

ENSC 483 - Waste Flows: Environmental Studies of Waste
Fall 2019
Course Syllabus

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COURSE SYLLABUS PART A (the fun stuff): course information, course description, course objectives, intended student learning outcomes, tutorials, course schedule, required readings, and resources.

COURSE SYLLABUS PART B (the fine print): assessment, grading scheme and method, statement on academic integrity, statement on plagiarism, statement of copyright of course materials, privacy statement for instructors, accessibility statement, accommodations statement.

COURSE SYLLABUS PART A

Course Information

Seminars: Wednesdays 8:30am – 11:30am

Office hours: Wednesdays 12:30pm - 2:30pm, or by appointment. TA office hours will be announced in the first tutorial.

Teaching Assistant: Micky Renders (51mar1@queensu.ca)

Course Description and Rationale:

This course will consider waste as a topic that requires interdisciplinary approaches to understand waste as both a techno-scientific and socio-ethical issue. Various types of waste will be considered (municipal solid, industrial, bio-hazardous, food and agriculture, nuclear, clothing, electronic, mining, military, and so on), as well as various waste management practices (landfilling, incineration, bioremediation, repositories, and so on). We will consider various ways of understanding waste (what waste is) as well as how waste is governed politically, economically, and socially.

The course structure is seminar-based. Students will lead each seminar, and make active contributions to the learning process through various activities every week.

Grades are earned on the basis of the quality of advance preparation, quality of in-class contribution, and quality of written assignments. Dr. Hird and invited guests will occasionally lead seminars in order to provide background and content (see course schedule section).

Course Objectives:

1. Provide an overview of the major themes, theories, and methodologies used to study the broad topic of waste;
2. Situate these themes, theories, and methodologies within contemporary environmental debates of interest;
3. Highlight Canadian research that advances thought-provoking and timely contributions to environmental studies;

Intended Student Learning Outcomes:

By the course’s completion, students will be expected to demonstrate:

- 1) An understanding of how waste may be used to inform our understandings of the complex interactions between societies and their environments;
- 2) Critical assessments of the role and importance of the relations between material and social processes;
- 3) Critical assessments of the ways in which differing theoretical and methodological approaches might be deployed to understand waste as an environmental, social, political, economic, and cultural issue;
- 4) Enhanced critical thinking and effective communication skills;
- 5) Enhanced research and writing abilities.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|--|
| 11 September | Seminar 1 | Introduction: Course Description Seminar Organization What is Waste? Film: <i>The Story of Stuff</i> |
| 18 September | Seminar 2 | Canada’s Waste Flow in Southern Communities Film: <i>Crapshoot</i> |
| 25 September | Seminar 3 | Canada’s Waste Flow in Arctic Communities |
| 2 October | Seminar 4 | Queen’s Sustainability Week: Participation in |

| | | |
|-------------|------------|---|
| | | Queen's Waste Audit + Talk on Recycling (Possibility of tours of KARC and/or Norterra) |
| 9 October | Seminar 5 | Student-led Seminars |
| 16 October | Seminar 6 | Student-led Seminars |
| 23 October | Seminar 7 | Student-led Seminars |
| 6 November | Seminar 8 | Student-led Seminars |
| 13 November | Seminar 9 | Student-led Seminars |
| 20 November | Seminar 10 | Student-led Seminars |
| 27 November | Seminar 11 | Review and Reflections |

List of Seminar Topics:

This list is *not* exclusive. If you do not see a topic here that you would like to present/write about, suggest an alternative.

A. Types of Waste:

Municipal solid waste
 Industrial waste
 Biohazardous waste
 Water waste
 Sewage waste
 Medical waste
 Food waste
 Mining waste
 Agricultural waste
 Electronic (e) waste
 Military waste
 Dirt
 Excrement/Sewage

B. Theories and Methods for studying Waste:

Disgust and separation (social avoidance) from waste
 Political economies of waste
 Global capitalism and waste
 Economies of waste
 Phenomenology and waste
 Identity and waste
 Waste as a nonhuman entity
 Waste mobilities

Geographies of waste
Governance/governmentality and waste
Actor Network Theory and waste
Participant observation and waste
Non-participant observation and waste
Waste and art (installation) etc.
Case studies and waste
First-hand accounts of living with waste (ethnographies)
Waste audits
Environmental Assessment exercises

C. Waste Management:

Landfilling
Incineration
Bio-technologies (bioreactors and so on)
Freezing
Recycling/composting
Reduction and reuse
Freegans
Producer responsibility
Government oversight
Gleaning

D. Social conditions and Waste:

History and waste
Slums and waste
Global transportation of waste
Value and waste
Waste and cultural issues
Waste and work (making a living from waste)
Dumpster diving
Social/class stratification and waste
Child labor and waste
Gender and waste
Environmental justice and waste
Waste in literature/fiction
Consumption/overconsumption

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COURSE SYLLABUS PART B

Assessment

The course assessment consists of 3 parts:

1. **Seminar Presentations:** (30% of final grade)

This course structure is seminar-based. At the beginning of the course, students will choose a topic to investigate, and present to the class (students are welcome to suggest a different topic, to be agreed upon with the course Instructor).

For each student-led seminar, the presenting student will provide:

- A. One to two readings for the class (to have read before the seminar presentation) in addition to the readings listed below (see course schedule). Students may also use short film clips, music, newspaper articles, blogs, or other forms of information dissemination.
- B. A presentation: The presentation should take about 30-40 minutes, and may include a power point presentation, short film clips and so on. Also prepare some points for discussion/questions for the class, and be prepared to lead a class discussion following your presentation.
- C. A written essay: the essay will contain a summary and discussion of the chosen topic (not in point form) and be 2 pages (double spaced, excluding references). *The emphasis must be on analysis rather than description.* The essay is due by midnight of the same date that you present, and must be submitted electronically via OnQ .

