

GEOGRAPHY 3640

Social Geography of the Environment



"I don't believe in Global Warming – Banksy" and "Politicians Discussing Global Warming – Isaac Cordal"

Tuesday and Thursday 11:30-12:45 St. John's College 201

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Office Hours: Tues-Thurs 10:30-11:30 (or by appointment)

Course Outline – Welcome to the Anthropocene... the Age of Humans. The goal of this course is to develop an understanding of the interaction between human society and the natural environment. We interrogate the relations between natural systems and social systems so that we might better understand the seemingly insurmountable environmental problems and conflicts of our age. Our task is to bring some of the leading analytical currents in human-environmental geography (political economy, social construction, ethics, markets and scarcity, for example) to bear on the seemingly benign 'things' and materials of everyday life. To do this, we test our geographic theories and analyses by looking at 'on the ground' examples or how these things are made, what their social, economic and environmental effects are, and what work they do in the modern world. We use examples from all over the world, but drawing primarily from Canadian human-environment relations, to show how the things have larger effects than at first glance.

Course Objectives

- To engage with multiple theories, methods and modes of analysis at the intersection of human society and the environment.
- To test these theories, methods and analyses through a series of case studies into the complex lives of the everyday things that make up the modern world and shape our relationships to it.

Learning Outcomes – Students will...

- learn the key frameworks and concepts in social, cultural and economic geography for understanding the relations between society and the environment.
- understand the overlapping dimensions of some of the 21st century's most pressing environmental problems.
- learn analytical tools for disaggregating and thinking critically about the cause and effects of environmental problems.
- learn how to become an effective and engaged environmental citizen.

Course Etiquette

What to expect from your professor: provocative, challenging and informative lectures; wrapping up lectures/discussions on time; a willingness to listen to and learn from you; prompt and fair grading of your assignments; timely responses to your questions and comments.

What I expect from you: being prepared for class, arriving on time, and not engaging in disruptive behaviour (you can sleep, browse Instagram, talk to friends, and send texts in the many hours when you are not in this class); completing the readings and preparing questions and comments for class discussions; a willingness to listen and learn from your instructors *and* your classmates.

Textbooks, Readings, Materials

Required textbook: Paul Robbins, John Hintz and Sarah A. Moore. 2014. *Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell)

Many copies of this text are available in the UofM bookstore, used, UofM Library, and online. Students could use the 1st edition of the book though it is missing some class materials that will be used towards the latter half of the course.

Other material will be made available through the UofM's course management interface Desire2Learn. Articles and links will be posted weekly. Students can also access these academic articles through the UofM Library e-journal service.

Lecture and Readings Schedule

Sept 8 – Introductions and Syllabus

Sept 13 – The Population Bomb?

- Robbins Chapter 2

Sept 15 – Markets and Commodities: The Story of Things

- Robbins Chapter 3

Sept 20 – The Commons: Property and the Public

- Robbins Chapter 4

Sept 22 – Environmentalism I

- Robbins Chapter 5

Sept 27 – Environmentalism II

Sept 29 – Detour 1: Spatial Justice in Winnipeg's North End

- Guest Lecture: Emma Bonnemaïson
- Assignment Option A handed out

Oct 4 – Detour 2: Oil and gas in Manitoba and beyond

- Film: Deep Time
- Assignment Option B handed out

Oct 6 – NO CLASS: Fall break

Oct 11 – Environmental Risk, Hazard and Uncertainty

- Robbins Chapter 6

Oct 13 – Political Economy: Capitalism, Nature and Development

- Robbins Chapter 7
- Assignment Option A Due

Oct 18 – Carbon Dioxide

- Robbins Chapter 9
- Assignment Option B Due

Oct 20 – More-Than-Human Natures 1: Trees

- Robbins Chapter 10

Oct 25 – More-Than-Human Natures 2: Tuna

- Robbins Chapter 11

Oct 27 – Midterm Exam

Nov 1 – Nature/Culture

- Robbins Chapter 8

Nov 3 – More-Than-Human Natures 3: Wolves

- Robbins Chapter 11

Nov 8 – Underground Geographies 1: Uranium

- Robbins Chapter 12

Nov 10 – Underground Geographies 2: Copper

Nov 15 – Underground Geographies 3: The Shale Gas Revolution (boom/bust/boom)

Nov 17 – Urban Natures 1

Nov 22 – Free Class – Major Assignment Preparation

Nov 24 – Urban Natures 2: Lawns (the grass isn't always greener...)

