COURSE OVERVIEW

Individuals, communities and nations in all regions of the world are experiencing the effects of climate and human induced changes in their physical and social environments. The highest and the most direct impact of these changes are seen in the case of commons (e.g., fisheries, shellfish beds, coastal spaces, lagoons, mangroves, range lands, forests, groundwater, freshwater systems, irrigation systems, urban spaces, etc.) upon which humans depend for their social, cultural and economic needs. When impacted by a variety of drivers, commons not only go through a process of change in their biophysical characteristics, but the resulting impacts linger on to the social, cultural, political and economic lives (e.g., loss of livelihoods, subsistence, institutions, disempowerment, loss of rights, cultural identity) of the commons-dependent population. In a similar sense we all, as humans, are linked to some form of commons in our daily lives - we either impact the commons or get impacted by it or experience the both. Given this background, sustaining the commons remains an ongoing challenge that requires enhanced understanding and innovative governance approaches at all levels of society. The aim of this course is exactly to do this, i.e., creatively engage students in furthering their understanding and knowledge on commons and deliberate on novel governance approaches though which commons can be sustained.

So, now, what is commons? Commons is generally understood as a resource that is held by an identifiable community of interdependent users who exclude outsiders while regulating use by members of the local community. Within the community, rights to the resource are unlikely to be
either exclusive or transferable; they are often rights of equal access and use, and held as a collective under well-defined institutional arrangements and rule system. Commons have two essential characteristics: *Excludability* pertains to the decision on who is not and who is a user (question of exclusion and inclusion) and *Subtractability* deals with the rules of distribution and allocation within the users without which exploitation by one user will reduce resource availability for others. In other words, in a commons situation, the exclusion or the control of access of potential users is difficult and each user is capable of subtracting from the welfare of all other users. Therefore, commons are defined as those ‘in which 1) exclusion of beneficiaries through physical and institutional means is especially costly, and 2) exploitation by one user reduces resource availability for others’. Both these characteristics of commons add to their complexity, generate new contestations and help explain various critical perspectives and dynamic processes associated with the commons. Important to note here that commons are influenced by the prevalent social, cultural, economic, ecological and political history and traditions of the specific contexts within which they are situated and impacts of several internal and external drivers across multiple scales. This makes the commons dynamic over time, consistent with the literature that suggests that commons institutions may go through processes of development and decline. The dynamic nature and fluctuations associated with commons make it imperative to understand commons as a process, rather than a regime that is spatially and temporally fixed.

**Objectives**

At the end of this course, students will have (a) a firm grasp of the meaning and complexity of commons and its various components through studying theory, concepts, scholars and practice; (b) a critical understanding of interdisciplinary / multidisciplinary approaches to the study of commons; (c) a good grasp of the main issues involved in the debates around commons; (d) an analytical knowledge of the key drivers and actors influencing the making or breaking of the commons; (e) a solid understanding of the links between commons and its role in sustainable development; (f) a capacity to critically analyze challenges facing the commons in different parts of the world and the nature of struggles, strategies adopted by communities, governments and civil society to deal with it; (g) a solid perspective on how to sustain the commons and carry them into the future through appropriate governance arrangements.

**Pedagogy**

The course will run in a seminar style with appropriate use of lectures. The basic pedagogy of the course will include an interesting mix of conceptual and empirical information delivered through evidence-based learning methods and structured lectures. The class will meet once every week for three hours to deliberate on one particular issue or a set of related issues relating to commons. First half of the class time will be devoted to dealing with the conceptual aspects of the topic mainly through a mix of interactive lecture and facilitated seminar and the remaining half of the class time will be used to discuss an empirical case study or guest speakers that can offer practical examples to help explain selected commons topics more succinctly. Class seminars and discussions will also revolve around a set of required and recommended readings wherein students will be encouraged to participate in a meaningful way.
Required course material

There is no required textbook for this course. Readings from journal articles, books, internet sources will be assigned on a weekly basis. A number of key textbooks are placed on reserve in the Dana Porter Library. It is the responsibility of students to access all journal articles via the University of Waterloo library homepage. Some of these articles are also uploaded to LEARN under the ‘content’ folder. Additional readings, web-pages and points of interest will be posted during the term.

Assessment of Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight %</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on the Commons (One-page Learning Diary)</td>
<td>22.5% (7.5 x 3)</td>
<td>One in every four weeks (total 3 diaries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation on weekly reading materials</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Every week in class (one / two students weekly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commons Major Paper: Step 1 (Outline / abstract)</td>
<td>10% + 30%</td>
<td>Step 1: February 7, 2020 Step 2: March 20, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 (Research essay)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(in class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Action Project (Group Task) plus presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>March 27, 2020 (in class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation + Attendance in the course</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>Ongoing through the course - one-on-one feedback provided by the instructor as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS ON EACH OF THE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE GIVEN IN THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS ON THE 10TH JANUARY AND RELEVANT INFORMATION AND MATERIAL WILL BE POSTED ON LEARN.*
WEEKLY TOPICS

WEEK 1 (January 10): Introduction: What is commons? Why commons?

Required Readings:


WEEK 2 (January 17): Concepts, theories and major debates around commons.

Required Readings:


John M. Anderies and Marco A. Janssen. 2016. Sustaining the Commons. Center for Behaviour, Institutions and the Environment, USA: Arizona State University. READ CHAPTER 2 -Defining Institutions; CHAPTER 10 - Classifying Rules

WEEK 3 (January 24): Concepts, theories and major debates around commons.

Required Readings:
John M. Anderies and Marco A. Janssen. 2016. Sustaining the Commons. Center for Behaviour, Institutions and the Environment, USA: Arizona State University. READ CHAPTER 7 - Design Principles to Sustain the Commons


WEEK 4 (January 31): Typology of commons: From resource commons to knowledge commons and everything in between and beyond.
Guest Speaker: Prof. Neil Craik, School of Environment, Enterprise and Development, University of Waterloo on International Law and the Global Commons.

Required Readings:


WEEK 5 (February 7): Commons and Property rights system.

Required Readings:


(TBD)

WEEK 6 (February 14): The dynamic context of the commons and multilevel drivers: From policies to market and climate

Guest Speaker: Prof. Simron Singh, School of Environment, Enterprise and Development, University of Waterloo on Decommonising the Nicobar Islands: The role of Humanitarian Aid as a global driver of change after the 2004 tsunami.

Required Readings:


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**READING WEEK BREAK FEBRUARY 17 - 21**

**WEEK 7 (February 28):** The practice of commons

**Guest Speaker:** Prof. Jeremy Pittman, School of Planning, University of Waterloo on *The diverse and interacting commons across the land-sea interface*

**Required Readings:**


*(TBD)*

**WEEK 8 (March 6):** Contestations, struggles and politics around the commons: Whose commons? Who benefits? Who controls?

**Required Readings:**

Diegues, A. C. 1998. Social movements and the remaking of the commons in the Brazilian Amazon. Privatizing nature: political struggles for the global commons, pp.54-75.


**WEEK 9 (March 13): Governing the Commons: Key principles, institutions, interactions and policies**

*Guest Speaker:* Prof. Derek Armitage, School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability, University of Waterloo on *Governance and the Commons in a Multi-Level World*

*Required Readings:*


**WEEK 10 (March 20): Approaches to keeping commons as commons: From CBRM/CBC and co-management/ Adaptive management to protected areas**

*Guest Speaker:* TBD

*Required Readings:*


**WEEK 11 (March 27): Commons as complex social-ecological system**

**Guest Speaker:** Fikret Berkes, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Manitoba on *Commons as complex social-ecological system*

**Required Readings:**


(TBD) – A suggested reading from Fikret Berkes relevant to his proposed talk

**WEEK 12 (April 3): Future of the commons: Understanding commons as a process through the lens of commonisation and decommonisation**

**Required Readings:**


Late policy: Assignments are to be handed in IN CLASS on the date highlighted above. You are expected to take account of the possibility of computer or printer failure in planning your time. Emailed or faxed assignments will not be accepted. The penalty for late assignments is 5% of the total possible mark per day, including weekends and holidays. I will not accept assignments more than 5 days after the due date unless we have a prior arrangement.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement Due to Illness or Other Reasons: There will be no unpenalized extensions on assignments except for illness, severe personal extenuating circumstances, or weather emergencies. When you find yourself unable to meet a course requirement because of medical, compassionate or other reasons, please advise me in writing by ACE email; make sure to include your full name in your message. Where possible, you must contact me in advance of the assignment due date, but otherwise as soon as possible after the due date. As a rule, you must provide appropriate documentation, for example, a note from your doctor indicating the dates during which you were ill, and describing the severity of your illness.

University policies
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.

Using UW-LEARN course website: See http://uwace.uwaterloo.ca/ to sign on to UW-ACE. In case of difficulties, contact uwacehelp@ist.uwaterloo.ca.

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/

All students are encouraged to visit the on-line tutorial at http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait/(see ‘Check your understanding’) to learn more about what constitutes an academic offence.

Research Ethics: 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 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:** Please 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.

**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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm)

**Strongly recommended sources on writing skills**
To further hone your skills, I strongly recommend the two sources below to all students.

- **Writing Effective Essays and Reports**, by Rob de Loe (free online resource): [http://www.environment.uwaterloo.ca/u/rdeloe/writing_booklet/](http://www.environment.uwaterloo.ca/u/rdeloe/writing_booklet/)
- Improve your grammar (free online resource): [www.grammarbook.com](http://www.grammarbook.com)

**Consequences of Academic Offences:**

Students are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their actions. Students who are unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who need 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, TA, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean.

For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy #71, Student Academic Discipline, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm)
Within FES, those committing academic offences (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) will be placed on disciplinary probation and will be subject to penalties which may include a grade of 0 on affected course elements, 0 on the course, suspension, and expulsion.

Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve; refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm