

## **ASCI 4020 W24: Topics in Arts and Science Research**

### **The Past, Present, and Future of Waste**

Instructor: Dr. Alex Souchen

Method of Delivery: In-person, seminar

#### Course Description:

North Americans throw away more things than any other civilization in recorded history. From E-waste and plastic packaging to food waste, diapers, and toys, we possess few things without expiry dates. Today, every North American is destined to generate at least 100 tons of garbage over their lifetimes. That amounts to seven pounds of trash created every day, from birth to death. Hoarded in landfills that obscure the intensity of consumption habits, the mountains of garbage we create will be, arguably, our most enduring lifetime achievements.

Why are we so wasteful? How does garbage affect culture, politics, and society? What is the economic and environmental significance of garbage? How have science and technology contributed to creating the garbage crisis? How can they help resolve it? What can we do to reduce our wastefulness in the future?

This class addresses these questions by exploring the cultures of consumption and waste through historical and comparative case studies. Drawing insights from the fields of history, anthropology, discard studies, psychology, social justice, public health, and environmental science, class discussions will investigate four major themes: 1) the economic and social origins of wastefulness, 2) the political and international issues relating to waste management, colonialism, and inequality, 3) the health and environmental consequences of waste, and 4) the promise and perils of science and technology in a wasteful world.

#### Method of Evaluation:

Participation: 20%

Reflections: 30%

Team Project Proposal: 5%

Team Project Written Report: 20%

Team Project Presentation & Activity: 25%

No required textbook

***\*Please note: This is a preliminary course description only. It can change without notice. The final, binding course outline will be distributed in the first class of the semester.***