

Course Overview

This course investigates our attempts to predict and mitigate the adverse impacts of development in this time of great socio-ecological upheaval. The focus is primarily on formal environmental impact assessment, especially the BC provincial process, but we will explore other forms of assessment in other contexts. The intention is not to train students in environmental impact assessment techniques (although we will engage with these). Rather, the course adopts a critical, interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon geography, political science, cultural theory, ecology, law, and Indigenous studies to interrogate environmental decision-making, unpack the complex political /cultural context within which it takes place, and explore how the practice could be improved.

Instructor-lead discussions of theory and engaging case studies - past and present - are supplemented by frequent guest speaker presentations

Note on Course

Experience Survey:

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

“The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.”

Note on Marks

A-level marks (80%+) reflect exceptional (beyond expectations), outstanding, or at least highly competent efforts. B+/B level marks (73-79%) reflect good or at least acceptable efforts (usually above the class average). B-/C+ level marks (65-72%) represent average efforts, showing some understanding but deficient in some way. C/D level marks (50-64%) represent passable but largely insufficient efforts, while F marks (<50%) represent failing the course.

Course readings

The course is designed around a text (see below) and a number of other important readings which will be posted on the Course Spaces site. The text is mandatory and can be purchased at the UVic Bookstore. Reading - and engaging with the readings (highlighting, underlining, taking good notes etc.) – is absolutely essential for your enjoyment of and success in this course (see assessment below).

- Hanna, K. (2016). **Environmental Impact Assessment: Practice and Participation 3rd Edition**. Toronto: Oxford

Learning expectations

1. Think deeply about why you are here and what you want to get out of your experience at UVic in the short time you’ll be here. Use this time wisely to develop important skills in professional writing, oral communication, critical thinking*, problem solving, organization, perseverance, and initiative.
2. I consider such skill development and good habit formation as being at least as important as content mastery in this course. While I want you to learn important things about environmental assessment, I also want you to develop particular skills and habits, which employers will be expecting.
3. Effective learning involves recognizing how the course material is directly relevant to your life. Rather than think of classes as irrelevant drudgery that you have to get through, think of them as unique opportunities for personal transformation.
4. *Note: critical thinking is often misrepresented as cynical, pessimistic, or “being against things”. In this class it should rather be understood in terms of healthy skepticism with received wisdom recognizing the things could /should be otherwise; ceaseless, piercing questioning of status quo “common sense”; trying to make important linkages and connections; recognizing and evaluating multiple perspectives and the values and assumptions underlying each (including our own); evaluating evidence and arguments (while recognizing power relations in knowledge claims), arriving at defensible positions on issues and working towards a more respectful, inclusive, just, and fair world.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE