

Senior Honours Research Seminar

I. Course information

Professor	Brendon Larson, Ph.D. (Office: EV2 2016)
Contact	Email is the best way to reach me: blarson "at" uwaterloo.ca
Office hrs	TBD (based on your schedules) and by appointment
Class meetings	Tuesdays 11:30-2:20pm in PAS 1229
LEARN	Course dropboxes will be posted on LEARN. I will also send course emails through LEARN, which will be sent to your uwaterloo account.

II. Course overview and learning outcomes

The calendar course description for ERS413 reads as follows:

*This course consists of **intensive readings, seminar discussion and a major one-term research paper**. It will be taken instead of ERS 411A/B or ERS 412A/B. **One particular socio-ecological thematic area** will be used in areas such as environmental health, environmental decision-making, climate change, ecological restoration, environmental history, etc. A **major analytical research paper and presentation** will be required, as well as **participation** in weekly seminar discussions.*

Note that this is a 1.0 credit course, so the expectation is that you'll devote 15-18 hrs/week to it.

I have designed the course this term to be consistent with this description, so you will see various ways in which its key elements (in bold) are reflected in the course design.

Given that students in the course come from different backgrounds, I didn't want to dictate one thematic area; instead, we will investigate the following three broad themes:

- I. **Climate change and what we can do about it;**
- II. **Conservation in the Anthropocene; and**
- III. **The future of humanity.**

Each of you will choose one of these themes to investigate more deeply for your major project.

In the first three weeks of the course, we will read a book on each of these themes together, followed by intensive class discussion/response. Early in the course, you will also choose your theme on a first-come, first-served basis. We will then take a break for several weeks (including spring break) for you to do independent research and meet with me about your project. In subsequent weeks, each of you will lead a 40-minute class discussion, centered around one focal book, concerning your take on evolving thought in your theme area.

This is a fourth year seminar course, so its design will resemble a graduate-level seminar more than other undergraduate courses you may have taken. There will therefore be a focus on higher-level cognitive skills and abilities and you'll need to develop a path of self-learning. By the end of this course, you should be able to do the following (our course learning outcomes):

- i. **assemble** a body of literature on your theme and **appraise, critique** and **synthesize** it;
- ii. clearly and concisely **communicate** an argument about this literature;
- iii. **participate** constructively in group discussions;
- iv. **present** clearly, **inspire** participation, and **facilitate** discussion.

III. Course schedule

Note that this schedule is subject to change (of which you will be notified in advance). **The assigned readings are mandatory, so you will be expected to have read them before class: please arrive prepared to discuss them.**

Week. Topic Date	Readings (read <u>before</u> Tuesday's class) and Activities (subject to change)
1. Introduction Jan. 5	<i>In-class mini-tutorial:</i> 1. Evaluating sources and critical reading skills 2. Participation skills
2. Class discussion: Theme I Jan. 12	<i>Shared reading:</i> N. Oreskes and E. Conway (2014). <i>The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future</i> (Columbia University Press). <i>In-class mini-tutorial:</i> 1. Writing skills 2. Presentation skills: C. Gallo (2014). <i>Talk Like TED: The 9 Public-Speaking Secrets of the World's Top Minds</i> (St. Martin's Press), Intro & Part 1.
3. Class discussion: Theme II Jan. 19	<i>Shared reading:</i> J. B. Mackinnon (2013). <i>The Once and Future World: Nature As It Was, As It Is, As It Could Be</i> (Vintage Canada). <i>In-class mini-tutorial:</i> Presentation skills: Gallo (2014), Part 2.
4. Class discussion: Theme III Jan. 26	<i>Shared reading:</i> G. Vince (2014). <i>Adventures in the Anthropocene: A Journey to the Heart of the Planet We Made</i> (Milkweed Editions). <i>In-class mini-tutorial:</i> Presentation skills: Gallo (2014), Part 3.
5. <u>No class</u> : Check-in meetings Feb. 2	Individual research and reading
6. <u>No class</u> : Check-in meetings Feb. 9	Individual research and reading
Break – No classes	Individual research and reading
7. Student-led seminars: Theme I Feb. 23	
8. Student-led seminars: Theme I Mar. 1	
9. Student-led seminars: Theme II Mar. 8	
10. Student-led seminars: Theme II Mar. 15	
11. Student-led seminars: Theme III Mar. 22	
12. Student-led seminars: Theme III Mar. 29	Wrap-up discussion and Course evaluation

