INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

ENV 100 University of Toronto
School of the Environment
Fall term 2019 LEC 0101

Thursdays 3-5 pm
Medical Science Building, Room 2158

Instructor
Simon Appolloni, Ph.D.
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Simon’s Office and Hours
Room TBD 1:30 to 2:30 pm
Thursdays (before class); I can come earlier at 1 pm by appointment

Teaching Assistants

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Course Description and Rationale

Ecological concerns have begun to permeate our collective consciousness. Ocean acidification, poisoned air, forest clear-cutting, ozone depletion, global climate change, toxic waste sites – the list goes on – all weigh heavily on our personal and intellectual lives. This course introduces students to the scope and seriousness of present ecological concerns, and explores some of the prevailing human-nature relationships undergirding both environmental degradation and sustainability.

We will carry out this exploration in part by touching on some of the major writers and classic essays in the field. Class lectures will be supplemented by audiovisuals, guest lectures and class discussions.

Photos above, clockwise: ocean pollution (John Cameron); wildfire Fort McMurray (Creative Commons); Activist (Markus Spiske); flooding in Canada (Gov. of Canada)
Welcome to ENV100!

Course Objectives

The course is intended as a broad-based introduction to the study of the environment. The objectives of the course are:

1) to provide students with a “functional literacy” in some of the foundational ideas and concepts in the study of the environment;
2) to help students gain a greater knowledge of, and appreciation for, the sundry ecological challenges confronting the planet;
3) to create an educational atmosphere that is respectful, challenging, engaging, and informative; and to help students learn to think critically about environmental issues, and to express their ideas clearly and effectively.

Course Material

One course book and a collection of readings:

*For Earth’s Sake: Toward a Compassionate Ecology*


Other mandatory and suggested readings are available through our library system via Quercus.

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course! In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach the Head TA and/or Accessibility Services at (416) 978 8060; http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as.
Course Evaluation

1. Test: Oct. 3 (1 hour in class), worth 20% of total mark
2. Participation Practice Quizzes/Assignments 5%
3. Mid-term exam: Oct. 31 (1.5 hours at Exam Centre), worth 35% of total mark
4. Final Exam: Dec. Exam Period (3 hours), worth 40% of total mark
   - The first test comprises multiple choice, short answer questions covering material from weeks 1 to 4.
   - Both the midterm test and exam will include essay components, short answers, as well as multiple choice questions. The midterm covers Weeks 1 to 7. The exam covers all material.
   - 5 Participation practice quizzes/assignments will be given throughout the course on Quercus, non-graded, but each worth 1%.
   - More information on each of the above will be supplied in class before the dates of evaluation.

Important Dates

QUIZZES:
#1 September 23-29
#2 October 7-13
#3 October 21-27
#4 November 11-17
#5 November 18-24

TEST: October 3

MID-TERM: October 31

FINAL: TBA (exam period December 7-20)

LAST DAY TO DROP: November 4

READING WEEK: November 4-8 (no classes)
Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules.

Online Communication Policy

Please use email as a professional tool of correspondence. Always place the course name and number in the subject heading of your email. Directly address the instructor or TA by name, and always provide your own (full) name as part of your message.

When emailing our Head TA, Lauren, please only email her in case of a personal emergency (illness, family death, accident, etc.) She usually responds to emails within 48 hours. Make sure you write "ENV100" in the subject line. All non-emergency questions should go on the COURSE DISCUSSION BOARD on Quercus; Lauren will regularly check the board and will answer your questions there. Remember to read through the discussion board and course announcements to avoid redundancy. Non-emergency emails that are better directed to the discussion board will not receive a reply. The same applies for emails without the course code in the subject.

Missed Tests / Re-marking Policy – Timeline and Protocol

Make-ups for missed tests will be reserved only for reasons of illness, personal or medical emergency. The make-up tests will occur later in the term at the discretion of the Head TA.

Do you agree with Pope Francis? Why or why not?

The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs to buy, own and consume.

#LaudatoSi
Students should contact the Head TA, Lauren, as soon as possible via email to make the necessary arrangements. All requests must be accompanied by appropriate types of medical documentation deemed “official” by the Faculty: the U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form, available to students online; the Student Health or Disability Related Certificate; a College Registrar’s Letter (from a senior authorized staff); an Accessibility Services Letter. Letters should be submitted to the Head TA no later than one week after returning to class. If the student does not come forward with one week, the Head TA or the instructor may consider a request to extend the deadline, but is under no obligation to do so. Should you wish your test paper to be remarked for a miscalculation of marks, please see the Head TA.

For concerns about the marking of tests, please discuss the matter first with the TA who marked your work (look for her/his initials/name on your work). You may not simply request that the whole work be re-examined merely because you feel the mark is too low. Please note that in re-examining the work, the TA is free to lower the mark if she/he deems it merits it. If unsatisfied with your mark, it is only after you have met and discussed your work with the TA who marked your work that you can come to the instructor with your concerns. There are no make-up opportunities for missed participation practices quizzes/assignments.

Quercus

Students are responsible for keeping informed about the course and its content via the course website on Quercus (https://q.utoronto.ca/). All documents and resources required for the course, except for the course textbook, will be accessible through this website.

