

**Course title:** Environment & Society  
**Date:** July 3 – July 21, 2017

**Professor:** Mr. Furqan Asif  
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## Course Outline

<b>Class schedule:</b>	Monday - Friday, 9 AM – 12 noon* [Location TBD]
<b>Instructor office hours:</b>	Appointment by email only
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:furqan.asif@uottawa.ca">furqan.asif@uottawa.ca</a> (please use 'SISS' in subject line)
<b>Phone:</b>	XXX XXX XXX (please only use in emergency)

\*Note: there will be a 15 minute break halfway through every class

### Course description

The nature of the relationship between environment and our society has always depended on a mix of factors such as economics, culture, history and politics. A newly connected world does not change this at a fundamental level. However, as a result of major developments (e.g. industrial revolution; globalization), our relationship between environment and society has become refocused on the social consequences of our current industrial societies and lifestyles.

Emphasis on the international scope and nature of urbanization and globalization allows us to analyse such impacts on human health and sustainability, with the need to be kept informed of the intricate relationships between environment and society and the contemporary ideas and issues surrounding sustainable development (including the outcomes of the COP21 Paris Climate Conference).

- What does it mean to have environmental awareness?
- How is awareness shaped and reshaped?
- How do different viewpoints of environmental awareness consider important issues such as climate change?

### Course objectives

The goal of this course is to provide students with a foundation in a range of theoretical approaches and analytical tools suited to understanding and critiquing human-environment relations broadly, with a focus on environmental awareness.

Critical reading and interactive discussion will emphasize the literatures in history of the environment, environment and society, sustainable development, commons theory, political ecology/economy, with opportunities to explore related literatures such as environmental health, degrowth, resource governance, and human geography.

Case materials will relate not only to the Global South but also to industrialized Western countries including examples relating to international policy contexts (e.g. climate change).

## Prerequisite:

- Undergraduate level English language (speaking/writing) skills
- Background or interest in areas of environment and global development: sustainability, poverty, inequality, climate change, globalization, etc.
- Students in social sciences, environment and human geography would find this course most relevant but background in any of these is not strictly a prerequisite.

Students' own research interests and activities are integral to the course content and will also guide student-led sessions throughout the course.

At the end of the session, students are expected to:

- Be familiar with the main concepts, critiques and tools of the main theories covered: history of the environment, sustainable development, political ecology, commons theory, social-ecological vulnerability;
- Understand the complexity of human environment interactions, and the contested perspectives on issues such as climate change, resource governance, and sustainable development;
- Apply these theoretical perspectives or 'lenses' to analyze concrete case examples from around the world
- Be familiar with the standards required for strong academic writing

## Teaching methods

This is an interactive course combining lectures, discussions, in-class videos and group work to explore the themes covered throughout this course.

## Textbooks

Paul Robbins, John Hintz, & Sarah A. Moore. *Environment and Society: A critical introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.

**Download link:** <https://1drv.ms/b/s!Av41O6cxUj-pkSEnj6jomDplIkx3> [PDF]

## Assessment

Form	Percentage of course	Duration	Comments
A) Class participation	30%	Throughout course	
B) Student reflection journal	30%	Throughout course	
C) Photovoice project	40%		See below for details
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>		

## A) Class Participation (30%)

In order to strike a balance between giving lectures and having student engagement, you are expected to come prepared to discuss and reflect not only the required readings but also their relationship to the course themes and broader events around environmental awareness. There are two components to this:

- i) **Weekly questions:** for each set of class readings, you will need to prepare at least one question. Your question(s) must be sent to the instructor via email no later than 9 pm the night before the next class. We will use these questions to facilitate discussion so try and think of questions that would stimulate debate or highlight potential controversy.

For example, compare and contrast readings, noting contradictions or reinforcements that they provide as well as linking to any contemporary world events.

- ii) **In-class participation:** Since there are some people who are more comfortable talking in class than others, it is expected that each student actively contributes to class discussion using not only the assigned readings but also personal experience, ongoing world events and material from any other courses they have taken.

Evaluation of these components:

<b>Questions (15%)</b>	Submit a list of questions on time for each class = 15/15
<b>Participation (15%)</b>	Overall assessment of in-class participation (X/15)

## B) Student reflection journal (30%)

Recognizing that not everyone is comfortable speaking in class and to encourage reflection and thinking, each student will be responsible for emailing a personal reflection on each week's class to the professor (no later than 9 pm of each Sunday). This should not take more than 30 minutes per week (e.g. 150 – 200 words) and is your opportunity to reflect on what you learned or did not understand for each week of the course. Some questions to facilitate this could be:

- *What key points made by the articles or in-class discussion “stay with you”?*
- *How did you feel the readings and/or discussion relate to your understanding of the course material so far?*
- *How did the readings and/or discussion help you understand the broader theoretical issues or practical context?*
- *Did anything from the readings or discussion affect how you think of certain concepts or ideas?*
- *This is also a space where you could document any concerns with the conduct of the course, with the content covered, or to make suggestions about ways subsequent classes could function better to meet your learning objectives.*

Criteria for in-class participation and journal grading:

- 0 – 4: Below standard (e.g. no useful contributions in class, persistent errors in interpreting content or the conclusions of readings; incomplete or missing questions)
- 5: Not quite to expectations (e.g. minimal in-class participation, superficial understanding of the readings; superficial questions)
- 6 – 8: Meets expectations listed above (e.g. journal posted with reflections; active contribution to class using required readings)

- 9 – 10: Exceeds expectations (e.g. contributions based on additional readings, or other relevant outside material; journal shows strong synthesis across a range of material)

### C) Photovoice Assignment (40%)

Photovoice is a technique used as a participatory research method tool that helps in identifying, representing and enhancing the production of knowledge by enabling people to reflect and document their observations and realities from their own perspective. In this way, knowledge is participant-led and participant-generated with the method promoting reflection and dialogue through discussion of photographs.

For the assignment, students will work around a pre-assigned topic/theme (e.g. sustainability) related to the course subject. Keeping that theme in mind as you go about your life, you are encouraged to use observations of your surroundings and take pictures (using your smartphones) of scenes that speak to the topic/theme (be creative!).

You can take as many photos as you want but you will have to choose your three favorite photos. Each photo must be accompanied by a brief written description (250 – 300 words maximum) describing a) why you chose to take the photo; b) what it represents, and c) how it speaks to the topic.

The photos and descriptions are expected to be sent by email to the instructor in advance of your class presentation (two to three minutes per photo). After all of the presentations, there will be an open class discussion.

Grading criteria for this assignment is as follows:

Component	Criteria
<b>Photos (10%)</b>	<p><b>0 – 5:</b> It is difficult to see how the photo relates to the theme of focus or does not illustrate the concept effectively; the photo is limited in creativity</p> <p><b>6 – 8 :</b> The photo is related to the theme but does not illustrate it very effectively; the photo is somewhat creative</p> <p><b>9 – 10:</b> The photo captures the theme well and in an engaging and effective way; the photo is very original and creative or uses a unique perspective</p>
<b>Photo descriptions (15%)</b>	<p><b>0 – 5:</b> The descriptions make vague or indirect connections between the photo and the theme; significant grammatical/spelling errors present</p> <p><b>6 – 8:</b> descriptions analyze and explain the photo, relating well to the thematic focus; few grammatical/spelling errors</p> <p><b>9 – 10:</b> descriptions analyze and explain in-depth connection of photo to thematic focus with significant cross-links made to broader and related themes; no grammatical/spelling errors</p>
<b>Presentation (15%)</b>	<p><b>0 – 5:</b> poor presentation – virtually no eye contact with audience; low voice; little to no intonation of speech; direct reading off paper</p> <p><b>6 – 8:</b> good presentation – some eye contact with audience; good voice; some intonation of speech; moderate reading off written material</p> <p><b>9 – 10:</b> excellent presentation – abundant eye contact with audience; loud voice projection; effective and liberal intonation of speech; little reading off written material</p>

## Course overview – Themes & Topics

Week	Themes
<b>One (July 3 – 7)</b> <b>Conceptual Approaches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Introduction to key concepts</li><li>○ Constructions of Nature</li><li>○ Environmental Philosophy and Ethics – What is our place in and obligations to a more-than-human-world?</li><li>○ Markets &amp; Institutions</li><li>○ Political Ecology</li></ul>
<b>Two (July 10 – 14)</b> <b>Special topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ People, Population, and the Environment</li><li>○ Fisheries &amp; Oceans</li><li>○ Forests &amp; People</li><li>○ Land &amp; Agriculture</li><li>○ Energy</li></ul>
<b>Three (July 17 – 21)</b> <b>Bringing it all together</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Climate Change</li><li>○ Photovoice assignment presentations</li><li>○ Role of civil society (NGOs, cooperatives, etc.)</li><li>○ Role of multilateral organizations (UN, World Bank, etc.)</li><li>○ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</li></ul>