

EAS 494 Environment & Health



Instructor: Dr. Theresa Garvin Winter 2008
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CLASSES

Time: Mondays 1-4pm Location: ESB 1-31

COURSE SUMMARY

This seminar course examines the relationships between environmental issues and health outcomes through the competing approaches of scientists, policymakers and the general public. Throughout the course students will use case studies, academic and scientific literatures, and popular reports (including internet resources) to evaluate criteria by which various groups determine risk and make policy decisions in light of unclear and uncertain evidence in contentious environmental health problems.

Please Note: This seminar course is designed for upper-level students in human geography, environmental studies and social science programs. It requires a commitment to class preparation and discussion, as well as independent library research and access to internet resources. If such access is a problem, please see the instructor.

REQUIRED READINGS

All required readings will be available on-line through the University library or they will be provided for students.

GRADING SCHEME

Weekly Discussion Papers (5 @ 2% ea)	10%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Take Home Midterm Paper (8-12 pages)	20%
Project Communication	15%
Term Project: Select Env't-Health Topic	35%
Class Preparation and Participation	10%

NOTE: THIS COURSE HAS NO FINAL EXAM

COURSE OUTLINE/OVERVIEW OF TOPICS

Date	Class #	Topic
Jan 07	1	Introduction to the course Environment & Health; Social Construction
Jan 14	2	The social context of health & the environment Case Study: Black Lung Discussion Paper #1 Due
Jan 21	3	Evaluating Evidence and Cause-Effect Case Study: EMFs Discussion Paper #2 Due
Jan 28	4	Science and Certainty Case Study: Chernobyl Discussion Paper #3 Due
Feb 04	5	Risk & Risk Controversies Case Study: GMOs Discussion Paper #4 Due
Feb 11	6	News, Media & Controversy Case Study: BSE Annotated Bibliography Due
Feb 18	--	No class – Family Day & Reading Week
Feb 25	7	Take-Home Midterm Assigned
Mar 03	8	Take Home Midterm Due
Mar 10	9	Policymaking in Conditions of Uncertainty Case Study: Endocrine Disruptors Discussion Paper #5 Due
Mar 17	10	Environment & Health Reconsidered Case Study: Water
Mar 24	--	No Class – Easter Monday
Mar 31	11	Project Communications
Apr 07	12	Project Communications
		Term Project Due by Noon, Friday April 11

COMPONENTS OF THE FINAL GRADE

Weekly Discussion Papers (5 @ 2% each = 10%)

You are expected to prepare for class each week by writing a short (2-3 page d/s) discussion paper identifying what you think are the key ideas or themes that link together the weekly readings. Once you have selected your term paper topic, your discussion paper may attempt to link the weekly readings to your research topic. The weekly discussion papers will be given one of three marks fully satisfactory = 2/2, partially satisfactory = 1/2 unsatisfactory = 0/2.

IMPORTANT: The weekly discussion papers must be e-mailed to Dr. Garvin (Theresa.Garvin@ualberta.ca) by 9am every Monday morning.

Annotated Bibliography (10%)

In this assignment, you are asked to construct an annotated bibliography around a selected environment and health topic. This bibliography should include at least five (5) refereed, academic journal publications and three (3) internet information sources. You may, additionally, include up to 3 reviews of popular press coverage if applicable. It is highly recommended that you construct your bibliography around your term paper topic. Details on requirements for this assignment are available on the course website.

Take Home Midterm (20%)

Using materials provided, write an 8-12 page paper analyzing an evolving environment and health issue. You will be provided with materials and asked to analyze the issue using key themes and ideas discussed in class. This assignment should take 15-20 hours and you will be given one week to complete it.

Term Paper/Project (35%)

Topic must be approved by instructor.

Write a 20 page (approx) paper evaluating a contentious environment and health issue of your choosing. The paper should present a concise summary of what happened (history), the key players involved, and their perspectives on the topic (description), and your own analysis of important issues and controversies. Your analysis must include key themes from the course and should (at minimum) answer the following questions:

- What happened?
- What positions did particular groups/individuals take? Why?
- What is the strength of the scientific & epidemiological evidence?
- What do **you think** were/are key issues and/or turning points?
- What do **you think** will be the long-term outcome of this issue?

