COURSE OVERVIEW

This online course takes a spatial approach to issues related to energy, economics, the environment, urbanism, social division, public space, racism, geopolitics, and migration. Taking a spatial approach to these themes grounds them in places, and focuses them on human and human-non-human relationships, making them at once more real and more personal to you. In this class you will discover that these very large issues are personal in another way: what you do matters. We make the world. In the way we move from place to place, in the way we heat our homes, in the way we choose to communicate with each other and consume: we have an impact on the environment and on other people both near and far from us. Living responsibly is, in part, being aware of our choices and their impacts. But of course, it is not quite that simple: the world has been made and unmade (and is being made and unmade) by you and others all the time. We will work to understand the forces that make the world we live in. In this course, through the relatively simple concepts of location and distance and the much more complex concepts of space and place, we will consider how economic development, city design, geopolitics and geo-commerce, policies on migration and population movement shape landscapes of inequality and desire. You will explore all these themes and do a final illustrated essay (poster) assignment related to one of them.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. You will understand the difference between the concepts of location, space and place and be able to use them correctly in your discussion of the spatial and place-based challenges covered in this course, through review of the work of your peers and in a poster presentation.
2. You will be able to describe some of the challenges to the environment, health, equity, social justice and economic growth.
3. You will be able to describe some of the challenges and benefits presented by place attachment for community building in Canada and elsewhere in the world.
4. You will be able to demonstrate an understanding of scale and the ways in which individual choices are related to the larger social issues around energy development, food security and diversity, city design, the international division of labour, immigration, consumption and place attachment.

COURSE TOPICS

1. Energy, the economy and the environment
2. Food security and diversity
3. Cities and social division
4. Health, equity and the distribution of resources
5. Mining, manufacturing and agricultural production in Canada
6. International division of labour
7. Population movement, diaspora and immigration
8. Place attachment and community building

COURSE READINGS