

# **JGE331H1F**

## **RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL THEORY**

### **COURSE SYLLABUS, FALL TERM 2021**

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

**Instructor:**

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

**Course Meetings:**

- 1. Week of September 9 (first meeting), online only (Zoom), attendance required, 12:00 – 14:00 EDT. This session will NOT be recorded.**
- 2. September 16 and 23 online only. Lectures will be uploaded to the Quercus course site by Tuesday evening prior to the scheduled class meeting. Optional Discussion and Q&A will take place online via Zoom Thursday, 12:00 – 14:00 pm EDT (during the scheduled course time slot), September 16, and 23**
- 3. Thereafter, we will re-assess how things look then, but for now, in-person lectures Thursdays, 12:00 – 14:00 pm EDT in SS 1085 starting September 30**

### **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 think about and respond to environmental problems (e.g., through environmental policy and management prescriptions) and where did they come from? 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 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 discussions. 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. 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 do not rely on “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 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 have gone to the source in most instances 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, principles and assumptions (often implicit) underpinning dominant paradigms used to understand 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, School of the Environment, Room 5007, Sidney Smith Hall.

- home page: [scottprudham.ca](http://scottprudham.ca)
- email: [scott.prudham@utoronto.ca](mailto: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 have an on-line chat (or we could meet on or near campus, outside, if you are nearby and weather permitting).
- Office hours: By prior arrangement, on Zoom (send me an email if you want to meet).

Teaching Assistants:

- TBA

## Course Meetings (Subject to Change):

1. Week of September 9 (first meeting), online only, attendance required, 12:00 - 14:00 EDT. This session will NOT be recorded.
2. Weeks of September 16, and 23 online only. Recorded lectures will be uploaded to the Quercus course site by Tuesday evening, prior to the scheduled class meeting. Informal discussion and Q&A will take place online via Zoom Thursday, 12:00 – 14:00 pm EDT (during the scheduled course time slot), on September 16 and 23. Attendance is optional (but if you have questions or topics you wish to pursue based on the readings and lectures, please show up) with the exception of September 9 when I want everyone to be present to talk about the course outline, expectations and logistics.
3. Thereafter, we will re-assess, but for now, in-person lectures Thursdays, 12:00 – 14:00 pm EDT in SS 1085 starting September 30.

## 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 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 along with comments from me pertaining to them by Monday evening each week. 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 UTORid to login.

### **Course Format**

The plan, for the moment (!), is to meet online only for the first three course meetings of the term (meaning for us, covering the scheduled meetings of September 9, September 16, and September 23). For those weeks, lectures will be uploaded to the Quercus site by the end of the Tuesday prior to lecture. The scheduled lecture slot Thursday 12:00 – 14:00 EDT will be used for online Q&A using Zoom. Attendance is voluntary, and up to you, with the exception of September 9 which is required.

Starting September 30, we are scheduled to meet in SS 1085 each Thursday from 12:00 – 14:00 EDT. Let's see how things go and assess where we are after the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

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

1. Complete the assigned reading(s) for the week.
2. For the first three course meetings, review the posted lecture slides and recorded comments (the slides and comments will be uploaded by the end of day each Tuesday) prior to the scheduled online class discussion time each Thursday afternoon at 12:00 EDT (we will start at 12:10)
3. Thereafter, if possible, review the readings and the lecture slides posted by the end of Wednesday prior to in-person lectures in SS 1085 (assuming we go ahead with those), starting Thursday, September 30.
4. For online instruction, if possible, join the interactive course discussions online each Thursday afternoon from 12:00 – 14:00 EDT. These sessions will be interactive and conducted within Zoom. The purposes of the Thursday sessions are to allow for discussion and the interactive exploration of questions and themes arising from the readings and the lecture materials. It is a good idea to bring your own questions to the online interactive sessions.
5. Complete the weekly quiz by the end of each Friday (i.e., by 23:59 EDT). Weekly quizzes cannot be completed after they expire at 23:59 EDT on Friday. 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 substance 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 infer 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 will explain why), so you need to read the assigned readings and review the lecture materials each week. It is also a good idea to participate in the interactive discussions on Wednesdays. They should add depth to your understanding of the material. Completing the readings, reviewing the lecture materials and participating in the weekly discussions will help you to complete the assignments effectively and will also aid you in your ability to answer questions on the weekly quizzes correctly.

Evaluation in the course is based on two components:

1. Two critical reading assignments based on specified readings (to be determined) worth 20 percent each for a total of 40 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 6 percent each (we count your best ten), to be completed by 23:59 EDT each Friday.

### **Critical Reading Assignments (two worth 20 percent each):**

On two occasions, you will be asked to read a piece that I assign and 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, you 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, Friday, October 22. Assignments received after the deadline are late.

The second assignment is due by electronic submission via Quercus no later than 23:59 EDT, on Friday, December 17. Assignments received after the deadline are late.

Important notes:

- i. Submit all assignments via the course space in Quercus. No exceptions.
- ii. Do NOT email me any assignments unless online submission fails you.
- iii. Please submit your assignments in .doc format, .rtf format, or .pdf format.
- iv. Name your files in the following manner: Lastname\_Firstname\_assignment (e.g., Prudham\_Scott\_peerreview1).
- v. All assignments must be formatted with at least 2.5 cm margins on all sides, and must be double spaced.
- vi. Pages should be numbered.
- vii. Your name should be on every page of the assignment, as should the course name and code (number). I suggest using footers for this.
- viii. Extensions will not be granted without properly documented medical reasons as per University policy. I do not make exceptions to this policy in order to ensure fairness to everyone in the class. Being busy is a good excuse, but since everyone has it (including me!), it won't be accepted under any circumstances. Material submitted late without extensions arranged prior to the due date are considered late.

### **Late Penalties**

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day of lateness and weekends count as one day (e.g., if an assignment is due Friday before 23:59 EDT and it is submitted Sunday before 23:59 EDT, that is one day late. Handing it in the following Monday before 23:59 EDT would be two days late).

### **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> (Links to an external site.)).

### **Pre-Requisites**

One of GGR100H1/GGR107H1/ENV221H1/ENV222H1/GGR222H1/GGR223H1 is required as preparation for this course. Students without one of these courses, completed prior to JGE331, will NOT be permitted to take the course. Some exceptions will be made based on previous course

experience on a case-by-case basis at the sole discretion of the instructor. Students without one of the pre-requisites, or who have doubts about their preparation, should speak to me as soon as possible. I will remove students without adequate preparation, so make sure you have the prerequisites or talk to me about why you think you should be allowed into the course if you don't. Please also note that GGR331 is an exclusion; if you passed that course, you cannot take this one.

### **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](#))

Thus, you are NOT permitted to 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](#) as soon as possible: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto: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](#).