Project Communications (15%)

Present a short overview (amount of time is yet to be determined) of your term project to the rest of the class. Your communication can take any of a number of forms. In the past, students have communicated via oral presentation, role-playing exercises, games, debates, or websites. Communications will be graded by both the instructor and your fellow students. Attendance during these communications is critical to your participation grade. A communications schedule will be compiled in class prior to Reading Week.

Class Preparation and Participation (10%)

As a small seminar course, the success of the learning environment is based upon students' willingness to engage in discussion with classmates. Therefore, 10% of your final grade for the course is based on your participation in class; be reminded that you cannot participate if you do not attend. Students are expected to fully prepare, attend class, and take part in class activity in order to attain the full participation grade.

TERM PROJECT TOPICS

The following is a list of possible research topics for the Annotated Bibliography, Term Paper & Communication. **Term project topics must be approved by the instructor.**

Health impacts of climate change (pick a specific location)	Housing and Health
Lyme Disease	Transgenomics (environmental- genomic interactions)
Legionnaire's Disease	Lead
Radon	Cellphones & Cancer
Second hand cigarette smoke	Heat Stroke
Toxic Mould (or mold)	Homelessness
Autism Spectrum Disorders	Parkinson's Disease
Water Quality	Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
Fibromyalgia	Endocrine Disruptors
Epidemics & Natural Disasters	Coronary Heart Disease (CHD)
Asthma	Trans-fats
Obesity & the environment	Vitamins/Food Supplement
Coalbed Methane	Immunization
Sound Pollution & Hearing	Drug-resistant diseases
Sour Gas	Repetitive Strain Injury

For all your assignments in this course it is crucial that you know how to use citations correctly. I recommend that you adopt the APA in-line citation or Chicago Manual styles. Information and guidelines on how to use these styles can be found at the following useful websites:

<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/apa/index.cfm> (APA reference guidelines)

<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/chicagostyle/index.cfm> (Chicago reference guidelines)

<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/criticalevaluation/index.cfm> (criteria for evaluating websites)

<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/citation/index.cfm> (citation styles for internet and electronic sources)

DOING THE READINGS AND PREPARING FOR CLASS DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this course is to provide a broad overview of complex and (sometimes) highly technical topics. Many of the readings are dense, detailed, and span several different specialized fields. You may find them difficult to read but please remember that these readings are considered departure points for discussion in class. While you are expected to read the articles before class, do not get bogged down in technical details or feel that you have to “memorize” specific information. Rather, try to evaluate the general ideas in each paper, compare the papers in a set of readings, and reference the learning objectives and discussion questions provided for each week’s readings.

In EAS 494 class preparation means more than simply reading the articles. Please set aside 30-60 minutes each week after you have completed the readings to consider what you have read and about an hour to write your discussion paper. Find a comfortable place to relax, grab a cup of coffee (or your beverage of choice) and think about what the articles have to say. Try to answer the discussion questions and ask yourself the following questions:

- What are the 3 main points in each article?
- Why was I asked to read these articles?
- How do these readings relate to previous readings in the course?
- What can I take from these readings and apply to my term project?

Note that each week’s outline provides a list of additional resources for you to access for those topics that interest you. Feel free to look at these sources or search out your own to bring to class additional ideas and perspectives.

Students who are unfamiliar with the seminar format or who need assistance with writing, study skills in reading journal articles, writing term papers, and time management, are encouraged to talk to me and/or to contact University of Alberta’s Academic Support Centre for students:

<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/academicsupport/>

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance is required for this course and will impact the participation mark that students receive in the class.

