

Geography 1500: Environment and Development Challenges

Overview

This course examines environmental change over long periods of earth history, considering both physical processes and human impacts. An integrative approach (which combines physical and social science perspectives) provides a basis for understanding some of the world's most pressing environment and development challenges, such as biodiversity loss, climate change, energy use, and persistent hunger and inequality.

Teaching team

Role	Name	Email	Office	Office hours
Instructor	Dr. Carol Hunsberger	chunsber@uwo.ca	SSC 2409	Thurs 1:30-3:00
TA	Cortney Dakin	cdakin2@uwo.ca	SSC 1430	TBD
TA	Rosalind Ragetlie	rragetli@uwo.ca	SSC 1424	TBD
TA	Samantha C	sclaesse@uwo.ca	SSC 1413	TBD

Class schedule

Lectures: Monday and Wednesday 12:30-1:30, WSC-55

Tutorials: Every other week – see course schedule below. All tutorials are in SSC 1004.

Monday 10:30-12:30

Monday 2:30-4:30

Monday 4:30-6:30

Tuesday 4:30-6:30

Thursday 2:30-4:30

Prerequisites: None

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify and explain major drivers of environmental change;
- Explain how physical and human processes interact to shape the course of key environmental and social challenges;
- Apply geographical concepts of space, place and scale to world issues;
- Articulate well informed, convincing statements in writing;
- Connect theory to practice by undertaking a 30-day behavioural change and reflecting on the experience.

Format

The course involves lectures, tutorials, readings and written assignments. Although it is a large class, lectures will be interactive and will involve discussions and other activities. Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings and ready to participate.

Readings

There is no required textbook. Readings for each topic will be posted on OWL.

Tentative schedule (subject to change with notice)

Week	Lectures	Tutorials	Due dates
11-Sep	Global systems		
18-Sep	Drivers of environmental change	Lab 1	
25-Sep	Biodiversity and conservation: Valuing the diversity of life		
2-Oct	Case study: The Amazon	Lab 2, Change assignment	Lab 1 due in tutorial
9-Oct	No lectures or tutorials: Fall Reading Week		
16-Oct	Cities and global systems	Practice exam	Lab 2 due in tutorial
23-Oct	Food and agriculture: Feeding 7+ billion		Change Reflection 1 due Mon. Oct. 23 at 12:30
30-Oct	Case study: The Horn of Africa	Lab 3	Peer response to reflection due Mon. Oct. 30 at 12:30
6-Nov	Energy systems: Powering human activities		Change Reflection 2 due Mon. Nov. 6 at 12:30
13-Nov	Case study: Canada's oil sands	Lab 4	Lab 3 due in tutorial
20-Nov	Climate change: The politics of co-operation		Change Reflection 3 due Wed. Nov. 22 at 12:30
27-Nov	Case study: The Colorado River	Review session	Lab 4 due in tutorial
4-Dec	Course synthesis		Final exam to be scheduled, Dec. 10-21

Methods of Evaluation

Grades will be allocated based on the following tasks:

Tutorial assignments	40%
Change assignment	15%
Participation	10%
Final exam	35%

Tutorial Assignments (4 x 10% = 40% total)

Tutorials involve exploring specific topics in depth and completing short written assignments, due on the dates shown. You are expected to attend all tutorials in your assigned time slot. Only under special circumstances can you arrange to attend at a different time. Unless you discuss and receive permission from your lab instructor, missed assignments will be given a 0.

Change Assignment (15%)

The Change assignment involves choosing and completing a 30-day behavioural challenge that contributes to sustainability in some way. You will write a series of reflections about the experience and share them with the class through the course OWL site. Evaluation will be based on the written reflections. Detailed instructions will be provided separately.

Participation (10%)

Throughout the term, you will be asked a series of questions in class using “iClickers” – a system where you use your phone, laptop or tablet to submit answers electronically. Questions will be graded for completion, not correctness. If you answer 80% of the questions or more, you will get 100% for participation. If you answer less than 80%, your participation mark will be calculated as 1.25 times the percentage of questions you did answer.

Final Exam (35%)

The final exam will have a mixed format including multiple choice and short-answer questions. It will draw on content from the lectures, tutorials, and readings. If you fail to write the final on the scheduled date and time, you will be given zero, unless you communicate and receive permission from the instructor *prior* to the exam, in which case you will require a note from your physician (see note on special examination policy below). No books, notes or electronic devices will be allowed at the exam.

Submission Policy and Late Policy

Hard copies will be handed in at the beginning of class or lab on the due date. The penalty is 5% per day for late assignments (weekends count as one day; the clock “starts” when class/lab starts on the due date). Assignments will no longer be accepted after they have been handed back to the rest of the class. Material should be printed on letter size paper, two-sided, and stapled. Do not use folders or covers. Put your name, the course name, instructor’s name and TA’s name on the front page. Late assignments should be put in the drop box outside SSC 2322.

Additional Information

Mental Health: If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit [this site](#) for more information.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: See the [UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and a downloadable SMC](#). Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for missed exams and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Students seeking accommodation for missed work worth less than 10% of their final grade should speak with the instructor. Again, medical documentation should be submitted to the Faculty Dean's office and not to the instructor.

Statement on Electronic Devices: Using electronic devices in class for non-academic purposes distracts you and everyone around you. Do not surf, text, tweet, chat, shop, etc. during class.

Special Examinations: A special examination is any examination other than the regularly scheduled exam. Special exams will be allowed only on receipt of medical documentation verifying a serious illness that kept the student from writing the exam as scheduled. Such documentation is confidential and kept in the student's file. In the case of missing a final exam for documented medical reasons, a special exam will be set within 30 days. Special exams will not be granted for occasions such as employment interviews, weddings, family reunions, vacations, misreading an exam timetable, oversleeping, or booking flights home for holidays.

Accessibility: UWO is committed to achieving barrier free accessibility for persons studying, visiting and working at Western. Please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 if you require material in an alternate format or any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you.

Plagiarism: The Department of Geography has a zero tolerance policy towards plagiarism. If a student commits plagiarism, the instructor will assign a grade of zero to the assignment. A second instance of plagiarism is regarded as a scholastic offense and will be dealt with according to The University of Western Ontario policy for Scholastic offenses - [more information via this link](#). The most common offense is failing to cite properly. If you quote directly, you must cite the author! Students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, [here](#).

Turnitin.com: If you do original work and write and cite properly you have nothing to worry about. The university provides this mandatory statement: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](#)."