



Spring 2016
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COR A120

Geog 301 / ES 461

Environmental Impact Assessment

Tentative course outline subject to change. See course spaces site for updates.

Dr. Cameron Owens

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Office: DTB B210

Office hrs: W 4-5:30 pm

Policies:

1. Late policy – 10% penalty per day late for 3 days (for assignment). Contact instructor before any test if you must miss (for legitimate, documented reason). Zero tolerance for late final exams.
2. Plagiarism – zero tolerance (see UVic's [academic integrity policy](#))
3. Accessibility – please meet with instructor and the [Resource Centre for Students with a Disability](#) early if you may need accommodation
4. Do your part to ensure an engaging classroom. Be punctual, respectful, compassionate and attentive.

Course Overview

This course investigates our attempts to predict and mitigate the adverse impacts of development in this time of great socio-ecological upheaval. The focus is primarily on formal environmental impact assessment, especially the BC provincial process, but we will explore other forms of assessment in other contexts. The intention is not to train students in environmental impact assessment techniques (although we will engage with these). Rather, the course adopts a critical, interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon geography, political science, cultural theory, ecology, law, and Indigenous studies to interrogate environmental decision-making, unpack the complex political /cultural context within which it takes place, and explore how the practice could be improved.

Instructor-lead discussions of theory and engaging case studies - past and present - are supplemented by frequent guest speaker presentations with a wide range of perspectives. Students will undertake an assignment designed to inspire research specifically useful for the BC EAO for improving assessment practice. Given the pressing socio-ecological challenges we face, such a course, focusing as it does on the practicalities of environmental decision-making and how to improve it, should be of great interest to students.

Assessment

Students will be assessed on the following:

1. **Participation** (15%) – in class and online participation as discussed in class
2. **Midterm** (25%) – Feb 23rd – multiple choice and short answer questions covering material up to this point
3. **Assignment** (25%) – researching and preparing a research note making useful recommendations to EA Office about current EA practice- due March 23rd
4. **Final Exam** (35%) – take-home final exam – questions given on the last day of class (March 29th) and due on Thursday, April 7th (submitted electronically through Course Spaces dropbox)

Note on Marks

Note on Course

Experience Survey:

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

“The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.”

A-level marks (80%+) reflect exceptional (beyond expectations), outstanding, or at least highly competent efforts. B+/B level marks (73-79%) reflect good or at least acceptable efforts (usually above the class average). B-/C+ level marks (65-72%) represent average efforts, showing some understanding but deficient in some way. C/D level marks (50-64%) represent passable but largely insufficient efforts, while F marks (<50%) represent failing the course.

Course readings

The course is designed around a text (see below) and a number of other important readings which will be posted on the Course Spaces site. The text is mandatory and can be purchased at the UVic Bookstore. Reading - and engaging with the readings (highlighting, underlining, taking good notes etc.) – is absolutely essential for your enjoyment of and success in this course (see assessment below).

- Hanna, K. (2016). **Environmental Impact Assessment: Practice and Participation 3rd Edition**. Toronto: Oxford

Learning expectations

1. Think deeply about why you are here and what you want to get out of your experience at UVic in the short time you'll be here. Use this time wisely to develop important skills in professional writing, oral communication, critical thinking*, problem solving, organization, perseverance, and initiative.
2. I consider such skill development and good habit formation as being at least as important as content mastery in this course. While I want you to learn important things about environmental assessment, I also want you to develop particular skills and habits, which employers will be expecting.
3. Effective learning involves recognizing how the course material is directly relevant to your life. Rather than think of classes as irrelevant drudgery that you have to get through, think of them as unique opportunities for personal transformation.
4. *Note: critical thinking is often misrepresented as cynical, pessimistic, or “being against things”. In this class it should rather be understood in terms of healthy skepticism with received wisdom recognizing the things could /should be otherwise; ceaseless, piercing questioning of status quo “common sense”; trying to make important linkages and connections; recognizing and evaluating multiple perspectives and the values and assumptions underlying each (including our own); evaluating evidence and arguments (while recognizing power relations in knowledge claims), arriving at defensible positions on issues and working towards a more respectful, inclusive, just, and fair world.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE		
WEEK	DATE / THEME	READINGS
Week 1 Introduction	Jan 5 – Course Overview	
	Jan 6 – Introducing the who, what, where, when, why and how of EA	
Week 2 The what and why of EA	Jan 12 – (Why) do we need EA?	Folke Gibson (2005) on Course Spaces
	Jan 13 – What is EA? – basic overview of BC and Canada process	Ch 1, 10, 14
Week 3 The where and when of EA	Jan 19 – What is (important about) the (geographic, historic, jurisdictional) context of EA?	CH 2, 9
	Jan 20 – How has EA evolved in Canada? What are the most important events in its evolution?	Course Spaces readings (case studies)
Week 4 The BC Process	Jan 26 – <u>Guest speaker</u> - Ray Crook on “What needs to be considered in designing an effective EA process?”	Ch 14
	Jan 27 – <u>Guest speaker</u> – Autumn Cousins and Scott Bailey on “What is the current state of practice of EA in BC? What works? What challenges persist?”	
Week 5 The how and who of EA	Feb 1 – Debrief guest speakers	
	Feb 2 – What are the important how and who considerations of EA? (questions of actors, power, process)	CH 3, 4, 8
Week 6 Reading Week	Feb 8-12 – NO CLASSES	
Week 7 Critique of BC EA	Feb 16 – Critique of BC Process	Ch 14 + Course Spaces Readings
	Feb 17 – <u>Guest speaker</u> Murray Rutherford on “What are the key issues with BC EA process?”	
Week 8 Assignment	Feb 23 – Midterm	
	Feb 24 – Video: Amazay – on Indigenous struggles, water and EA	
Week 9 Indigenous involvement	Mar 1 – How are Indigenous peoples involved in EA? Challenges? Opportunities?	CH 8 + Course Spaces readings
	Mar 2- <u>Guest Speaker</u> : TBD	
Week 10 Indigenous involvement	Mar 8 – <u>Guest Speaker</u> : TBD	
	Mar 9 – Debrief guest speakers	
Week 11 International Case Studies	Mar 15 – International case studies – What can we learn about EA through exploring international case studies?	Course Spaces readings
	Mar 16 – International case studies – cont.	
Week 12 Improving Practice	Mar 22 – <u>Guest Speaker</u> : Janis Shandro – on “What are international best practices in health and social impact assessment that we could potentially adopt in BC?”	Ch 6 + Course Spaces readings
	Mar 23 – What are the opportunities and challenges for improving EA practice with respect to approaches such as: Strategic Impact Assessment, Cumulative Effects Analysis, Sustainability Assessment?	Ch 5,7 + Course Spaces readings
Week 13 Final reflections	Mar 29 – Assignment due, discussion, final exam	
	Mar 30 – No class	