

School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability
Faculty of Environment
University of Waterloo

ERS 215: Introduction to Environmental Assessment Fall 2020

Instructor:

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Teaching Assistants:

See the online course site for TA contact details.

Office Hours: Due to COVID-19, office hours will be by appointment rather than scheduled. Please contact me or the TA by email with concerns. Drop-in hours will also be scheduled every two weeks for students with questions that do not require an office hour appointment or who wish to engage in student discussions.

Description

This course is an introduction to processes and techniques for incorporating environmental considerations in planning and evaluating proposals for future undertakings that may have significant social and ecological effects. The course provides an overview of methodologies for, and controversies surrounding, the design and conduct of environmental impact studies, and the testing of reported findings. The main focus is on the purposes and design of impact assessment processes, with particular reference to the Canadian federal and Ontario provincial environmental assessment systems, and the evolution of environmental assessments toward a sustainability-oriented framework. Further, students will get the opportunity to develop their skills on how to write a briefing note to a government decision maker. This assignment will develop the skills to quickly (concisely) and effectively convey key issues surrounding impact assessment in Canada. You will develop an in-depth understanding of key principles and priorities of a well-done impact assessment. This knowledge will be transferable to any impact assessment act. As some of you will be aware, there is a new Impact Assessment Act now in Canada. In this course we will be focusing on CEAA 2012 at this time. Many of the challenges and shortcomings of CEAA 2012, are still relevant with the new IA Act.

Approach

Modules will be used to provide an overview of key topics and also to highlight important themes. Key topics and themes will be elaborated on through videos and regular attention to case studies. Assigned readings throughout the semester are critical for providing additional depth and breadth. Quizzes and assignments provide an opportunity for integrating key topics and themes, as well as linking them with the broader scholarly literature on environmental assessment. From this course you will develop a key understanding of what an EA should be and, therefore, you can apply this knowledge and understanding to any assessment act in general, as well as be able to determine, to a more clarified degree, the implications of differences between various assessments.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- **define** the aims and objectives of environmental assessments, as well as key terms and concepts in EA,
- **identify** the roles and relevance of EA as a potential venue that can contribute to sustainability,
- **describe** the different steps and components of an EA process, particularly in Canada,
- **apply** EA principles for best practices to case studies and critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses of environmental assessment, and
- **identify** the important relationship between EAs and other environmental planning and management instruments (i.e., SEA, CEA, SA).
- **develop** the skills to write a briefing note to a government minister, an essential component of the course. Students will develop the skills to quickly (concisely) and effectively convey the key issues surrounding the federal IAA to a government discussion maker. Therefore, all students must complete the briefing note assignment.

Course Technologies

We will use LEARN and CMS in this course. The link to CMS will be provided on the LEARN platform. On Learn you will also have access to quizzes and dropbox for assignment submissions. On CMS, you will have access to the course contact information, course outline, and course content in module format.

Required Readings

Noble, Bram (2014). **Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment: A Guide to Principles and Practice, 3rd Edition**. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Other required readings will be posted to the course website.

Course Schedule

Week Of	Module Topic (on CMS)
Sept 8, 2020	Module 1: Introduction to Environmental Assessment
Sept 14, 2020	Module 2: History of Environmental Impact Assessment
Sept 21, 2020	Module 3: Introduction to Systems Thinking and Environmental Assessment
Sept 28, 2020	Module 4: Screening Procedures
Oct 5, 2020	Module 5: Scoping Procedures (Quiz 1 Available)
Oct 12, 2020	READING WEEK
Oct 19, 2020	Module 6: Impact Prediction and Evaluation
Oct 26, 2020	Module 7: Determining Impact Significance
Nov 2, 2020	Module 8: Public Participation and Indigenous Issues
Nov 9, 2020	Module 9: EA Follow-up and Monitoring
Nov 16, 2020	Module 10: Cumulative Effects Assessment
Nov 23, 2020	Module 11: Real World EA Application (Quiz 2 Available)
Nov 30, 2020	Module 12: Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Assessment Module 13: What is Next for Canadian Environmental Assessment

Course Grading

The instructor determines the content and establishes the grading rules for all assignments and quizzes. The teaching assistants will assist the instructor with grading course work. The following table represents the grade breakdown of this course.

