

University of Toronto | Faculty of Arts & Science | Fall 2019
GGR 197H1: Nature, Conservation and Justice

- Course Instructor:** Prof. Neera Singh
Room 5025A Sidney Smith Hall
Phone: 416-971-2658
Email: neera.singh@utoronto.ca
- Class Meetings:** Room: SK 348
Thursdays 3-5 pm
- Office Hours:** Wednesdays 11-12 PM (or by appointment)

Course Description and Goals

We are amidst unprecedented ecological and social crises. Climate change crisis is challenging us to rethink human ways of being and organizing our economic activities. In the course, we will explore the nature of this crisis and how it is connected to human ways of being and relating to “nature”. We will examine how we can rework human ways of relating to nature, while querying the idea of “nature” and questioning dominant approaches to nature conservation. How can concerns for nature and biodiversity conservation be balanced with concerns about social justice and human well-being? How are citizens and communities in the different parts of the world struggling for environmental justice and to protect their local environments? How do these place-based movements offer visions for a more just and sustainable world? In specific, how do indigenous worldviews offer conceptual resources for rethinking ‘nature’ and our ways of relating to it? The course will explore these questions using lectures, class discussion, videos and student presentations.

Course Organization

The course will be run as a seminar. This implies that all of us share the responsibility of contributing to the collective learning process. Please take this responsibility seriously and come to the class prepared to contribute and be respectful of the diverse perspectives that each of your peers brings to the class. The required readings are the main learning resources and you are required to do all the assigned readings PRIOR to class. Seminar discussions will be based on these readings and my brief lectures will clarify and build on these readings and not simply summarize the articles. If you miss a class, it will be your responsibility to catch up with the material that you miss. You are expected to put in at least 6 hours of time in preparation for the class on top of the time required to complete assignments. Please set aside this time for class related work each week and keep up with the course readings on a weekly basis.

The best way to learn is to try and “teach” the material to others! You will have opportunity to do so through short-presentations in class. Starting from Week 8, a group of students (3-4 students per group) will make a brief 15-minute presentation in class that links to course themes. We will identify the topics for presentations and form groups in Week 4. In your presentation you should be oriented towards helping your colleagues learn about the topic. You are expected to get in touch with me at least a week before your

presentation to discuss your plans and then email me your presentation outline (or a powerpoint) by Monday 12PM prior to the class in which you are presenting so that I can provide you feedback. Detailed guidelines as well as possible resources that can be used to identify case studies will be provided later. We will form groups during class time in Week 3/ or on Quercus.

Team Work

In the course the assignments are geared towards providing you with an opportunity to engage in teamwork. I will encourage forming teams that maximize diversity in the group (different disciplines, nationalities, experiential backgrounds, etc.). So, step out of your comfort zone and work with people from background different than yours. You will work in the same group for your class presentation and for the final paper. Detailed guidelines for the class presentations and the final paper proposal and the final paper will follow.

In-Class Etiquettes

Cell phones and other communications devices should either be turned off or put on silent mode. Since this is a seminar, I would request you to minimize the use of laptop so that you are engaged 100% in class discussions and do so in respectful manner. Taking photos, video or audio recordings require permission of the instructor.

Course Requirements and Marking Scheme Summary

		Due dates
Reading Responses (4)	20%	Weekly, due on Wednesdays before class@noon.
Seminar Contributions	25%	Ongoing
<i>Class "reflections" (7)</i>	15%	(Due on Saturdays by 5PM)
<i>In-class and online participation</i>	10%	Ongoing
Writing Assignments (Two)	10%	Sept 26; Oct 17
Class Presentation (in groups)	10%	(Week 8-12)
Final Paper Proposal & Annotated Bibliography (in groups)	10%	October 31 (Midnight)
Final Paper (group-work)	25%	November 28 th (Midnight)

Reading Responses (20%)

You are required to post on Quercus FOUR "reading responses" to weekly readings (for any 4 weeks out of Weeks 2-11). These reading responses will be about 400-500 words synthesis of the main points of the articles, your response to these arguments and 2-3 questions for discussion in class. The reading responses will not be a mere summary of the articles but an engagement with the arguments of the articles and how they relate to one another. These responses should be posted on Quercus by **Wednesday 12 PM**. In preparation for the class, please read the responses posted by your colleagues – BUT please do so after doing the readings for the week.

