

**Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change
York University**

**ENVS 8102
Environmental Studies PhD Research Seminar
Fall, 2023**

Course Director:

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HNES 251

Course consultation hour

Thursdays, 12:00 – 1:00 pm or by appointment
Virtual meetings available on request

Time and Location:

HNES 142

Tuesdays, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm

Course Objectives:

ENVS 8102 offers an advanced introduction to selected themes and issues in, and approaches to, doctoral work in Environmental Studies. Based in part on student research interests, the seminar is intended to stimulate interaction and discussion of substantive issues, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and varied forms of intellectual praxis in Environmental Studies. After a general overview of selected issues in Environmental Studies research (including questions of interdisciplinarity, intersectionality, epistemology, methodology, and justice) readings will be shaped according to students' areas of study.

Seminar readings are not meant to be exhaustive, and discussions are not meant to be conclusive; rather, they will critically explore research problems and address questions emerging from diverse research fields. The success of the seminar will depend on students' careful preparation of readings and other materials; on their active and thoughtful participation in weekly discussion sessions and peer review forums; and on their iterative work on their PhD Program Plans demonstrated in the successful and timely completion of assignments.

Specific course objectives are intended to allow students to:

- critically engage and review a range of substantive issues, epistemological positions, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and forms/contexts of critical and creative practice related to Environmental Studies research;
- develop breadth of knowledge through exposure to a range of interdisciplinary topics, current research issues, and research methods;
- effectively develop and communicate their ongoing research interests and issues;
- develop depth in their research topics and prospective comprehensive areas;
- complete a solid first draft of the PhD Program Plan; and
- develop a preliminary annotated bibliography for their first Comprehensive area.

Course Requirements:

All first year ES PhD students must be enrolled in this course. Students should attend class sessions every week; prepare in advance all required readings; complete all presentation and writing assignments on time, as specified below; and participate in peer review of colleagues' work.

Students are also expected to participate in EUC and other York research and professional development activities and events such as lectures, symposia, and workshops related to Environmental Studies in general and to their individual research areas.

Required Readings:

One required book is available at the York University Bookstore, the Scott Library, and other public libraries and independent bookstores:

David Chariandy, *Soucouyant*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2008.

One required book is available for free download from Punctum Books (a donation has been made on your collective behalf). <https://punctumbooks.com/titles/how-we-write/>

Suzanne Conklin Akbari, ed. *How We Write: Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blank Page*. New York: Punctum Books, 2015.

Other required readings are, unless otherwise indicated, available through the course eClass page, online (open access), and/or through the York University Library collection. As below, students will add further readings to the list of required texts and are asked to make use of the Library collection and open access sources in their choices.

Course Organization:

This course is an introductory, participatory seminar that depends entirely, for its success, on class members' generous engagement with the course materials and each other's work and ideas. We will meet weekly, in person, for a three-hour class to present and discuss the required readings, some of which will be chosen by students in relation to their programs of study. Students are also expected to share iterative, draft materials related to the Program Plan via the ENVS 8102 eClass page for collective reading and commentary.

Course Evaluation:

1. Participation

Participation in this course involves two primary elements:

- a) Engaged, prepared, thoughtful, and respectful participation in weekly seminars, including preparation of in-class assignments, reflections, and questions for presenters; and
- b) Submission of draft materials related to the Program Plan on the course eClass site, and critical/helpful commentary on others' materials in the designated discussion forums.

2. In-class Presentations

Over the course of the term, students will undertake two forms of presentation:

- a) On **October 3, 17 and 31**, two students per week will be responsible for presenting, in class, the assigned readings for the class (see course schedule below). Presentations should outline the main arguments of the selected readings in relation to the themes for the week and raise one or two points for discussion in class; each presenter should expect to lead approximately an hour of class. Presenting students should confer in advance about who will present which readings as all of them need to be covered in a given week.
- b) On **November 21 and 28**, three students per week will be responsible for choosing two thematically-related, article-length readings each from their developing Comprehensives lists and presenting their respective research areas to the class through these readings. Presentations should be no more than 25 minutes to leave time for class discussion; each presenter will have 50 minutes in total.

Students will sign up for presentation slots in the second week of class.

For the November presentations, students should submit their two chosen readings to the Instructor at least two weeks in advance of the class in which they are presenting so the readings can be made available via eClass in ample time for others to read them and prepare questions. Non-presenting students are expected to bring to their colleagues informed and thoughtful questions about their chosen texts and areas of research: at the very least, one generous, generative question for each presenter.

3. Critical Reflections

- a) On **September 12**, students should prepare an informal, two-page reflection as per the instructions below. This reflection will serve as the basis of class discussion but will not be submitted to the instructor.
- b) On **September 19**, students should come to class with about two pages of informal writing that relates at least one element of the novel *Soucouyant* to their doctoral work. (Think outside the box: this does not have to be about content.) These pages will serve as the basis of an exercise and class discussion *and will also be submitted at the end of class to the instructor for comment*.
- c) From **September 26 to October 31**, students should come to class each week with a 1000 to 1500 word, hard-copy reflection on the week's readings; reflections should identify key themes and problematics and should refer specifically to *four* of the week's readings. Students should comment on the readings and what they present – compare and contrast – rather than refer the discussion through their specific research interests. These reflections will both contribute to class discussion and be submitted at the end of class to the instructor for comment. *Students who are presenting in a given week do not have to submit a reflection paper in that week*.
- d) On **December 5**, students should come to class with about two pages of informal writing inspired by the essays in the book *How We Write* in conversation with Dumit's essay and Liboiron's chapter. Please use these readings to reflect on your current reading and writing practice: how, where, why, when, with whom, citing whom, to what end, in what mode, and with what kinds of personal stakes? How might you be more aware and reflective about your practice moving forward? These pages will serve as the basis of an exercise but will not be submitted to the instructor (although I will be happy to discuss them with you informally).

4. Program Plan and Comprehensives Development

Over the course of the term, students will submit, in designated forums on the course eClass page, the following elements in the iterative development of their Program Plans:

- a) **September 29**: a preliminary bibliography of your research area/comprehensives. This preliminary bibliography is not annotated, but must contain at least 30 titles, each

with an accurate and complete reference according to your chosen citation style. Titles should be organized under your preliminary comprehensive areas (two or three).

- b) **October 27:** a draft Program Plan. Draft Program Plans must include: a) a brief statement of your research area as a whole; b) a brief description of each of your two (or three) comprehensive areas, including a rationale, key research questions, format of the examination, and a preliminary list of readings; and c) a timeline for degree completion, noting the normative schedule in the ES PhD Program Handbook.

Students should comment on their peers' preliminary bibliographies and draft Program Plans via eClass. The instructor will also respond privately to each student.

- c) **December 8:** a revised Program Plan with a partially annotated bibliography for the first Comprehensive area. Revised Program Plans should respond to comments received on the first draft. In addition, your partially annotated bibliography must contain **25** titles related to your first Comprehensive area and include, for **ten** of these titles: a) an accurate and complete reference for each title; b) a summary of the main argument; c) a description of the theoretical framework(s) used by the author(s); d) definitions for key terms or concepts; e) an outline of key points of debate or contention; f) description of the author's or authors' research design, creative practice, or methodology, as relevant; g) use of appropriate selected quotes; and h) a brief statement about the relevance and applicability of the work to your first Comprehensive area.

For one approach to creating an annotated bibliography (there are many), please see: <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography>

Submission and Approval of PhD Program Plans

Although the Instructor will provide feedback on your draft and revised Program Plans, your Supervisor and Comprehensives Committee must ultimately must approve it during the Winter term (2024). You are strongly encouraged to work with your Supervisor on the development of your bibliography, and to share your draft and revised Program Plans with your Supervisor for substantive feedback and advice during the Fall term. Students are required to submit a further revised copy of their Program Plan to their Supervisor for review early the Winter term (2024), at which time a Comprehensives Committee will be formed and a meeting convened to review and approve your Program Plan, including your detailed proposal for your first Comprehensive area.

Program Plans should be finalized and approved no later than the end of the Winter term (Term 2).

Course Schedule:

All readings are required unless otherwise indicated. I have responded to students' areas of interest in curating each week's reading list, but I am open to substitutions if you think there are better choices. Please feel free to talk to me about them.

Part I: Foundations for Environmental Studies PhD Research

September 12: Environmental Studies in the Neoliberal University

Readings: hampton, "The University as a Site of Struggle"
Seal, "How the University Became Neoliberal"
Muzatti, "Strange Bedfellows"
Kidman, "Whither Decolonisation?"
Gair, Hager and Herzog, "Setting the Scene"
gurudev et al., "Loving Cohorts"

Background: Leduc and Morley, "Canadian Evolutions"
ENVS PhD Handbook 2023-24

Assignment: Please bring to class about two pages (double-spaced) of reflection on the following questions as they are addressed in the readings. You will not submit these pages to the instructor, but you will exchange your work with your colleagues and your ideas will serve as the basis of class discussion.

- 1) What is neoliberalism (broadly) and how does it shape universities as sites of teaching and learning?
- 2) What are some of the diverse effects of neoliberal universities on diverse faculty and students?
- 3) What are some of the tensions involved in doing work for social justice, decolonization, and environmental sustainability in the context of the neoliberal university?
- 4) What are some of the different forms of resistance/survivance presented in the readings?
- 5) How does all of this affect you?

September 19: Interdisciplinarity I

Reading: Chariandy, *Soucouyant*

Assignment: Two pages of writing to class, as above.

Note: Learning agreement development (in class)

September 26: Interdisciplinarity II

Readings: McGregor, "Traditional Knowledge"
Neimanis, "Imagining Water in the Anthropocene"
Kambic, "Urban Water Visibility"
Johnston, "Large-Scale Dam Development and Counter Movements"
Aguillera, "Grieving Geographies, Mourning Waters"
Belmore, "The Poetics of History"

Listening: Simpson, "Theory of Ice"

Assignment: Reflection paper to class

Note: Preliminary bibliography due September 29 (eClass)

October 3: Intersectionality?

Readings: Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex"
Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex"
Puar, "I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess"
Rice et al, "Doing Justice to Intersectionality in Research"
Roberts and Jesudason, "Movement Intersectionality"
Ahmed, "Being In Question"

Recommended: Hunt et al, "Dialogue on Intersectionality and Indigeneity"

Assignment: Reflection paper to class

October 10: No class (Reading Week)

October 17: Epistemology

Readings: Collins, "Black Feminist Epistemology"
Alcoff, "Extractivist Epistemologies"
Blackstock, "The Breath of Life Versus the Embodiment of Life"
Johnson and McRuer, "Cripistemologies"
Brenner and Schmid, "Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban"
Kaplan, "Food Epistemology"

Assignment: Reflection paper to class

October 24: Methodology

Readings: Spiegel, Thomas et al, "Visual Storytelling"
Brown-Vincent, "Seeing It for Wearing It"
Lemke and Bellows, "Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches"
Grandi, "Theatre as Method"
Davis et al, "Innovating Methodologies"
Jane Finch Community Research Partnership, *Principles*

Assignment: Reflection paper to class
Note: Draft Program Plan due October 27 (eClass)

October 31: Justice

Readings: Whyte, "Indigenous Environmental Justice"
Ross and Solinger, "Reproductive Justice in the 21st Century"
Dias et al, "Belo Horizonte"
Alkon, "Food Justice and the Challenge to Neoliberalism"
Figueroa, "Autism and Environmental Identity"
Pellow and Montague, "Health and Environmental Justice"

Assignment: Reflection paper to class

Part II: Selected Topics in Environmental Studies Research

Note: The readings for the weeks of November 21 and November 28 are student-generated. Each student will be responsible for assigning two article-length readings for the week in which they will present their topic and will lead a 50-minute presentation/discussion of them.

November 7: "It's Just a Dissertation"

Reading: Your choice

Assignment: Please find a York University doctoral dissertation in your general research area, written within the last ten years. Read it, make notes on it, and come to class prepared to present and discuss it using the following questions as guides.

- What is the dissertation about and what is its main argument? What are the major disciplines and fields of the work?
- Can you find a simple statement of the primary research question? How does the chosen methodology respond to the question?
- What does a dissertation look like? How many chapters, pages, references, tables, images (etc.) are there? What are the chapters?
- Is it a relatively conventional work or does it involve creative or multimedia elements? Is it manuscript-based? (Look at the FGS guidelines for "types of dissertations.")
- Is it well written? Convincingly argued? Do you see any flaws or limitations? Does the author mention any in the conclusion?
- What do the acknowledgements tell you about the author's journey?
- Google the author: Has the work subsequently been published elsewhere as articles or a book? Compare the dissertation with the finished work.

York University doctoral dissertations can be found at:

<https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/handle/10315/26310>

FGS doctoral dissertation requirements guidelines can be found at:

<https://www.yorku.ca/gradstudies/students/current-students/thesis-and-dissertation/doctoral-dissertation/>

Please bring your thoughts to class. No need to post it to eClass in advance.

November 14: PhD Research Day

Assignment: Attend PhD Research Day (full day). Choose one panel and write a two-to-three page review of it, submission via eClass. **Details TBD.**

- What was the topic/theme/organizing question of the panel?
- Briefly reflect on the panel and/or any of the presentations: What stood out as successful? Problematic? Interesting? Relevant to your own work?
- Name and discuss one thing you have learned from this panel about what makes an effective academic presentation.

November 21: Topics TBD (three presenters)

Readings: TBD

November 28: Topics TBD (three presenters)

Readings: TBD

December 5: How We Read and Write

Readings: Conklin, ed. *How We Write*
Dumit, "How I Read"
Liboiron, "Introduction"

Assignment: One to two pages of writing to class, as above
Note: Revised Program Plan due December 8