

CEM 444: GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Course Syllabus

The course examines a wide range of global environmental issues that reflect major and far-reaching effects on the planet, spanning the atmosphere, water, land and biodiversity. Course modules explore topics such as anthropogenic climate change, degradation of freshwater resources, destruction of coastal and marine ecosystems, deforestation, desertification and other forms of land deterioration, waste generation, and biodiversity loss. Material covered in the course includes the causation, both underlying and proximate, of global environmental change as well as the direct and indirect impacts on the physical and human environments. While there has been a measure of success to date in grappling with several of the global environmental issues, protection of the planet undeniably entails many obstacles and challenges. As such, the course assesses initiatives underway to address the problems and find effective strategies and workable solutions, as well as societal changes needed in order to limit the damage to the planet and ensure a sustainable future.

Moreover, the course looks at related ideas and themes, including scientific uncertainty, environmental justice, poverty, and sustainable development. Course content is based on academic and non-academic sources, drawing from experiences in different parts of the world, efforts being made to better understand the issues, and lessons learned thus far in responding to global environmental challenges.

Required Course Text

Middleton, N. 2013. *The Global Casino: An introduction to environmental issues*. Fifth Edition. London and New York: Routledge (paperback).

The text is available through the University of Toronto Bookstore. Please order your book as soon as possible so that you have the required reading material prior to the first class. The U of T Bookstore has several available copies. You can order the text by internet, in person or by mail. The url for the Bookstore is: <http://www.uoftbookstore.com/>. If you wish to pick up your textbook, please call the bookstore first to ensure it is in stock. The address and telephone number for the University of Toronto Bookstore can be found on the website above.

Alternatively, you could order a new or used copy through Amazon.ca or Indigo.Chapters.ca.

Additional Readings

Additional material will be assigned and available through electronic links or in .pdf format. You may need to download the free version of Adobe Reader if you currently do not have this (see <http://www.get.adobe.com/reader/> for link to free Adobe Reader download). Keeping up with the readings is essential in the course. In order to

participate effectively in the online weekly discussions, please have the assigned readings completed during the week in which they are assigned. In general, the weekly discussions will be based on the module material from the previous week (i.e., there will usually be a 1-week time lag between the module material and the related weekly discussion).

Assignments and Grading Scheme

The grade you obtain from this course will depend on your research and writing skills, critical thinking ability, and participation in the weekly discussion forums. There are three short papers and one final long paper due in the final week. In addition, you are expected to participate actively in the weekly discussion forums. The course grading scheme is as follows:

Three short papers (end of Week 3, Week 5, and Week 7; 10% for each paper) - 30%

Participation in weekly discussion forums (throughout course) - 35%

Final long paper (end of Week 10) - 35%

The short papers and final long paper will be based on the readings from the course and also draw from additional research sources. The purpose of these assignments is for you to utilize your writing and critical thinking skills, and to explore the content of the course in a formal manner. You will receive detailed instructions for both the short and long papers once the course has started.

Overall assessment

This program requires that students maintain a grade of 70% (B-) or higher in the course work to continue in the program. A high level of quality is expected in the work produced by students. For evaluation purposes, work will be graded based on the following criteria:

For an A+ grade (90%+): Exceptional performance: creative and original thinking; excellent organization, capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.

For an A- (80-84%) to A (85-89%) grade: Strong performance: solid evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyze and synthesize; good grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of broad knowledge base.

For a B (73-75%) to B+ (76-79%) grade: Good performance: evidence that the subject matter has been grasped; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.

For a B- grade (70-72%): Intellectually adequate performance: student who is profiting from her or his educational experience; understanding of the subject matter and ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.

Student Obligations

a) Students are expected to participate "in class" every week with a **minimum** of twice weekly participation in the discussion forum. Participation counts for 35% of your overall mark and will be based on regular contributions to the weekly discussion forums, so do participate regularly.

