

GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

GPYH 368- Environments and Society (or, the 'nature' course)



Course Instructors	Dr. Laura Jean Cameron	Email: cameron@queensu.ca
Offices	E301 Macintosh-Corry Hall	
Contact Time	Two weekly 1.5 hour sessions per week	
Format	Exercises, listening, fieldwork, research and discussion based on key texts, podcasts, videos, local places and contemporary events.	
Class Assessment	(May change from year to year) (1) Participation (weekly check-in submissions): 25% (2) Critical Review (proposal, podcast and paper): 45% (3) Active Journal (weekly exercises: best 10/11): 30%	

COURSE OVERVIEW

"Only when love takes the lead will the earth, and life on earth, be safe again. And not until then." Mumford, 1956

This course explores relationships between societies and their environments. Drawing from several contemporary streams of human and historical geography, this course invites you to think critically and creatively about some very deeply ingrained assumptions concerning the "taken-for-granted-ness" of nature and the environment as it appears in social, political, cultural and ethical debate. A key focus will be historical geographies of the Anthropocene and the course will attend particularly to the human-shaped past, but also presents and futures. Methodological and conceptual tools will be drawn from both the humanities and the sciences with attention to the histories and cultures of geographical research and differing understandings of nature. The theoretical material to be covered in the course is challenging and students will be expected to read widely and critically.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Exercise a critical and historical understanding of key concepts related to nature and environment.
- Apply skills to evaluate the social and political relationships that structure these concepts.
- Explore and challenge the ways that 'taken for granted' understandings of nature shape our world from issues of racialization to what we regard as 'noise'.
- Practise research and presentation skills and learn more about the 'nature' of Kingston and places beyond.

COURSE TOPICS

Topics may include (but are not limited to): 'Nature' in strange times; Historical geographies of nature and governance; Where 'things' come from; The non-humans within and without; Power: producing nature; Indigenous cultures and contested ecologies; The troubles with wilderness; Sustainable food systems; City challenges & urban nature; Social construction; Sound, place and nature; Governance, nature & justice; Political, creative, theoretical interventions; Greening the brain; Work in the Anthropocene; Social imagination and storied landscapes

COURSE READINGS (Will change from year to year)

Noel Castree. 2005. *Nature*. Routledge. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Mark Whitehead. 2014. *Environmental Transformations: A Geography of the Anthropocene*. New York: Routledge.

Robin Kimmerer. 2014. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.

Selections from various, including the following:

W.M. Adams and Martin Mulligan. 2003. *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Postcolonial Era*. London: Earthscan.

Noel Castree and Bruce Braun. 2001. *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Stephan Harrison, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift. 2004. *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture*. London: Reaktion.

Rebecca Solnit. 2010 *Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster*. Penguin.