Activities/Assignments/Tests	Due Date	Weight
Module Review Quiz Questions (6 quizzes total)	Friday of every other week starting Sept 18, and ending Dec 4, 2020	30%
Term Quiz 1	Start Date: Oct 5, 2020 End Date: Oct 9, 2020	10%
Term Quiz 2	Start Date: Nov 23, 2020 End Date: Nov 27, 2020	10%
Briefing Note	Nov 13, 2020 at 11:55 pm on LEARN	25%
Final Exam	TBD	25%

Module Review Quiz Questions – 30% of final grade

In previous iterations of the course, module review questions were submitted weekly via dropbox on LEARN. This year, the module review questions are built-in as bi-weekly quizzes on LEARN (6 total). The module review quizzes will contain questions pertaining to the content of the weekly modules and the review questions that are presented at the end of each weekly module. The questions may include a variation of multiple choice, short answer, and long (paragraph) answer. Students will have a two-week window to attempt the module review quiz, only one attempt will be allowed per quiz, and time limit (2 hour) will not be enforced. **These quizzes are to be done independently.** While the review question quizzes are not enforced as closed book, it is highly recommended that students use these as an opportunity to test their own knowledge without external references.

Term Quizzes (Quiz 1 and Quiz 2) – 20% of final grade

The quizzes for this course are like mini tests to assess student understanding of the course content at two points during the course. Students will be given a week-long window to attempt each quiz, only one attempt will be allowed per quiz, and time limit (60 minutes) will be enforced with a 15-minute grace period for technological/other issues that may occur during the quiz attempt. The first quiz is mostly based on material covered in Modules 1 - 4 (including all readings for each module). The second quiz is mostly based on the second part of the course material (Modules 4 – 6, including all readings). Please note, that some key concepts are carried throughout the entire course, and, therefore, can appear on both quizzes and the final exam. Both quizzes will include multiple choice and true/false questions. **These quizzes are to be done independently and are closed book.**

Briefing Note – 25% of final grade

This assignment is an essential course component. Students will write a briefing note to the Environment Minister regarding improvements to the current federal EA process. The briefing note will be addressed to the Cabinet Minister (Minister of Environment and Climate Change) and contain at least 3 main points that should be addressed during a possible review of the current environmental assessment. Use of antiplagiarism (e.g. Turnitin software) will be applied to the submission.

Final Exam – 25% of final grade

The final exam will assess student learning and understanding through questions that focus on synthesis, evaluation, and analysis. The exam will consist of short answer and long answer questions that will require students to make connections between the various content learned in the course. These may include scenario-based and problem-solving based questions that the students will have encountered throughout the modules as well as through the module review quiz questions. Final exams will be submitted through the LEARN dropbox and will be subject to antiplagiarism (e.g. Turnitin software).

The final exam will be scheduled by the registrar's office. Due to the online nature of the course, students will have a 24-hour period to complete the exam.

Communication with Instructors and TAs

Students' UW email accounts will be used for all communication. Students are responsible to check their UW email and LEARN accounts regularly. All course announcements will be posted to LEARN. An effort will be made by the TAs and the Instructor to deal with email requests, within two business days of receipt (48 hours). The instructor does not respond to emails outside of regular working hours (M-F ~8:30 AM- 5:50 PM). If you require a timelier response, post your question to the LEARN discussion board. The courses LEAD TA will be monitoring the discussion board daily. Further, other students in the course might respond quicker. All emails and communications with the TAs and course instructor must be respectful and professional. Any unprofessional and disrespectful emails will be reported.

Access to LEARN and Online Content for the Course:

Please note it is your responsibility to ensure that your computer is up to date and compatible.