All assignments are due at the **START** of seminars or class (not during or after class / lecture) on the due dates indicated in the course outline. Students are encouraged to print their papers early and to arrive at school early on the due dates to avoid missing deadlines due to a last minute issue (malfunction, traffic jam, etc). Discussion papers will be accepted by e-mail in either MS Word (.doc) or PDF (.pdf) formats. However the e-mails must be sent **BEFORE** class in order to be accepted.

Late papers/assignments will not be accepted under any circumstances. Papers/projects submitted late and without an approved extension will receive a zero (0).

Extensions of up to one week will be liberally granted if students contact me at least four days prior to the due date. This means that if an assignment is due on Monday, you must contact me by the Thursday beforehand. Longer extensions/exemptions for personal illness, immediate family illness, and bereavement situations can be granted if appropriate documentation of the situation is provided as outlined in the University Calendar.

All assignments, including reading reviews must be in typed format. I will not accept any handwritten assignments. All written work must be in your own words (i.e. language composed uniquely by you), with the exception of quoted material which must be denoted by quotation marks (“ ”) or by being offset from other text by being inset from the text on both the right and left margins of the paper. The source of the quoted material must be denoted as required in APA style. Directly quoted material must be accompanied by page numbers for the source.

Once the communication schedule is established (around Reading Week), revisions to the schedule can only be made by switching times with another student. This must be done with the approval of the instructor.

If you have an issue or question regarding the grading of an assignment, please provide me with the concern/complaint in writing with the assignment. I will review the grading of the question/assignment and return it to the student.

EVALUATION

Evaluation will be completed and expressed in raw marks throughout the course. Final grades at the end of the course will be assigned using a combination of absolute achievement and relative standing in the course and will remain unofficial until approved by the Faculty Council or its designate (i.e. the departmental chair).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

‘The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the *Code of Student Behaviour* (online at www.ualberta.ca/secretariat/appeals.htm) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.’

All forms of dishonesty are unacceptable at the University. Cheating, plagiarism and misrepresentation of facts are serious offenses. Anyone who engages in these practices will receive at minimum a grade of zero for the exam or paper in question and no opportunity will be given to replace the grade or redistribute the weights. Any offense will be reported to the Senior Associate Dean who will determine the disciplinary action to be taken. Typical sanctions for serious violations of the Code have included disciplinary grade reductions, disciplinary failing grades, suspension or permanent expulsion from the University

CELL PHONES: Cell phones are to be turned off during seminars.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students who require accommodation in this course due to a disability are advised to discuss their needs with Specialized Support & Disability Services (2-800 Students’ Union Building).

ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTRE: Students who require additional help in developing strategies for better time management, study skills or examination skills should contact the Academic Support Centre (2-703 Students’ Union Building).

Policy about course outlines can be found in section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar. **Disclaimer:** Any typographical errors in this Course Outline are subject to change and will be announced in class.

GRADING

The University's grading scheme will be applied in the following way:

- A+ A *Excellent*. Student performance well exceeds expectations. Student attends class, participates actively and excels at all levels of evaluation. Student displays innovation in the application of all course concepts.
- A- B+ *Very Good*. Student performs above the expected level. This includes attending class, participating actively and performing well in graded materials. Student shows a thorough understanding of course concepts and is able to apply most in an innovative manner.
- B B- *Good*. Student meets course expectations in some areas and exceeds them in others but shows inconsistency in participation or materials submitted for grading and evaluation. Student shows a thorough understanding of course concepts and is able to apply them in an innovative manner.
- C+ C *Average*. Student meets course expectations by attending most classes, taking part in class discussions and submitting all required work for evaluation. Student shows a basic understanding of course material.
- C- D+ *Pass*. Student has met most course expectations but has some major weakness in attendance, participation or graded materials. Student shows basic understanding of some material but fails to show clear understanding of one or more course concepts.
- D *Minimal Pass*. Student has met minimal course requirements but has major weakness(es) in one or more of: attendance, participation, graded materials. Student shows basic understanding of some course concepts and little or no understanding of others.
- F = Fail *Unacceptable*. Student has not met minimal course requirements and shows major weakness(es) in one or more of: attendance, participation, graded materials, and conceptual understanding.