2) **Contribution to Seminars** (20% of final grade – continuous assessment)

This assessment element focuses on active and *relevant* participation in seminar discussions, demonstrating respect for other people and perspectives. It also includes active demonstration of having completed the readings before each seminar. Attendance will be taken at each seminar.

3) **Critical Thought Essay** (50% of final grade)

One-page outline (single-spaced) – 10% of final grade (Due 9 October 2019)

Critical thought essay – 40% (Due 27 November 2019)

For this assessment element, each student will choose one topic related to waste, which is *not* a topic chosen for the seminar presentation. The topic may be a type of waste (for instance, bio-hazardous waste), or it may be a particular theory or methodology for studying waste, a social movement for contesting waste management, and so on. Students must check with Dr. Hird about the suitability of the chosen topic.

The two elements are designed to be iterative. By the outline (one page, excluding references) due date, you will select a particular waste topic. The outline should be an exploratory effort to identify and arrange the key actors (animate and inanimate), structures, and practices that ‘make up’ the particular topic. The outline should sketch your initial ideas (in prose) and analyze how this topic is embedded in society (remember to specify which society). The essay (5 pages, excluding references) is due at the end of the course, by which time you will be much more familiar with the topic of waste (through readings, seminar presentations, and discussion). Therefore, the essay should constitute a much more refined and organized examination of the chosen topic. It should reach greater precision in using the analytical resources growing in readings, lectures, and discussions.

Student research is important: Dr. Hird will be looking evidence of **extensive** reading and engagement with contemporary debates drawing on relevant academic literature (i.e. not Wikipedia). Each essay is due *before* the beginning of class on the due date, and must be submitted electronically via OnQ.

Grading Method: “Numbers in, letters out”

Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale

| Grade | Numerical Course Average (Range) |
|-------|----------------------------------|
| A+ | 90-100 |
| A | 85-89 |
| A- | 80-84 |
| B+ | 77-79 |
| B | 73-76 |
| B- | 70-72 |
| C+ | 67-69 |
| C | 63-66 |
| C- | 60-62 |
| D+ | 57-59 |
| D | 53-56 |
| D- | 50-52 |
| F | 49 and below |

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is constituted by the six core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities <http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities>).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1 <http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1>), on the Arts and Science website (see <http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity>), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

Statement on Plagiarism

Students are reminded that plagiarism is a serious academic offence and carries severe penalties. Definitions, procedures and penalties regarding Queen's policies on plagiarism are outlined in your Academic Calendar in the section on academic regulations. The minimum penalty for plagiarizing any assessment in this course is 0%/F on the assignment(s). In the case that more than one finding of a departure from academic integrity occurs, the subsequent assignment(s) will incur a penalty of 0%/F, and the finding will be marked as a 'level two'.

Assignment Rules

- If you know you are going to be away for any reason except an illness accompanied by officially accredited documentation, observe a spiritual holiday etc. on any of the due dates, plan ahead by completing and submitting your assignment early.

- If you miss any seminars, it is your responsibility to try to make up these absences by getting notes from other students. Dr. Hird does not supply seminar notes. If you know in advance that you are going to miss several seminars, you are advised to select a different optional course.
- Failure to submit assignments on the due date will result in a deduction of **10 percentage marks per day including weekends up to a maximum of five days, after which assignments will receive a mark of zero (0)**, unless supported by medical evidence in the form of official accredited documentation. Please be advised this deduction amounts to TWO letter grades per day.
- Students are responsible for retaining copies of their assignment drafts and final versions. There are multiple ways of saving copies of work (memory stick, emailing a copy to yourself, google docs, iCloud and so on). Losing an assignment does not warrant an extension.
- Work that is racist, sexist, ageist, heterosexist, or plagiarized will earn a grade of zero (0)/F.
- Assignments should be double-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font, 8.5x11 paper, 2.54cm margins, and with consistent referencing.
- Submit all electronic submissions in Word to OnQ.
- All assignment submissions should be made using student number only. Do not put your name or your email on any submitted assessment. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in a one letter grade reduction (i.e. B- from a B).
- Neither Dr. Hird nor the TA will not read rough drafts of any written work. No 'second-try' assignments are allowed.
- Extensions will be granted only in exceptional cases. Requests for extensions must be made prior to the due date and must be submitted in writing along with any relevant documentation.
- Grades are not negotiable.
- If you would like your written work re-assessed, be advised that Dr. Hird reserves the right to LOWER any grade upon re-assessment. Should you decide you would like your assignment re-graded, you will need to submit, in writing, a detailed point-by-point explanation of the specific points in the assignment you feel deserve a better grade. Dr. Hird will then carefully review the detailed letter, the assignment, and the comments already on the assignment in determining whether the grade will be increased, stay the same, or decreased.

Email

Please check your queensu.ca account regularly or forward your mail from your university account to the email address that you do check, as the course email list is compiled from your university addresses only.

Please note that due to the sheer volume of emails received from students, Dr. Hird and the TA cannot ensure a response in less than five business days from the date it is sent. Therefore, you are strongly advised to see Dr. Hird and/or the TA during office hours to address your queries. Please also note Dr. Hird will not respond to email queries regarding any information already provided in the course syllabus.

Copyright of Course Materials

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Accessibility Statement

Queen's is committed to an inclusive campus community with accessible goods, services, and facilities that respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. This course syllabus is available in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports upon request.

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Accommodation Statement

Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Wellness Services (SWS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the Student Wellness website at: <http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/>