IV. Course assessment

I have designed the course so assessment aligns with our learning outcomes as follows:

Learning outcome (see above)	Teaching and learning activities	Assessment methods
i. assemble a body of literature on your theme and appraise and critique it	Readings, class discussions and mini-tutorials, office hours	Check-in, presentation, Final paper
ii. develop a clear and concise argument to synthesize this literature	Readings, class discussions and mini-tutorials, office hours	Book reviews, Presentation, Final paper
iii. participate constructively in group discussions	Class discussions and mini-tutorials	Participation, Book reviews, Response papers
iv. present clearly, inspire participation, and facilitate discussion	Class presentation, discussion, and mini-tutorials	Presentation

5% Check-in

During weeks 5 and 6 (Feb. 3 and 10), you must meet with me in my office during regular class period (after sign-up for a time slot). You should come to this meeting prepared to discuss how your project/ides are evolving. Specifically, please bring your list of sources and be prepared to discuss your plans for the project and initial thoughts on your argument.

10% Response papers

You must submit a **3-page** synthetic response to the presentations on *one of the themes other than your own*. These papers are due on the Friday following each set of student presentations on a theme: March 6 (I), March 20 (II) and April 3 (III). Further details t.b.a.

15% Book reviews

You must submit a well-written **2-page** book review, worth 5%, in response to each of the three books we will read together. Your reviews must be submitted by 2:30pm each Tuesday (i.e., in advance of our class). Further details t.b.a. *I will draw from this writing (anonymously) for short in-class writing workshops to help improve everyone's writing.*

20% Participation

I want everyone to participate, so you will receive a grade for your contribution to in-class discussions and activities, including the quantity and quality of your participation. I'll look for insightful interactions, based on the readings and your classmates' presentations, which help to advance the conversation.

20% Student-led seminars

On the Friday before your seminar, you will distribute a **1-page** (single-spaced) guide to provide context and questions for your classmates. You will lead a **40min** class discussion on your topic, centered on a focal book (TBD). Although you should include an oral "book review" component, to summarize and critically evaluate the book, you should also put the book into its thematic context based on your other readings. A significant part of your grade will reflect your presentation skills and ability to engage the other students. Details t.b.a.

30% Final paper

This final, synthetic paper should present a strong argument on your theme. It should cite on the order of 10 books and 10 additional journal articles, in addition to any other sources that you engage with critically. It should be **10 pages** in length and it is due on **April 12**. Further details t.b.a.

V. Course policies

This syllabus is a contract between us, so you must abide by the policies and schemes laid out here. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with me as soon as possible.

Attendance and preparation

You are required to attend class meetings. Please come to class prepared to discuss and engage.

Assignment submission policies

Please read rubrics carefully for guidance on preparation and submission of assignments. In general, assignments will be due in a dropbox in LEARN by 11:55pm on the due date. For consistency, assignments should be Word documents that are double-spaced with 12-pt Times new Roman font and 1" margins. Please number pages in the bottom right and put your name in the top right corner of the first page.

I will only accept late assignments if you arrange this with me at least three days in advance of the due date (or if you have a doctor's note or a documented family emergency). Otherwise, your grade for the assignment will be 0.

Laptop policy

Recent studies have demonstrated that students cannot focus effectively on classroom discussions if others around them are using laptops or electronic devices. This course involves extensive oral and listening participation, rather than note-taking. As such, laptops will not regularly be used during class. If you have a special learning need that requires a laptop, documented through AccessAbility Services (formerly OPD), please come see me and we will come up with a mutually-agreeable solution together.

VI. Notes for persons with religious beliefs and/or disabilities

AccessAbility Services (<https://uwaterloo.ca/disability-services>), located in Needles Hall (Room 1132), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

Religious Observances: Please let me know at the beginning of term if special accommodation needs to be made for religious observances that are not otherwise accounted for in the scheduling of classes and assignments.

VII. Plagiarism and academic integrity

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity). Students who are unsure what constitutes an academic offence are requested to visit the tutorial at <http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait>.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline (www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm). For typical penalties, check Guidelines for Assessment of Penalties (www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm). When in doubt, contact your Undergrad Advisor for details.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances, other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals (www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm).

Turnitin: Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) may be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all materials and sources in assignments is documented.