- Robbins Chapter 14
- Major Assignment Due

Nov 29 – Urban Natures 3: E-waste

- Robbins Chapter 17

Dec 1 – Urban Nature 4: Water

- Robbins Chapter 15

Dec 6 – Review

Dec 8 – Final Exam (in-class)

Midterm and Final

There will be a midterm and a final exam – both of these exams will take place in class and will last for 75 minutes. Each will be worth 20% of your final grade.

Written Assignments

There are two written assignments in the class: A shorter written assignment due in October (of about 1000 words) and a more substantial assignment due toward the end of November (of 1500-2000 words). You will be offered a choice for each assignment – you can choose to tailor your coursework to your own strengths as a learner. Students will be given handouts for the first assignment two weeks before the due dates (there are separate due dates for the different assignments). This assignment will be returned to students within two weeks of submission. Students will receive handouts for the second assignment at least four weeks prior to the submission date – there will be several options for the second assignment as well.

Assignment 1 will be worth 20% of your final grade, while Assignment 2 will be worth 30%. The remaining 10% of your grade will consist of a participation grade.

Important Dates

Assignment #1 – October 13 (Option A) or October 18 (Option B)

Midterm – October 27

Assignment #2 – November 24

Final Exam – December 8

The **Grading Standard** for this course is as follows:

A+	(90-100%) is Exceptional
A	(80-89%) is Excellent
B+	(75-79%) is Very Good
B	(70-74%) is Good
C+	(65-69%) is Satisfactory
C	(60-64%) is Adequate
D	(50-59%) is Marginal
F	(0-49%) is Failure

Late Assignments

Students will not be permitted to write make-up tests, except for documented medical or compassionate reasons. Students may hand in assignments late but will be assessed a late penalty if they do so (– 2 marks per day including weekends).

Feedback

Evaluative feedback will be provided several times before the Voluntary Withdrawal date of November 18.

Academic Dishonesty

Students should acquaint themselves with the University’s policy on plagiarism and cheating and examination impersonation (see University of Manitoba General Calendar). Please submit your own unique work – I take plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty very seriously. Consult the U of M Calendar “academic regulations” for more information on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. I will talk about proper citation methods when we get closer to assignment due dates. Please see me if you have any questions about sources, citations or academic/research ethics.

Student Accessibility Services

If you are a student with a disability, please contact SAS for academic accommodation supports and services such as note-taking, interpreting, assistive technology and exam accommodations. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. mental illness, learning, medical, hearing, injury-related, visual) are invited to contact SAS to arrange a confidential consultation.

Student Accessibility Services <http://umanitoba.ca/student/saa/accessibility/>

520 University Centre

204-474-7423

Student_accessibility@umanitoba.ca

A Note on Email: I will happily answer email queries that you might have about course administration or other housekeeping duties – but I will only be checking email during regular office hours (ie. not on evenings and weekends). I will aim to answer you’re emails within 48 hours. If your questions are more substantive (requiring a longer answer or explanation) I will ask you bring them to me before/after class or during office hours. Feel free to stop me in the halls or to make an appointment if you’re not able to make it to the regularly scheduled office hours. In general, personal face-to-face communication is much preferred over email.

A Note on Technology: Many students prefer to take notes on laptops. This is fine as long as you use the computer only for this purpose (ie. not for reading blogs or Tumblr, using facebook, writing emails). This is disruptive for your classmates.

Cell phones should be turned off at the beginning of class... and texting is a big-time breach of classroom etiquette. Please do not text during class.

Unless a specific dispensation has been made, I would prefer students not to record lectures. Posting of class materials or recordings to the internet is prohibited.

A Note on Lectures: I'll be using powerpoint and links to the internet during the lectures to illustrate and supplement the things we talk about in class. I'll post the slides and links so that you can use them as study guides. I tend to use little text on the powerpoints so please don't use them as a substitute for lecture/seminar attendance. The slides should be used as a general outline but not as a comprehensive guide to what we will be talking about. You should still take notes.