IMPORTANT: Technical Support

If you are unable to access Waterloo LEARN or course content you must contact Technical Support at learnhelp@uwaterloo.ca. **Include your full name, WatIAM user ID, student number, and the course name and number.** Technical support is available during regular business hours, Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30 PM (Eastern Time). Further, trouble shooting for LEARN can be found here: <https://uwaterloo.ca/learn-help/students>. Often, if you log out of LEARN and exit your web browser and then log back in, you can access LEARN again. Remember that your textbook has a lot of course material in it – so you can access a lot of course content without LEARN, should you need to study etc. Ultimately, if access issues are not due to any University of Waterloo changes/updates, it is your responsibility to fix the problem.

Course and University Policies

Missed Examinations:

All exams are mandatory, and thus, students are expected to be present at the time of each exam. If you miss an exam you must provide reasonable documentation explaining the reason for your absence,

degree of incapacitation, dates covered by the note to be considered for an alternative arrangement. Please make a copy of this note and give the copy to your instructor by hand or scanned and sent by email (email to s23esmai@uwaterloo.ca)

Requests for Extension on Briefing Note Assignment: Regular Deadline and Extended Deadline

There is an extended deadline available to you for your briefing note assignment. You have 7 days past the assignment regular due date to submit your briefing note assignment with a 10% late penalty total. This extended deadline is available to everyone and therefore you do not need to ask me for an extension. After the 7-day extended deadline assignments will no longer be accepted. No further extensions will be granted.

Note for Students with Disabilities:

The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), 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:

Student needs to inform the instructor 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.

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 on-line 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, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>. For typical penalties, check Guidelines for Assessment of Penalties, <http://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, Section 4, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>. When in doubt please contact your Undergraduate Advisor for details.

Appeals:

A decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 – (Student Discipline) may be appealed i here is a ground, A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should defer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals)

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>

Consequences of Academic Offences:

Students are strongly encouraged to review the material provided by the university's Academic Integrity office. See (<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infoacad/Students/index.html>) .

University Policies: Plagiarism

Please familiarize yourself with the University of Waterloo's policy dealing with plagiarism. Be especially careful when using materials from the internet, and be aware that software available to instructors can be used to check student submissions for plagiarism (e.g. [www.Turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)). Plagiarism offences are normally treated quite seriously by the University and can result in significant penalties being assessed (e.g. failing grade on an assignment, repeating a course, suspension or expulsion).

Definition of Plagiarism: "The act of presenting the ideas, words or other intellectual property of another as one's own."- Source: University of Waterloo, Policy 71.

To Avoid Plagiarism

The use of other people's work *must* be properly acknowledged and referenced in all written material such as take-home examinations, essays, research papers, laboratory reports, work-term reports, design projects, statistical data, computer programs and research results. The properly acknowledged use of sources is an accepted and important part of scholarship. Use of such material without complete and unambiguous acknowledgement, however, is an offence under Policy 71.

Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing (source: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/1/>)

These three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing differ according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing.

- **Quotations** must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author with page number.
- **Paraphrasing** involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.
- **Summarizing** involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

Turnitin:

Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments and review questions in this course. Turnitin is primarily a plagiarism detection tool but can also be used to help students understand academic integrity in written assignments. Turnitin generates 'originality reports' on student

submissions, which can provide instructors with information about plagiarized sources, but the reports can also be used to help students understand the proper use of quotation marks, how to cite sources properly, and how to paraphrase.

Students will be given an option if they do not want to have their assignment screened by Turnitin. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course. NOTE: any student not wishing to submit materials for Turnitin detection must contact the instructor within the first week of the term, to arrange for an alternate format for the review questions and assignment – including an annotated bibliography for each assignment.

Unclaimed Assignments

Unclaimed assignments will be retained until one month after term grades become official in quest. After that time, they will be destroyed in compliance with UW's [confidential shredding procedures](#).