Syllabus: ENVS 105: Environmental Sustainability and Ethics

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the ethical and social challenges posed by environmental sustainability in the age of the 'Anthropocene'. To begin, we will examine classic approaches to thinking about ethics through an environmental lens. We will then move on to a discussion of some the most pressing and hotly contested environmental challenges of our time: what is the role of the public and private sectors in steering social systems toward sustainability? How should we respond to climate change? What is the role of economics, game theory, and new technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and social media? Should we be 'ecomodernists'? How do we reconcile planetary boundaries with human development? These and other 'wicked questions' will be examined throughout the course with an eye toward improving our facility and confidence in approaching these defining questions in the 21st century.

Learning Outcomes

1. The ability to critically evaluate ethical arguments and viewpoints with respect to environmental issues;
2. The capacity to apply ethical decision-making “tools” to environmental problem contexts;
3. Knowledge of the reasons and causes of ethical disagreement and collective action problems with respect to environmental issues;
4. Knowledge of the many environmental themes of the Faculty of Environment and an introduction to some of the key challenges facing environmental governance research and action.

Contact Us

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<tr>
<th>Who and Why</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Instructor: Professor Morgan Tait</td>
<td><a href="mailto:m5tait@uwaterloo.ca">m5tait@uwaterloo.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Hours: 10-11am Tuesday and Thursday or by appointment. I will be online during office hours on Virtual Classroom. I can also be reached by</td>
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Undergraduate Studies Calendar

Graduate Studies Academic Calendar
Instructor and TAs

- Course-related questions (e.g., course content, deadlines, assignments, etc.)
- Questions of a personal nature

You can post general course-related questions to the Ask the Instructor discussion topic*. This allows other students to benefit from your question as well.

Questions of a personal nature can be directed to your instructor.

Instructor: Professor Morgan Tait
m5tait@uwaterloo.ca

TAs: Tatiana Brierley: tmbrierley@uwaterloo.ca
Rachel Krueger: r3krueger@uwaterloo.ca
Gryphon Loubier: gryphon.loubier@uwaterloo.ca
Geisha Sanchez: geisha.sanchez@uwaterloo.ca

Your instructor checks email and the Ask the Instructor discussion topic* frequently and will make every effort to reply to your questions within 24 hours, Monday to Friday. When emailing the instructor, please indicate the course code in the subject line.

*Discussion topics can be accessed by clicking Connect and then Discussions on the course navigation bar above.

Technical Support

Technical problems with Waterloo LEARN

learnhelp@uwaterloo.ca

Include your full name, WatIAM user ID, student number, and course name and number.

Technical support is available during regular business hours, Monday to Friday, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM (Eastern Time).

LEARN Help Student Documentation

Student Resources

- Academic advice
- Student success
- WatCards
- Library services and more

Grade Breakdown

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<th>Activities and Assignments</th>
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In-class participation

10% of the final grade for the course will be based on participation in multiple-choice polls that will be posted within the course lectures. Note that there is no ‘right answer’ for the polls; your grade is based on participation alone. Each poll question will be posed in the lecture slides for the course every week. You can answer the polls by accessing the 'Quizzes' folder under the 'Submit' tab on learn. Polls can be answered any time during the calendar week associated with the lecture(s) in which they are posed. When answering a poll, select a multiple-choice answer (a, b, c, etc.). Your participation is pass-fail, and your grade will be calculated by taking the total number of quizzes answered divided by the total number of quizzes.

Save the Last Word Discussions

15% of the course grade will be calculated for your participation in a group activity called 'Save the Last Word'. You will be assigned to groups of 8 students that will be your group members throughout the term. Groups will be divided into four ‘initiators’ and four ‘responders’. Each week, initiators will post a passage (a few sentences) that interests you from the assigned readings. Responders will then respond to two of the initiator’s posts, explaining why they think the chosen passage is interesting or useful. Initiators then respond to the responders. Every two weeks initiators and responders will swap rolls (see 'Save the Last Word' instructions under the Content tab). Your grade for this activity will be based on the number of posts you complete; full marks will be awarded for completion of all five activities.

Expository Assignments

You will be expected to complete two 350-500-word expository assignments due Oct. 2nd and Oct. 23rd at 11:59 PM. These assignments are intended to demonstrate your understanding of the relevant course material and readings. You will be given a list of questions from which you will chose one question to answer. Please see the 'Resources for Written Assignments' for a grading rubric, instructions regarding references, and an example answer.