What do you think?

Václav Havel, Czech playwright, essayist, poet, dissident and president of Czechoslovakia, 1989-92, wrote: “Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”

Where do you think we might locate hope today?
**FES** denotes the course book which you will have to purchase (*For Earth’s Sake: Toward a Compassionate Ecology*, by Stephen Scharper, edited by Simon Appolloni. Toronto: Novalis, 2013).

**PART 1: Revealing what we’ve been doing to the planet and to one another**

**Week 1 (Sept 5)**
*We go over course requirements and goals and begin the semester by introducing dimensions of a defining term for our time: the ‘Anthropocene’.*

Required readings:
- “We All Lose in the War against Nature,” by Stephen Scharper, pp. 63-64, in *FES*.

Suggested reading:

**Week 2 (Sept 12)**
*From its earliest (and heroic) messenger, Rachel Carson, to contemporary scientific frameworks all sounding environmental alarm bells, we continue to learn about this epoch of humans altering nature through chemicals.*

Required readings:

Suggested listening/viewing:

**Week 3 (Sept 19)**
*We continue to learn about the Anthropocene by examining the state of the world’s oceans which – as Mitchell tells us – are “our main life-support system, controlling the planet’s temperature, climate and key chemical cycles.”*

Required reading:
  Suggested viewing:

**Week 4 (Sept 26)**
*We look at climate change and its effect on the land and its soil and we learn who loses most in our war against nature. We will also review for next week’s test.*

Required reading/viewing:
- “Climate Chaos in the South - The Victims' Story,” Video by National Film Board of Canada, Antwerp: Wereldmediateek, 2010; available at http://go.utlib.ca/cat/12007819
- “It’s Time We Stopped Treating Soil Like Dirt,” *The Guardian* YouTube Network; available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=373&v=BSHR4sUZpcw

**PART 2: Analyzing our current context**

**Week 5 (Oct 3) – Test in second half of class**
*Building from last week’s class, we begin our analysis by examining what Scharper calls ‘unequal ecologies’, understanding the unmistakable connection between what we do to Earth systems and to one another.*

Required readings:

**Week 6 (Oct 10)**
*“The devastation of the planet that we are bringing about is negating some hundreds of millions, even billions, of years of past development of the earth,” Thomas Berry tells us; this is not the result simply of cultural, historical changes. Perhaps one of the reasons for this mess is our mistaken understandings about the human within biotic and urban communities.*

Required readings:

**Week 7 (Oct 17) GUEST LECTURER**
*Considering that you (and I) have spent most of our lives in this all-consuming world of ours (education), does it not seem odd that we never (or rarely) discuss what it is all for?*
PART 3: Redeeming creative spaces for new life-giving relationships

Week 8 (Oct 24)
“Most of us sense that the Earth is more than a sphere of rock with a thin layer of air, ocean, and life covering the surface,” James Lovelock tells us, adding, “We feel at home here....” What might happen if we actually think this way? We will also use this time for review of mid-term exam.

Required readings:

Week 9 (Oct 31)
*Mid-term* (NOT IN CLASS; room to be posted)

*Nov 7 is reading week: no class*

Week 10 (Nov 14)
No other discipline (economics) dictates so pervasively and so incessantly how we conduct our lives every day; perhaps it’s time to challenge the gods of the market economy that we have created.

Required readings:
- “Reverend Billy’s Crusade against the ‘Shopocalypse’, pp. 30-32, in FES.

Suggested Reading:
**Week 11 (Nov 21)**

Thomas Berry stresses that our destructive patterns of living cannot be critiqued effectively or sufficiently from within the traditional humanist ethics or religions, as these have arisen out of a cosmological perspective that places the human being at the center of ethical deliberations, separate from the natural world. Here we explore Indigenous traditions which have allowed Indigenous peoples, for the most part, to perceive a numinous presence within nature and thereby recognize that each aspect of the planet has its own inner life or subjectivity.

Required readings:

Suggested Reading:
- “Moment Two & Moment Three,” (Remainder of chapter “The Ecological Crisis”) by Stephen Scharper, in *FES*.

**Week 12 (Nov 28)**

To wrap things up, we will do a review of the course, go over the final exam, but not before reminding ourselves of our human frailties, the complexity of the world, and how much we really can (and cannot) know about it (at least anytime soon).

Required readings:
- “The Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill: Would the Precautionary Principle Have Averted This Disaster?” by Stephen Scharper, pp. 115-120, in *FES*.
Suggestions for further reading (in case there’s a topic that interests you)

The following books and/or resources can be found through our library system

**Economics/commerce and environment**


**Ethics and environment**


Religion and environment


Sustainability and environment


Science and environment


**Worldviews and environment**


**Film and Environment**

The Truman Show, US 1998, dir. Peter Weir


*The China Syndrome*, US 1979, dir. James Bridges

*Avatar*, US 2009, dir. James Cameron


*Babette’s Feast*, Denmark 1987, dir. Gabriel Axel

*WALL-E*, US 2008, dir. Andrew Stanton

*The Grapes of Wrath*, 1940, dir. John Ford