

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

ERS 215

Environmental and Sustainability Assessment I

Instructor:
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Office Hours: Due to COVID-19, no in-person office hours will be held. Please contact me by email with concerns. Special arrangements could be made, depending on need, for meetings via Skype.

TAs:

See the online course site for TA contact details.

Description:

This course serves as an introduction to both the processes, and techniques, for incorporating environmental considerations into planning and 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 designs of environmental assessment processes, with particular reference to the Canadian federal and Ontario provincial environmental assessment systems, as well as the evolution of environmental assessments toward a sustainability-oriented framework. Furthermore, students will develop their technical linguistic skills through a Briefing Note assignment. This assignment will develop the skills necessary to concisely and effectively convey key issues surrounding CEAA 2012. This course will also analyze the 2019 Impact Assessment Act, though to a slightly lesser degree than CEAA 2012 due to a lack of comparable assessment(s) surrounding the new legislation. You will develop an in-depth understanding of key principles and priorities needed for a well-done Environmental Assessment; this knowledge will be transferable between different EAs.

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.
- Identify the role 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 assessments.
- Identify the relationship between EAs and other environmental planning and management instruments (i.e., Strategic Environmental Assessment, Cumulative Environmental Assessment, and Sustainability Assessment).
- Develop skills to write a briefing note to a government minister

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. As many of you might know, a new impact assessment act (IA) has been passed into law. For the present time, the course will still focus on CEAA 2012. Many of the challenges and short fallings of CEAA 2012 are still present in the new IA act. 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.

¹ When communicating via email, please identify the course (e.g. "ERS 215") in the subject line. Make sure to use your UW account.

Website: <http://learn.uwaterloo.ca> (LEARN, ERS 215)

You will need to access the course website frequently, as some of the course material will be made available and managed through LEARN (Desire2Learn)

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 and will be available through course reserves.

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, 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.

EVALUATION:

Your final grade will be based on the Briefing Note assignment; the completion of module comprehension questions/activities; two LEARN quizzes; and a final exam. The professor 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 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 – 8, 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.**

<i>Course Component</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<u>LEARN Quiz 1</u> (See LEARN for quiz dates)	15%
<u>LEARN Quiz 2</u> (See LEARN for quiz dates)	15%
<u>Assignment: Briefing Note</u> (Mid July)	25%
<u>Module Review Questions/Activities</u> (4 total) (Refer to the online course site for more information on the module review questions – See LEARN for due dates)	20%
<u>“Stay at Home Exam”</u> (Due August 13 th , 2020, 11:59 PM)	25%

Numeric grades on a scale from 0-100 are used in grading all assignments at the University of Waterloo. The following list will give you an idea of the basis upon which numeric grades are assigned:

>90%	Work that shows a high level of initiative and is clearly above and beyond what is expected. Referencing, style, grammar/spelling, content and the development of ideas are all superior. (similar to A and A+ in the previous system)
80-89%	Work that shows good initiative and is above what is expected. Referencing, style, grammar/spelling, content and the development of ideas are all good. (Similar to B+ and A- in the previous system)
70-79%	Work that shows initiative and is about what is expected, but one or more problems are evident in referencing, style, grammar/spelling, content and/or the development of ideas. (Similar to B- and B in the previous system)
60-69%	Work that does not demonstrate initiative, has a series of problems in referencing, style, grammar/spelling, content and/or the ideas, and overall, does not fully convince the reader that the topic has been well considered (Similar to C-, C and C+ in the previous system)
50-59%	Work that is substandard/sloppy in places, has many problems in referencing, style, grammar/spelling, content and/or the development of ideas, and overall, raises more questions in a reader's mind than the work answers. (Similar to D-, D and D+ in the previous system)
40-49%	Work that is of consistently poor quality, demonstrates gaps in comprehension of the assigned material, and/or indicates that not enough time was taken to properly address the assignment. (Similar to F and F+ in the previous system)
<40	Work that is clearly of poor quality, demonstrates a lack of comprehension of the assigned material, shows little attempts at a personal development of ideas or efforts to back up arguments with suitable evidence, and/or indicates that the work was completed 'at the last minute'

Requirements, Late assignments, Grade Penalties and Special Considerations:

Readability and Clarity:

Students are expected to present well organized, and properly written work. Penalties of up to **25%** may be applied in cases where readability and/or clarity are inadequate. There are campus resources to help with your writing. Please make an appointment with the writing and communication centre (<https://uwaterloo.ca/writing-and-communication-centre/>).