Reflection Paper

The reflection paper is an essay assignment due Nov. 20th. You will be expected to formulate and defend a thesis regarding a topic of interest to you, chosen from a list provided (students who wish
to develop their own topic should consult the instructor). Your reflection will be graded both for
demonstration of relevant knowledge of content (as with the expository assignment), as well as the
quality of your argument or how well you present and defend your own thesis, e.g., 'I will argue that
climate change is first and foremost a human development problem').

Final Assessment

The final assignment for the course will take the form of a written take-home exam. The exam will
consist of a mix of short and long answer questions. The short answer questions will be
approximately 1-2 paragraphs in length, and the long answer approximately 3-4 paragraphs in
length. On November 23rd, a 'long list' of short and long-answer questions will be distributed. The
list will consist of 10 short and 5 long-answer questions. On December 1st, a 'short list' of 5 of the
short answer and 3 of the long answer questions will be randomly selected from the long list. From
this list, you will be expected to answer 3 short and 2 long answer questions of your choice. You
will then have one week to complete the exam, due Dec. 8th.

Your Instructor

I am a philosopher of science and environmental philosopher. I completed my PhD in the philosophy
of physics at Western University, and completed a post-doc in the School of Environment and
Resource Studies. I have been teaching at UW in the faculty of Environment and Faculty of
Engineering for 8 years. My research focusses on the nature of expertise, its bearing on climate
change policy, and problems of social coordination and game theory in the anthropocene. I am
married with two children, a 4-year old daughter Rowan and a 6-month old son Lewis (Lewis is seen
below). When I am not thinking about philosophy I am an avid jazz piano enthusiast and basketball
fan.

Professor Tait

Materials and Resources

All of the reading materials that you will need for the course are uploaded to LEARN. Each week has
specific readings, so to find out which readings are required in any given week, see the Course
Schedule or the Weekly Content Folders.

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Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of their instructor, TA, and/or the University of Waterloo. Intellectual property includes items such as:

-Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course (e.g., PowerPoint slides);

Questions or solution sets from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams); and

Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or TA or used by the instructor or TA with permission of the copyright owner).

Course materials and the intellectual property contained therein, are used to enhance a student’s educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without the intellectual property owner’s permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. For this reason, it is necessary to ask the instructor, TA and/or the University of Waterloo for permission before uploading and sharing the intellectual property of others online (e.g., to an online repository).

Permission from an instructor, TA or the University is also necessary before sharing the intellectual property of others from completed courses with students taking the same/similar courses in subsequent terms/years. In many cases, instructors might be happy to allow distribution of certain materials. However, doing so without expressed permission is considered a violation of intellectual property rights.

Please alert the instructor if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, either through the student body or online. The intellectual property rights owner deserves to know (and may have already given their consent).

Mental Health:

The University of Waterloo, the Faculty of Environment and our Departments/Schools consider students' well-being to be extremely important. We recognize that throughout the term students may face health challenges - physical and / or emotional. Please note that help is available. Mental health is a serious issue for everyone and can affect your ability to do your best work. Counselling Services http://www.uwaterloo.ca/counselling-services is an inclusive, non-judgmental, and confidential space for anyone to seek support. They offer confidential counselling for a variety of areas including anxiety, stress management, depression, grief, substance use, sexuality, relationship issues, and much more.

Territorial Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge that we live and work on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.

Religious Observances:

Students need 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.

Unclaimed assignments:

Unclaimed assignments will be retained for … [period of time*; or: “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.

Communications with Instructor and Teaching Assistants:

All communication with students must be through either the student's University of Waterloo email account or via Learn. If a student emails the instructor or TA from a personal account they will be requested to resend the email using their personal University of Waterloo email account.

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. 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/

Research Ethics: Please also note that the 'University of Waterloo requires all research conducted by its students, staff, and faculty which involves humans as participants to undergo prior ethics review and clearance through the Director, Office of Human Research and Animal Care (Office). The ethics review and clearance processes are intended to ensure that projects comply with the Office’s
Guidelines for Research with Human Participants (Guidelines) as well as those of provincial and federal agencies, and that the safety, rights and welfare of participants are adequately protected. The Guidelines inform researchers about ethical issues and procedures which are of concern when conducting research with humans (e.g. confidentiality, risks and benefits, informed consent process, etc.). If the development of your research proposal consists of research that involves humans as participants, the please contact the course instructor for guidance and see http://iris.uwaterloo.ca/ethics/

**Note for students with disabilities**: The AccessAbility Office 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 AccessAbility Office at the beginning of each academic term.

**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, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm. When in doubt please contact your Undergraduate Advisor for details.

**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

◆ 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 an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm

◆ LEARN: Users can login to LEARN via:
http://learn.uwaterloo.ca/
use your WatIAM/Quest username and password
Documentation is available at:
http://av.uwaterloo.ca/uwace/training_documentation/index.html