LABOUR STUDIES – LABR 4F03 Labour and the Environment

Winter 2017
Time and Date of Classes: Tuesdays 2:30-5:20pm
Class Location: PC 335

Instructor: Katherine Nastovski
Email Address: nastov@mcmaster.ca
Office Hours: Mondays 12-1pm
or by appointment
Office Location: Kenneth Taylor Hall
Room 724

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course considers the relationship between work, workers’ organizations and environmental justice. We will begin by situating the discussion within the major political tensions and positions regarding the nature of the environmental question. From here we will explore the political implications of the different ways that nature and the environment have been conceptualized historically.

We then move onto unpacking the connections between work, workers and the environment by considering the nature of capitalism, the effects of neoliberal policies and imperialism on the environment and what this means for workers.

The readings then turn to the examination of specific issues related to the environment and work. We will focus primarily on thinking through the potential as well as the tensions and contradictions within working class strategies for environmental justice. This includes assessing different strategies and models for environmental justice in Canada and internationally.

This course will be run like a seminar. This means that we will be collectively considering the course material. I see my role as a facilitator, helping to set up the discussion, asking and answering questions, and structuring our engagement with the material. We will do participatory activities each class. This includes brainstorming, considering how concepts relate to video clips and current events, pairing up or doing small group exercises such as debates, role-playing and problem solving.

You will get a lot out of the classes if you are prepared having done the weekly readings. We will critically consider the key issues and questions from the week’s readings and work to connect these ideas to the material we have covered in previous weeks.

TEXT AND COURSEWARE

***All the readings can be found online through the McMaster libraries databases for electronic sources.

*Note: You are required to bring the week’s readings to each class.
EVALUATION BREAKDOWN

Group Facilitation – 15%
We will go through the facilitation guidelines during the first class.

Participation – 15%
This grade includes attendance as well as participation in class discussions and activities (i.e. small group exercises on specific concepts or arguments). An important part of this grade is your ability to engage with the week’s presenters and their arguments and assessment of the readings. *This means you need to bring the week’s readings to class*

Paper – 40%
The guidelines for this paper will be discussed in class, week 3.

Exam – 30%
The final exam will be held during the exam period. This is an open book exam. However, please note that if you have not kept up with the readings, the fact that the exam is open book will not be of significant help.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course addresses three University Undergraduate Degree Expectations. First, and foremost, the course aims to develop critical thinking skills. As a seminar, the course will consist of critical discussion and debate on the main arguments raised in the readings as well as the theories and methods employed by the authors considered. Second, as a seminar, the course facilitates the development of effective communication skills. Lastly, the course supports student autonomy by making it necessary for students to take responsibility for their own learning.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Section 1:
Introduction to Labour and the Environment

Week 1
January 10

Is there a problem?

**Week 2**
**Conceptualizations of Nature and the Environment**

*January 17*


**Week 3**
**Labour and Environmental Justice: What’s the Connection?**

*January 24*


**Section 2:**
Unpacking the Connections – Political Economy and Differential Social Impacts

**Week 4**
**Environmental Justice within Capitalism?**

*January 31*


[http://monthlyreview.org/2010/03/01/what-every-environmentalist-needs-to-know-about-capitalism/](http://monthlyreview.org/2010/03/01/what-every-environmentalist-needs-to-know-about-capitalism/)


**Week 5**
**Neoliberal Strategies and their Impacts**

*February 7*


[https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/12/naomi-klein-capitalism/](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/12/naomi-klein-capitalism/)


**Week 6**  
**Imperialism and (Neo-) Colonialism**  
**February 14**

http://www.thenation.com/article/what-does-blacklivesmatter-have-do-climate-change/

http://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1298&context=faculty


******************************************Midterm Recess******************************************

**Section 3:**  
**Workers Fight Back(?): Struggles, Tensions and Contradictions**

**Week 7**  
**Situating the Struggles Historically**  
**February 28**


Week 8  Necessary Conflicts?
March 7  Thinking about Alliances for Environmental Justice


Week 9  Assessing Strategies and Solutions: Part I
March 14  Contradictions and Limitations of Union Responses


Week 10  Assessing Strategies: Part II
March 21  Green Jobs and Corporate Social Responsibility

ITUC Statement on Green Jobs

Toronto and York Region Labour Council Statement on Green Jobs


**Week 11**  
Thinking Resistance Internationally  
March 28


**Week 12**  
Review  
April 4  
**** No Readings****

**Assignment Submission and Deductions for Lateness**  
The due dates for assignments are firm. Late assignments will receive a deduction of 3% per day. Please email me your late assignment and then bring me a hardcopy (in-class or dropped off in the Labour Studies drop box. 7th floor, Kenneth Taylor Hall).

**Laptops, Cell Phones and Hand Held Devices**  
Please make sure that all cell phones and hand held devices are turned off during class. I strongly discourage the use of laptops in class. This creates a better learning environment for everyone (including you).

**Citation Format**  
You may use MLA or Chicago style. Make sure to be consistent.  
[http://library.mcmaster.ca/citation-and-style-guides](http://library.mcmaster.ca/citation-and-style-guides)

**Email Guidelines**  
The best way to reach me is to visit me at my office hour from 12-1pm on Mondays in Room 724, Kenneth Taylor Hall. I will do my best to return emails within 24-48 hours of the time they are sent. Please take that into consideration when sending emails i.e. if you send an email the day the research paper is due I will likely not get back to you in time. Email should be restricted to emergencies and arranging to meet with me. If you want to discuss the course material, please visit me during my office hour.

**Absence Reporting:**  
[http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/](http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/)  
On-line self-reporting tool – illness lasting **less than 3 days**. Can only be used **once per term**. Instructors are **not allowed to accept medical notes**! These must be submitted to your Faculty office. In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. Please also communicate with the course instructor.
Code of conduct: [http://studentaffairs.mcmaster.ca](http://studentaffairs.mcmaster.ca)

“McMaster University is a community dedicated to furthering learning, intellectual inquiry, the dissemination of knowledge and personal and professional development. Membership in this community implies acceptance of the principle of mutual respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study work and live within it.”

**Computer use** in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

**Course Modifications:** The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email AND Avenue to Learn (if used by instructor) regularly during the term to note any changes.

**E-Mail Communication Policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences:** all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor/TA receives a communication from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion. Please always include student name, ID, course # and TA name in messages.

**Evaluations (Online):** [http://evals.mcmaster.ca](http://evals.mcmaster.ca), and log in via MACID. Evaluations help the School of Labour Studies to meet our goal of continually improving teaching effectiveness. All students in the course are invited and encouraged to complete the evaluation.

**Student Accessibility Services:** [http://sas.mcmaster.ca/](http://sas.mcmaster.ca/) MUSC-B107 905-525-9140 x28652

*NOTE: Disclosure of disability-related information is personal and confidential.*

Student Accessibility Services offers various supports for students with disabilities. We work with full time and part time students. SAS provides or assists students with their academic and disability-related needs, including: Learning Strategies, Assistive Technologies, Test & Exam Administration, Note-Taking Programs, and Classroom Accommodations. *Please inform the instructor if there are disability needs that are not being met.*

**McMaster University Policy on Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities & McMaster University Anti-Discrimination Policy**

Student Success Centre:  [http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/](http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/)

GH-110  905-525-9140 x24254

Some services include: student orientation, academic skills, volunteerism, educational planning, employment and career transition. Writing Support:
 [http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/students/academic-skills/writing-support-services.html](http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/students/academic-skills/writing-support-services.html)

Student Wellness Centre:  [http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/](http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/)  MUSC-B101  905-525-9140
 x27700

Provides services in: Personal and Psychological Counselling, Mental Health Support, Medical and Health Services