explicit permission from me. This also applies to sharing video or images from class on any social media platform. You are also formally prohibited from sharing lecture slides and other course related materials with anyone other than other students enrolled in this course unless you have my prior permission in writing.

**Accessibility Needs**

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact [Accessibility Services](https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/) as soon as possible: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca or
On Writing (Well)

There are numerous resources at your disposal at the University of Toronto which are intended to help you improve your writing. Some of these are tailored to students whose first language is not English. Some are simply meant for anyone seeking to improve their writing. I urge you to make use of these resources.

One place to start is at the U of T’s Writing Page.
# Resource and Environmental Theory

## Course Schedule, Fall Term 2023

Department of Geography and Planning  
School of the Environment  
University of Toronto

**Instructor:**  
Scott Prudham, Professor  
Department of Geography and Planning  
and  
School of the Environment

### Summary of Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday evenings</td>
<td>Lecture slides posted</td>
<td>Complete readings and review lecture slides prior to scheduled class meetings on Wednesdays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(starting September 6, 2023)</td>
<td>Complete weekly quiz</td>
<td>Complete the quiz for each week prior to 23:59 EDT/EST each Sunday during the term (except Sunday November 12th). You cannot complete the week's quiz after the deadline. There will be no extensions for quizzes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursdays, 11:00 – 13:00</td>
<td>Class meetings</td>
<td>See ACORN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursdays, 14:00 – 16:00</td>
<td>Office hours</td>
<td>SS 5007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sundays</td>
<td>First assignment</td>
<td>Upload via Quercus before 23:59 EDT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before 23:59 EDT on Sunday</td>
<td>Second assignment</td>
<td>Upload to Quercus before 23:59 EST</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 22, 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before 23:59 EST on Wednesday</td>
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**Schedule of Lecture Topics and Assigned Readings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assigned Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept-7</td>
<td>Introduction and Course Overview</td>
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</tbody>
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- Also recommended  
- Also recommended  
- Also recommended  

**Oct-5** Moral Economies and Environmental Behaviour

- **Assigned Reading:**
- **Also recommended**

**Oct-12** Environmental “Degradation” and the Importance of Situating Crisis Narratives

- **Assigned Reading:**
- **Also recommended**

**Oct-19** (Un)Natural Disasters: The Social (and Urban) Metabolism of Risk

- **Assigned Reading:**

- Also recommended

Oct-22  Assignment #1 due by 23:59 EDT; upload to Quercus.

Oct-26  Nature/Biology as Ideology: The Complex Career of Environmental, Biological and Genetic Determinisms

- Assigned Reading:

- Also recommended:

Nov-2   Environmental Governance Through Metrics: Standards, (Ac)Counting and Objectivity

- Assigned Reading:

- Also recommended:

Nov-9   Reading Week. No class meeting

Nov-16  Mapping and Counter-Mapping: Cartographies of Territorial Resource Claims and Their Contestations

- Assigned Reading:

Also recommended:

Nov-23 Certifying Sustainability: the Dilemma of Ethical Commodities

Assigned Reading:

Also recommended:

Nov-30 Blowing Up Pipelines? Civic Action and the End of the Fossil Fuel Era

Assigned Reading:

Assigned Listening:

Also recommended:

Dec-20 Assignment 2 due by 23:59 EST; upload to Quercus