A rubric on the measure of quantity and quality of your participation in the discussion forum will be used for evaluation, as shown below:

Promptness and Initiative	Does not respond to most postings; rarely participates freely	Responds to most postings several days after initial discussion; limited initiative	Responds to most postings within a 24 hour period; requires occasional prompting to post	Consistently responds to postings in less than 24 hours; demonstrates good self-initiative
Delivery of Post	Utilizes poor spelling and grammar in most posts; posts appear "hasty"	Errors in spelling and grammar evidenced in several posts	Few grammatical or spelling errors are noted in posts	Consistently uses grammatically correct posts with rare misspellings
Relevance of Post	Posts topics which do not relate to the discussion content; makes short or irrelevant remarks	Occasionally posts off topic; most posts are short in length and offer no further insight into the topic	Frequently posts topics that are related to discussion content; prompts further discussion of topic	Consistently posts topics related to discussion topic; cites additional references related to topic
Expression Within the Post	Does not express opinions or ideas clearly; no connection to topic	Unclear connection to topic evidenced in minimal expression of opinions or ideas	Opinions and ideas are stated clearly with occasional lack of connection to topic	Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to topic
Contribution to the Learning Community	Does not make effort to participate in learning community as it develops; seems indifferent	Occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group's efforts; marginal effort to become involved with group	Frequently attempts to direct the discussion and to present relevant viewpoints for consideration by group; interacts freely	Aware of needs of community; frequently attempts to motivate the group discussion; presents creative approaches to topic

For the weekly discussion forums, the basic expectation in the course is a minimum of two substantive posts per week (each post being 200+ words). Posts can include your

own ideas and thoughts on the weekly topic and related course material, as well as responses to the posts of others in the class.

Please be aware that, as noted in the rubric above regarding promptness and initiative, *when* you make your posts is important; posts made earlier in the week count more in the grading scheme than those made at the end of the week, for the reason that the early posts represent more of a contribution to the class discussion. Don't leave your posts to the last minute!

b) Students are also expected to meet deadlines for written assignments. The assignments will have specific due dates. If you are unable to meet one of the deadlines (for a legitimate reason such as illness), please e-mail the course instructor in advance of the deadline. If you do NOT notify the instructor regarding your late assignment in advance, your paper will still be accepted, but a late penalty of 5% per day will apply. Assignments will not be accepted beyond one week past the due date, unless the student has obtained prior permission from the instructor.

Forum Etiquette

In discussion forums, remember to *think, discuss, and debate* from a multitude of perspectives. All class members are expected to use language that is scholarly and professional.

Express yourself *clearly, accurately, and in an intellectual* rather than in a personal fashion. Discussion forums are designed for you to ask questions and gain further knowledge. Remember to reason intelligently with the instructor and other students. As the study of environmental management is a broad field and is continually evolving, please feel free to give your view or interpretation based on your own experiences.

Develop *awareness* of your own ethnocentrism and make conscious efforts to ameliorate it. Keep in mind that the course materials will come from a wide cross-section of fields of study and may use jargon that is not familiar to you. Seek to understand the subtleties of these new terms to gain a deeper understanding of the material being presented. Please ask about concepts or terms that you do not understand.

Remember, if you have a question, it is likely someone else has the same question. Also, be conscious of the language you use when you speak about race, ethnicity, and gender. And be careful to avoid any bigoted or exclusive language.

Students who express themselves *inappropriately* or attack others personally in the discussion forums will lose their points for participation, and possibly their privilege to continue. Most students are considerate and respectful of others, but once in a while, someone acts inappropriately which detracts from the experience of others.

WEEKLY TOPICS, MODULE DATES, AND ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

The course is organized thematically into three parts, corresponding to the main components of the planet: land, water and atmosphere.

As shown in the schedule below, note that we will have two reading weeks in the course, the first one at the end of Module 3 and the second following Module 6. During the reading weeks, there will be no new material introduced or weekly discussion forums taking place.

Module 1	Dates TBA	Introduction to the Course
		PART A: LAND
Module 2	Dates TBA	Tropical Deforestation and Biodiversity Loss
Module 3	Dates TBA	Agriculture and Desertification <i>Short paper 1 due at end of Week 3</i>
	Dates TBA	First reading week
Module 4	Dates TBA	Energy Production and Mining
Module 5	Dates TBA	Urban Environments and Waste Generation <i>Short paper 2 due at end of Week 5</i>
		PART B: WATER
Module 6	Dates TBA	Oceans and Coastal Issues
	Dates TBA	Second reading week
Module 7	Dates TBA	Freshwater Resources <i>Short paper 3 due at end of Week 7</i>
		PART C: ATMOSPHERE
Module 8	Dates TBA	Climate Change
Module 9	Dates TBA	Acidification and Ozone Layer Depletion
Module 10	Dates TBA	Course Wrap-up and Final Reflections <i>Final long paper due at end of Week 10</i>