

**UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO**

**Master of Environmental Studies (MES) in Sustainability Management**

**SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT, ENTERPRISE AND DEVELOPMENT  
FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENT, UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO**

**GOVERNING THE COMMONS**

**Course # SUSM 675 / ERS 675 / INDEV 475**

**Winter Term 2020**

Course Instructor: Dr. Prateep Kumar Nayak  
Class Time: Friday 11.30 AM - 2.20 PM  
Class Location: STP 201  
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**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 through 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

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

**\* SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS ON EACH OF THE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE GIVEN IN THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS ON THE 10<sup>TH</sup> 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:***

Hardin, G. 1968. The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science* 162(3859): 1243 – 1248.

John M. Anderies and Marco A. Janssen. 2016. *Sustaining the Commons*. Second Edition. Center for Behaviour, Institutions and the Environment, USA: Arizona State University. *READ CHAPTER 1 – Why Study the Commons?*

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

***Required Readings:***

Feeny, D, F. Berkes, B. J. McCay and M. Acheson. 1990. The tragedy of the commons: Twenty-two years later. *Human Ecology* 18 (1):1-19.

Ostrom, E., J. Burger, C. B. Field, R. B. Norgaard and D. Policansky. 1999. Revisiting the commons: Local lessons, global challenges. *Science* 284:278-282.

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*

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**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*

Frank van Laerhoven and Elinor Ostrom. 2007. Traditions and Trends in the Study of the Commons. *International Journal of the Commons* 1(1): 3-28.

Johnson, C. 2004. Uncommon ground: The “poverty of history” in common property discourses. *Development and Change* 35(3): 407-433.

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**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:**

Brunnée, J. 2008. Common Areas, Common Heritage, and Common Concern. In: Daniel Bodansky, Jutta Brunnée, and Ellen Hey (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Environmental Law* UK: Oxford University Press.

Ranganathan, S. 2016. Global commons. *The European Journal of International Law*. 27(3): 693-717

Foster, Sheila R. and Iaione, Christian (2016) "The City as a Commons," *Yale Law & Policy Review*: 34 (2): Article 2. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/ylpr/vol34/iss2/2> (Read selectively)

Bunzl, M., 2009. Climate and the Commons: A reappraisal. *Climatic change* 97(1): 59 - 65.

Charlotte Hess. 2012. The Unfolding of the Knowledge Commons. *St Antony's International Review* 8(1): 13 - 24.

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

**Required Readings:**

Schlager, Edella, and Elinor Ostrom. 1992. "Property Rights Regimes and Natural Resources: A Conceptual Analysis." *Land Economics* 68(3): 249 - 262.

Ribot, J. C. and Peluso, N. L. 2003. A Theory of Access. *Rural Sociology* 68: 153 - 181.

(TBD)

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**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:**

McCarthy, J., 2005. Commons as counterhegemonic projects. *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 16(1): 9 - 24.

Randhir, T. O. 2016. Globalization impacts on local commons: Multiscale strategies for socioeconomic and ecological resilience. *International Journal of the Commons*. 10(1): 387 - 404.

Mansfield, B. 2014. Neoliberalism in the oceans: “Rationalization,” property rights, and the commons question. *Geoforum* 35: 313 - 326

Hochstetler, K and Viola, E. 2012. Brazil and the politics of climate change: Beyond the global commons. *Environmental Politics*. 21(5): 753 – 771.

Berkes, F. 2008. Commons in a Multi-level World. *International Journal of the Commons* 2(1): 1 - 6.

Patankar, V., D’Souza, E., Alcoverro, T. & Arthur, R. (2015). Erosion of Traditional Marine Management Systems in the Face of Disturbances in the Nicobar Archipelago. *Human Ecology*, Vol. 43 (5), pp. 697 – 707

Chandi, M., Mishra, C., Arthur, R. (2015). Sharing Mechanisms in Corporate Groups may be More Resilient to Natural Disasters than Kin Groups in the Nicobar Islands. *Human Ecology*. Vol. 43 (5). Pp. 709 – 720.

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## READING WEEK BREAK FEBRUARY 17 - 21

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### 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:**

Poteete, A., et al., 2010. Working Together: Collective Action, the Commons, and Multiple Methods in Practice. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. (*Selected chapters only – TBD*)

Ostrom, E., 1999. Coping with tragedies of the commons. *Annual review of political science* 2(1): 493-535.

Kerr, J. 2007. Watershed Management: Lessons from Common Property Theory. *International Journal of the Commons*, 1(1).

(TBD)

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

#### **Required Readings:**

Escobar, A. 1998. Whose knowledge, whose nature? Biodiversity, conservation, and the political ecology of social movements. *Journal of political ecology*, 5(1), pp.53-82.

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.

John M. Anderies and Marco A. Janssen. 2013. *Sustaining the Commons*. Center for Behaviour, Institutions and the Environment, USA: Arizona State University. *READ CHAPTER 3 - Action Arenas and Action Situations*.

Nayak, P. K. and F. Berkes. 2008. Politics of Co-optation: Community forest management vs. joint forest management in Orissa, India. *Environmental Management* 41(5): 707 - 718.

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**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:**

Dietz, T., E. Ostrom, P. Stern. 2003. The struggle to govern the commons. *Science* 302:1907 - 1912

Armitage, D. 2008. Governance and the Commons in a Multi-Level World. *International Journal of the Commons*. 2(1): 7-32.

John M. Anderies and Marco A. Janssen. 2016. *Sustaining the Commons*. Center for Behaviour, Institutions and the Environment, USA: Arizona State University. *READ CHAPTER 14 - Think Globally, Act Locally*.

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**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:**

Berge, E. 2006. Protected areas and traditional commons: values and institutions. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift-Norwegian Journal of Geography* 60(1): 65 - 76.

Armitage, D.R., Plummer, R., Berkes, F., Arthur, R.I., Charles, A.T., Davidson-Hunt, I.J., Diduck, A.P., Doubleday, N.C., Johnson, D.S., Marschke, M. and McConney, P., 2009. Adaptive co-management for social-ecological complexity. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 7(2), pp.95-102.

West, P., Igoe, J. and Brockington, D. 2006. Parks and peoples: The social impact of protected areas. *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.*, 35: 251 - 277.

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## **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:**

Ostrom, E. 2009. A general framework for analyzing sustainability of social-ecological systems. *Science* 325(5939): 419 - 422.

Folke, C. 2007. Social-ecological systems and adaptive governance of the commons. *Ecological Research* 22(1): 14 - 15.

John M. Anderies and Marco A. Janssen. 2013. *Sustaining the Commons*. Center for Behaviour, Institutions and the Environment, USA: Arizona State University. *READ CHAPTER 12 - Feedbacks and Stability and CHAPTER 13 - Coupled Infrastructure Systems*.

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

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

### **Required Readings:**

Ostrom, E., M. A. Janssen, J. M. Anderies. 2007. Going beyond panaceas. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 104 (39): 15176 - 15178.

Nayak, P. K. and F. Berkes. 2011. Commonisation and decommonisation: Understanding the processes of change in Chilika Lagoon, India. *Conservation and Society* 9:132 - 145.

John M. Anderies and Marco A. Janssen. 2013. *Sustaining the Commons*. Center for Behaviour, Institutions and the Environment, USA: Arizona State University. *READ CHAPTER 15 - Challenges Ahead*.

Berkes, F. 2015. *Coasts for People: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Coastal and Marine Resource Management*. UK: Routledge. *Read CHAPTER 5 - Can Commons be managed?*

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## **University Policies**



**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](mailto: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/](http://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 offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy #71, Student Academic Discipline, <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>*