Course Outline
GEOG/ENVIR SC 4ET3
Environmental Policy, Ethics and Risk
School of Geography and Earth Sciences
McMaster University
Winter 2018

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1. Course objectives

- Critically discuss topics in environmental policy, economics, ethics and law in a collegial and fun environment
- Develop and enhance oral and written communication skills
- Develop understanding of risk analysis, uncertainty and decision making

2. Course readings

- A Custom Courseware collection is available from the bookstore. These are the required readings for the course (see last page of syllabus).
- Short additional readings are assigned as part of the critical commentaries throughout the term; these will be posted on Avenue to Learn

3. Course assessment

- Three critical essays (10% each -- total 30%)
- Presentation (30%)
- Participation (10%)
- Final exam (30%)

3.1 Critical commentary (3 x 10% each = 30%)

The critical essay is a short (less than 1000 word) summary and critique of an argument. The specific method of critique will be discussed in class, but the general purpose is to thoughtful argue against a argument made in a short reading. Students should summarize the reading (up to 250 words) and critique the arguments and conclusions of the reading (500 to 750 words). Students will be graded based on their ability to communicate as well as the substance of their essay. The particulars of the critical commentaries are as follows:

- Must be handed in at the beginning of class
- Must be typewritten, in 12pt Times New Roman font, double spaced
- Ensure your name is on every page with pages stapled together
- Must be written in your own words, and cannot be collaborative (each student must write their own digest)
- Should be roughly 500 words in length (include a word-count)
- Use non-technical yet still formal and precise language. This is not a personal essay, it is a thoughtful reflection of the topic raised in the reading

Please note: the University reserves the right to change any aspect of this course outline
3.2 Presentation (30%)

Students will make a short (15 minute) group presentation. Groups will consist of 2-3 students. The presentation must be accompanied by up to 3 powerpoint (or equivalent slides) and one short written summary (250 words). The slides and summary must be emailed to the instructors at least 24 hours prior to the presentation. Grading will be based on the presentation (quality and substance) the three slides and the written summary. Presentations cannot include video or other interactive content that is not created by the presenters. A list of topics for seminar will be made available mid-way through the term.

3.3 Participation (10%)

Students will receive participation marks based on their participation in course online surveys (all of which are related to class material) as well as participation in the seminar discussions. Links to the surveys will be posted online on a regular basis, and must be completed before each class. It is your responsibility to check Avenue regularly to ensure you don’t miss the surveys.

3.4 Final exam (30%)

There is a final exam in this course scheduled by the registrar. Details will be discussed in class prior to the end of term. Material from lectures and assigned readings will be covered on the exam.

4. Avenue 2 Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue 2 Learn. Students should be aware that when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names associated with McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

Questions related to course content (for example, about lectures and reading material) should be posted online. All students registered in this course should have access to the online system. Speak to the instructor if you have difficulties with access.

5. Classroom civics

1. Attendance in this course is considered mandatory. If you miss a lecture, it is your responsibility to get notes / details about missed material from your classmates.
2. Electronic submissions of assignments, papers, etc. are not accepted.
3. The instructor puts notes on Avenue to Learn at his discretion, and has the right to stop posting notes at any time throughout the term.
4. Students are not permitted to use an audio and/or video recording device to record lectures. Students who do so will be reported to the academic integrity office.

6. Policy on late/missed assignments

- All late assignments receive a 15%/day late penalty.
- For absences lasting up to 3 days or assignments up to 3 days late that are worth less than 25% of mark:
  (definition of days late includes Saturdays but not Sundays)
Use the McMaster student absence form (MSAF) on-line, self-reporting tool. Undergraduate students may report absences lasting up to 3 days and may also request relief for missed academic work provided the work is worth less than 25% of grade. The submission of medical or other types of supporting documentation is normally not required. Students may use this tool to submit a maximum of one request for relief of missed academic work per term. Students must immediately (within 5 days) follow up with me via email regarding the nature of the relief. Failure to do so will negate the opportunity for relief. Using the MSAF system does not guarantee relief for missed or late work.

For absences from classes lasting more than three days or assignments/exams worth 25% or more of final mark:

Students who are absent more than three days cannot use the on-line, self-reporting tool to request relief. Assignments or exams worth 25% or more of the final mark cannot use the self reporting tool to request relief. On these occasions, students MUST report to their Faculty Office to discuss their situation and will be required to provide appropriate supporting documentation.

7. Policy regarding academic dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (where notation reads “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the University.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at: http://www.mcmaster.ca/univsec/policy/AcademicIntegrity.pdf

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:
1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Instructors in this course will be using software designed to identify instances of plagiarism.

8. Appealing Marks

If you wish to appeal an assignment mark, the appeal must be issued to the instructor within seven days (inclusive) after the assignment was handed back in class. Assignments may be remarked in their entirety at the complete discretion of the instructor. Students must submit their appeal in written form along with the original marked version of the assignment/exam into the course drop box. Marks may go up or down after re-grading.
9. Changes to the course outline

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 course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

10. Course topics

- Tragedy of the commons
- Environmental ethics
- Environmental values, behaviour and applied environmental ethics
- Environmental economics
- Environmental politics and law
- Expert knowledge and uncertainty
- Risk and risk perception
- Decision making