

## **Environmental Studies Basic Graduate Course Outline/Syllabus**

### **FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND URBAN CHANGE YORK UNIVERSITY**

#### **ENVS 6186 3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**Fall 2023**

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##### **Course Instructor and Contact Information**

Dr. Peter R. Mulvihill

HNES 214

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(416) 736-2100 ext. 22634

Office hours: by appointment, on campus or Zoom (Zoom link on eClass)

##### **Course Time and Location**

Wednesdays 11:30 – 14:30 HNE 102

##### **Official Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to provide a critical overview of the theory, practice and key issues pertaining to environmental assessment (EA). Emphasis will be placed on the Canadian context. The objectives include: a) gaining familiarity with the fundamentals of EA; b) exploring issues pertaining to the practice of EA; c) exploring substantive issues that may be addressed through EA; and d) exploring EA methods and techniques.

##### **Overview and Learning Outcomes**

Topics to be covered include but are not limited to: the origins and evolution of EA; steps in the EA process; impact analysis; prediction; cumulative effects; social impacts; public involvement; strategic EA; visual impacts; scenario development and related futures techniques. By the end of the course, students should have a basic understanding of EA, along with its key concepts, challenges and potential applications. *This course is designed for students with no background in EA.*

##### **Learning Outcomes**

The specific learning outcomes of the course include:

- 1) Firm grasp of the context in which EA is practised in Canada and internationally;
- 2) Firm grasp of the general process and major steps that unfold in cases involving EA;
- 3) Firm grasp of core concepts of EA theory and practice;
- 4) The ability to critically evaluate cases involving EA;
- 5) An enhanced appreciation of the complexities, uncertainties and contingencies involved in the identification; prediction, avoidance, mitigation and management of social and biophysical impacts.
- 6) Clear understanding of the relationship between EA and planning processes (municipal, land use, regional, provincial and national).

##### **Course textbook**

The following book is required reading for the course, and is available from the York University Bookstore as well as via a link on the course eClass site:

Noble, Bram. F., 2021. *Introduction to Environmental Assessment: A Guide to Principles and Practice* Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press Canada

Important: Earlier editions of the textbook are outdated, and the Fourth Edition is substantially new and different. Using an older edition of the textbook for this course is NOT an option.

### **Supplementary Reading**

For students who wish to explore environmental assessment further (beyond the required course textbook), there is a wide range of EA literature available in book, article and other forms. There are many web-based sources that deal with issues and topics covered in this course. Please note the following sources in particular:

- *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* (journal)
- *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* (journal)
- [www.canada.ca/iaac](http://www.canada.ca/iaac) (Canadian Impact Assessment Agency)
- [www.iaia.org](http://www.iaia.org) (International Association for Impact Assessment)
- [www.oaia.on.ca](http://www.oaia.on.ca) (Ontario Association for Impact Assessment)

### **Course Management**

The course Instructor will be responsible for all course components. Enrolment will not be permitted after the second week of the course.

### **Evaluation: Grading and Course Requirements**

The grade for the course will be based on the following items weighted as indicated:

Individual Assignment 1	15% (Due October 16, 11:59 p.m., on eClass)
Individual Assignment 2	15% (Due December 4, 11:59 p.m., on eClass)
Group Assignment 1	15% (Presentations in class September 23)
Group Assignment 2	15 % (Presentations in class October 21)
Group Assignment 3	15% (Presentations in class November 11)
Group Assignment 4	15% (Presentations in class December 2)
Attendance and Participation	10% (including 1 short individual presentation)

Detailed instructions for the two individual assignments will be made available on the course eClass site prior to the beginning of the semester. The Course Director will be available throughout the semester to answer any questions relating to the individual assignments. Students are encouraged to submit individual assignments early. Detailed instructions for the four group assignments and the short individual presentation will be discussed in class.

The mark for Attendance and Participation will be based on the Course Director's subjective evaluation. It is essential that students attend and participate regularly. Your participation grade will be based on your attendance and grasp of issues in required readings.

### **Important Course information**

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the [Senate Committee on Academic Standards, Curriculum & Pedagogy webpage](#)

- Senate Policy on Academic Honesty and the Academic Integrity Website
- Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation

**Intellectual property notice**

All materials prepared for this course are the intellectual property of the Course Director or otherwise stated. Course materials should only be used by students enrolled in this course. This can include but is not limited to the following material: lecture notes, handouts and recordings; assignment handouts and instructions; spoken and written presentations; audio and visual recordings; and PowerPoint slides.

**Schedule of Topics and Readings by week**

The following list of lecture topics and readings is subject to change. Remember that the readings listed under each date will be discussed in the lecture that week. Note: short individual presentations will be schedule on either September 13; October 4; November 1 or November 22.

<b>September 6</b>	Course overview Aims and objectives of EA Group assignment 1 launch Reading: Textbook Chapter 1
<b>September 13</b>	EA in Canada Pre-project planning and public engagement Group assignment 1 work Reading: Chapters 2 & 3
<b>September 20</b>	Group assignment 1 presentations
<b>September 27</b>	Determining the need for assessment Scoping and baseline assessment Group assignment 2 launch Reading: Chapters 4 & 5
<b>October 4</b>	Impact prediction and characterization Managing project impacts Group assignment 2 work Reading: Chapters 6 & 7
<b>October 11</b>	<b>Fall Reading Week (no class)</b>
<b>October 18</b>	Group assignment 2 presentations
<b>October 25</b>	Significance determination Follow-up and monitoring Group assignment 3 launch Reading: Chapters 8 & 9
<b>November 1</b>	Indigenous consultation and engagement

Cumulative effects assessment  
Group assignment 3 work  
Reading: Chapters 10 & 11

**November 8**                      Group assignment 3 presentations

**November 15**                   Strategic EA  
Group assignment 4 launch  
Reading: Chapter 12

**November 22**                   Professional practice and ethics  
Environmental assessment prospects  
Group assignment 4 work  
Reading: Chapters 13 & 14

**November 29**                   Group assignment 4 presentations