Lateness penalty:

All assignments are due on the date set by the professor. The briefing note is an essential learning component of the course so you must hand in the assignment to receive a mark for the course. There is a 10% penalty off the final mark of the briefing note assignment for assignments submitted up to 7 days past the due date. ***Assignments submitted past the 7 day extended due date deadline will not be accepted and a mark of zero will be given. No extensions will be granted.*** The time of the quizzes and review module questions are set in the course. You are required to complete the quizzes and comprehension questions in the timeslots given. ***No extensions or exceptions will be granted for missed quizzes and review module questions.***

Please ensure that you are diligent in ***backing up computer files*** and making ***draft copies*** of all assignments, as computer/disk failures, printer problems, etc, will **not normally be considered a valid reason to waive the late assignment deduction.** NOTE: Perhaps the easiest way to prevent computer file loss is to send to yourself an email attachment of your assignment after each significant work session.

Course Notes: Information for Students Using LEARN

LEARN is a web-based course management system that enables instructors to manage course materials (posting of course content, notes, etc.), interact with their students (drop boxes for student submissions, on-line quizzes, discussion boards, course e-mail etc.), and provide feedback (grades, assignment comments etc.). The degree to which LEARN is utilized in a particular course is left to the discretion of the instructor and therefore, you may find a large variance in how LEARN is being used from one course to another.

Logging Into LEARN

Since LEARN is a web-based system, you will need a browser. Minimum requirements include:

PCs running Windows:

- Internet Explorer 7 or 8 ([Download Version 8](#))
- Firefox 2 or 3 ([Download Firefox](#))

MACs running OS X:

- Firefox 2 or 3 ([Download Firefox](#))

Once you have started up your browser, type in the following URL: <http://learn.uwaterloo.ca>. Provide your Quest/UWdir userid and password (case sensitive). Once you have logged in, you should see a list of your LEARN courses under the Courses header bar. Clicking on the course name will take you to that course.

Multimedia Notes (DVDs, Videos, in-class internet-based videos, etc).

Approximately 15% of course content is delivered through multi-media materials (DVDs, online audio or video clips), and ALL of this material is valid testing/quizz material. Therefore, each student should take comprehensive notes.

PowerPoint Viewer

The web addresses for Microsoft PowerPoint viewers (for those who do not have PowerPoint on their computers) is: <http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?id=13>

Triweekly Module Review Questions (20% of final mark)

(Due triweekly, Sunday @ 11:55 PM EST in LEARN Dropbox: see LEARN for specific deadlines)

****The will be no extensions granted for module review questions. The drop boxes are set to close at the deadline.**

Each week, module review questions will be posted on LEARN. (12 sets in total – *note module 12 and 13 are combined into one week of review questions, refer to the course website for due date). Therefore, every third week, you are to submit a document which contains your answers to 3 of 9 total questions, 1 for each week. For example, in your first submission, your document will contain 1 answer to the week 1 questions, 1 answer to the week 2 questions, and 1 answer to the week 3 questions. The questions – and consequently, your answers— are not just about summarizing the readings for each module. Instead, you are to critically engage with each question, meaning that you must provide an original perspective that is backed by well-cited evidence. You are not to merely reiterate what you read, as the TAs, and myself, have already done all of the reading.

It is vital that you reference with in text-citations. You must include a reference list at the very end of the module review questions. If you fail to use in-text citations and/or you do not include a full reference list you will get a zero for that module. You must use sources beyond the weekly readings and lectures by the professor, as critical engagement necessitates that you conduct external research, comparing and contrasting different sources with one another. You can – nay, probably should – reference the textbook. See the APA reference guide posted to the course site. Use direct quotations sparingly, and obviously, ensure that they are properly cited. The TAs want to see you are critically thinking about the key concepts from the week's modules and readings. This exercise is an opportunity to show some synthesis of concepts and critical perspectives.

