GEOG 6340: Human-Environment Relations

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Course Description:
This course provides a survey of key themes and schools of thought in human-environment geography. The course is grounded in the following questions: Where does the study of human-environment relations fit within the broader ‘geographical tradition’? What conceptual and methodological approaches have been developed to help us understand human-environment relations? How do these approaches differ and in what ways are they competitive or complementary? What is the future of human-environment studies and what does it have to offer society?

We will explore a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to studying human-environment relations through readings, assignments, and seminar-based class discussion. Early in the term, smaller class projects will challenge students to apply these approaches toward analytical domains that are outside of their particular topic of study. Later in the term, students will have the opportunity to engage deeply with their thesis topic through the lenses that they see fit.

All lectures will be interactive, using key readings as a focal point for discussion. The final structure of the course (topics and organization) will depend on enrollment, but tentatively speaking the first five weeks of the course will be led by the instructor and the remaining weeks will be led by students (under guidance of the instructor).

Anticipated Learning Outcomes:
• Become familiar with the most recent theories, concepts and techniques through which to study human-environment relations.
• Learn how to apply conceptual lenses to interpret and understand contemporary issues.
• Skills development in writing, group facilitation, and public presentation.
• Skills development in knowledge synthesis

Course Materials:
Readings will be selected from peer-reviewed literature and shared via CourseLink. I have not predetermined the reading list; the reading list will be updated as the literature is updated. That said, readings will be shared no later than one week prior to class.
Course Topics and Schedule (subject to change):

Introductions
1: Getting started: personal introductions, class aims and objectives

First principles
2: Human-environment / nature-society / environment-society studies: are these distinctions significant, and what role do (can) geographers play in this field?  
3: The swinging pendulum - environmental determinism and social constructionism

Theoretical / conceptual frameworks (note: these are subject to change based on class interests)
4: Socioecological Systems & Resilience Theory
5: Environmental Economic Geography
6: READING WEEK
7: Political Ecology
8: Political-Industrial Ecology
9: Post-Colonial Geographies & Indigenous Knowledge
10: Feminist Ecologies
11: Critical Physical Geography
12: TBD

Student presentations
13: Student presentations

Course Assignments

Annotated bibliography and reflections on first principles [25%]: This assignment covers content from weeks 2 and 3. Summarize each paper in approximately 300 words. Demonstrate that you can effectively summarize and accurately characterize complex arguments. Then, write no more than 1000 word critical and personal reflection, which should identify tensions, gaps, complementary lines of argumentation across the papers.

Seminar Leadership / Case Study [25%]: Working with the instructor, students (in groups of 2-3) must identify and research a case study of their choosing that contributes to the dialogue of the papers that have been pre-selected by the instructor (note: this case study must be different from the topic selected for your final paper). Students will deliver a 20-30 minute presentation which provides background on the conceptual / methodological framework, and how their case study connects to this broader frame. That is, tell us how we can apply the conceptual / theoretical framework to contribute to the understanding and resolution of a particular, on-going issue. After the presentation, students
will facilitate discussion of key themes / insights / debates. The discussion should be organized around two levels: 1) the conceptual and methodological basis of the lens being applied in terms of what it says and what it does not say about human-environment relations broadly, and your issue more specifically; and 2) the issues on-the-ground as they relate to the case study. The topics and groups will be assigned randomly by way of CourseLink group generator.

**Term Paper [35%]:** Students will interpret their thesis topic through no fewer than two and no more than three of the approaches discussed in class. What would a geographer studying your topic through each lens say about your topic? What would they miss? How would they study it (type of data required, methods required)? Equal weight must be given to each lens, reflecting on the significance and / or limitations of each school of thought. The paper should be no more than 6,000 words, including references.

**Term Paper Presentation [15%]:** Consistent with academic conferences, students will develop a 15 minute presentation which summarizes their paper. Students will be graded on their capacity to communicate the subject matter, develop effective slide material, and manage Q&A. This is also an opportunity for students to receive feedback on their ideas prior to finalizing the term paper.

**Attendance and Participation [0% technically, but 100% by proxy!]:** Students will be asked to complete a matrix which summarizes all of the theoretical / conceptual frameworks covered in class. This matrix will be graded on a pass/fail basis.

**General Policy on Late Assignments / Make-up Tests**
All writing assignments are to be submitted via the Courselink dropbox no later than 4pm on their due-date. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior communication related to some legitimate and verifiable issue. Begin your writing assignments early so that you have plenty of time to organize your submissions to the Courselink dropbox. Only under very specific and rare occurrences will computing challenges be accepted as a reason for an extension to the due-date.

Students are expected to make every effort to meet deadlines. That said, when you find yourself unable to meet a deadline because of illness or compassionate reasons, please inform the course instructor and the teaching assistant by way of email or in person immediately, prior to the due date of a given assignment. We are only able to make accommodations if we are aware of your situation, so please keep the lines of communication open as early and often as possible.

**Academic Integrity Statement**
The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.
Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

In this course, your instructor will be using Turnitin, integrated with the CourseLink Dropbox tool, to detect possible plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration or copying as part of the ongoing efforts to maintain academic integrity at the University of Guelph. All submitted assignments will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

In this course, a submission must be within the 0-20% range of ‘unoriginal material’ (i.e., 80-100% original material) in order for the assignment to be graded without penalty. A major benefit of using Turnitin is that students will be able to educate and empower themselves in preventing academic misconduct. In this course, you may screen your own assignments through Turnitin as many times as you wish before the due date. You will be able to see and print reports that show you exactly where you have properly and improperly referenced the outside sources and materials in your assignment. Only the most recently submitted file to the dropbox folder will be retained and put forth for grading; all previous submissions will be deleted automatically from the dropbox folder.

**Student Accessibility Services**

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

For more information, contact SAS at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email csd@uoguelph.ca or see the website: [http://www.uoguelph.ca/csd/](http://www.uoguelph.ca/csd/)