Turnitin will be used to screen all module review question responses, not only between all students in the class, but all students from previous classes. This to be *individual work* and any evidence of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and will be immediately reported. There is no limit to how many times you can submit to turnitin to review your score.

Your answer for each question should be around 1 single-spaced page, or 2 double-spaced pages.

QUIZZES (two quizzes each worth 15% of final grade)

You will have two quizzes throughout the term in ERS 215. These quizzes are unconventional, in that you will be asked to evaluate one of the additional readings for the course, and then offer commentary on the connections and differences between two other pieces from different weeks – so, if you select an additional reading from week 2, you could connect to a reading from week 4 and week 3, or an additional week 3 reading and the textbook chapter from week 1, etc. The evaluations are meant to be short – 1 page single spaced maximum. You do not need full citations for these quizzes, as you are to focus on three readings total, but ensure that the pieces you are discussing are identified. The quizzes will open at the beginning of week 4 and 8, and will no longer be available by 11:59 PM on the Sunday at the end of those weeks. Upon starting the quiz on LEARN, you will have 24 hours to complete the quiz. Therefore, you should study by carefully going through the readings, and thinking through the connections between them well in advance.

ASSIGNMENT: Briefing Note (25% of final grade)

The Briefing Note Assignment is worth 25% of your final grade. This assignment is an essential course component. You will write a briefing note to the Environment Minister regarding improvements to the current CEAA 2012 (federal EA process).

- **IMPORTANT:** You should present your paper in an academic research paper format, based on adequate and appropriate reading and reflection, and it must acknowledge intellectual indebtedness through proper citations.

Required format for your assignment (marks will be deducted if these guidelines are not followed):

- Your assignment must have a plain title page with the title of your assignment, your name, course number (ERS 215), the date, your student number, and the term instructor's name.
- Please number all pages
- Typed/word-processed, with 1" margins.
- Font: Times New Roman, 12 point font; or Calibri, 12 point font.
- Submit your assignment as a word doc.
- Please read over further instructions/information posted on the online course site, which will include a specific description on how to write a briefing note, as well as a reiteration of formatting instructions and a declaration of the required word count. Also refer to the other sections on LEARN for information regarding citations, grammar, and thesis statements.

Important. You are responsible for ensuring your assignment is uploaded correctly into the LEARN dropbox. Failing to submit your assignment will result in late penalties. Double check that your submission is uploaded by 11:55 PM (EST).

Marking of your Module Review Questions and the Briefing Note Assignment:

Marking will follow the marking rubrics posted to the course website. If you have questions regarding your mark, you must first discuss your concerns with your TA. You must email your TA with a specific concern and a written response as to why you believe you deserve more marks. The fact that you are simply not happy with your mark is not a valid reason for asking for a re-mark. If you still have questions/concerns after talking with your TA, and you would like the instructor to remark your assignment or module review questions, please note that a re-mark will be for the entire assignment/module - possibly resulting in a higher or lower mark. *You have 14 days from the time the mark is posted to ask for a re-mark.* It is not a valid reason to say that you believe you should have a higher grade because a friend had a similar assignment and received a higher grade. Your assignment and modules are marked as an individual effort and therefore, is unique and is marked as such.

The “Stay at Home Exam” (25% of Final Grade) [No Extensions for this Exam]

The stay at home exam is ultimately modelled after the “take home” exam. On August 5th, the last day of semester, I will post a document containing 6-8 questions on LEARN. You will have exactly 8 days to answer 2 of the questions in essay format, meaning your answers must be structured as you would structure your answer to a long-answer question, and you must comprehensively answer the questions using evidence and citations. Your answers to these questions should be about 4-6 pages at 1.5 spacing each. The stay at home exam is meant to test your ability to mobilize and arrange sources, evidence, and arguments in a short time frame, whilst also demonstrating your awareness of the course material. The stay at home exam will be open book – as you could not include citations otherwise – but it is not a group effort, meaning that all answers must be your own, original work, with no consultation with your colleagues. The stay at home exam must include a reference page. You can use material from the course as well as external sources, but remember that you must quickly, yet carefully, develop your answers, so manage your efforts accordingly. To study for this exam, review all course material.

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 cbarbeau@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 if there 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). 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](#).