Seminar Contributions (25%)

A large chunk of marks in the class are for active participation and contributions to the seminar and collective learning process. This participation will be assessed not only on the basis of how much you talk in class but also on the quality of your contributions, your engagement with class material and your contributions to creating a safe and nurturing learning environment for all. In a seminar class, what you get out of the class is a function of what you put into it. Come to the class well prepared. You should have done all the readings prior to class and should have read at least some of the ‘reading responses’ posted by your colleagues on Quercus. Your contributions will be assessed as follows:

- 1) **Class “Reflections” (15%):** Over the course of the semester, you will write at least SEVEN class reflections. These reflections should be posted on Quercus under “discussion”. These reflection pieces cannot simply take the form of “Interesting discussion!” or “Enjoyed the lecture/ seminar!” but should reflect on the concepts introduced through the lecture, film(s), or student presentations; and respond to key questions discussed in class. You can use these reflections to discuss how the discussion in class helped clarify (or not) the core concepts for that week. I will use these reflection pieces to identify points of clarification or discussion. The reflection pieces will be graded for engagement with the ideas introduced in class (including your colleagues’ presentations) and with the readings. I encourage you to be honest when you are struggling with ideas. I encourage you to attend events, talks, lectures related to the course themes and to climate crisis more generally. Reflections on these events can be in addition to your seven weekly reflections and you can get extra credits for submitting these reflections.
- 2) **In-class and online participation (10%):** In-class participation marks will be based on attendance and your contribution to the class learning. Remember that quality matters more than quantity. If you like to talk a lot, please exercise some restraint and give your colleagues a chance to speak. If you are uncomfortable speaking in class, please make an effort to share your views as we would like to learn from what you have to say. We will collectively work on creating a safe environment where you feel comfortable expressing your views. In addition to in-class contributions, you can also use Quercus to respond to your peers’ article commentaries, class reflections. You can also add additional resources (websites, short videos, poem, art-piece or newspaper articles) on Quercus with a brief introduction of how it relates to the course material. I will take into account online contributions towards your participation grade.

Writing Assignments (Two): 10%**Assignment I: Youth Climate Activism (5%)**

Your first writing assignment (500-700 words) on “youth climate activism” is timed with the global climate strike events during the week of September 20-27th. I encourage you to attend event(s)/ protests during the week. Your action to support Climate Strike and activism can take a variety of forms – such as attending or organizing an event, learning more about climate activism (Fridays for Future, Extinction rebellion etc.) and/or writing to your political representative to demand action. Please share this experience with class and comment more generally on the growing youth activism demanding climate action, drawing upon course readings as needed. You can add a photograph, series of tweets, or an article that links to the event with your note. Due on September 26th by noon.

Assignment II: A Book or a Documentary Film Review (5%)

Write a review for a book/ documentary film that relates to your “research” topic for class presentation and final paper. This is an individual writing assignment. More details will be provided later. Due on October 17th at midnight.

In-class Presentation, Final Paper Proposal and Final Paper

Working in groups (average four people per group), you will undertake research on a topic related to course themes. There will be four deliverables:

- 1) Outline for class presentation (due on Tuesday by 12PM before the class presentation – not graded separately but required).
- 2) Class presentation (10%) (Spread over weeks 8-12)
- 3) Final Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (10%) Due Oct 31st by midnight
Final Paper November 28th 2019

Class Presentation (10%)

Working in teams of about 4 students, you will make a presentation in class once during the semester. Detailed rubric for evaluating your performance will be provided later. Select a topic, closely related to the course theme, that you would like to research on. I will be available to help you identify a possible topic and resources. Student presentations will take place between Weeks 8-12 (2 presentations in Weeks 11 and 12).

Proposal & Annotated Bibliography: 10%, Final Paper: 25%

The final paper will build on your class presentation. It will be an essay of about 4000-5000 words written collaboratively as a group. The final paper will be developed through three stages that include: 1) class presentation; 2) a paper proposal with an annotated bibliography; and 3) the Final paper; with feedback provided at each stage.

More details will be provided later. Due dates for the different components are as follows:

Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (10%)	Due October 31 st by midnight.
Final Paper (25%):	Due November 28 th midnight.

Assignment Submission and Late Penalty

All assignments for this class are to be submitted electronically via Quercus. There will be a late penalty of 5% for each day late. No assignments will be accepted more than one week after the due date unless the student has obtained prior permission from the instructor in the case of documented illness or other extenuating circumstances.

Academic Integrity/ Plagiarism

Please familiarize yourself with what counts as academic misconduct:

<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/what-is-academic-misconduct>

Also, check out the rules relating to how to document the sources of information that you use and how to avoid plagiarism:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Note that using information directly from sources such as books, articles, videos, the Internet or work of fellow students without proper citation is considered plagiarism.

Quotation marks are required when using someone else’s words. Changing a few words in a sentence is not enough to make it your own. Be aware that cheating and plagiarism will

not be tolerated. Nor should you submit any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought. The Department and the University treat these all as serious offenses and sanctions are severe.

Accessibility Needs:

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible. For details see: <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as/>

Course Overview

Date	Class Topic	Notes
PART I: Setting the Stage: The Current Environmental Crisis in Context		
Week 1 September 5, 2019	Introduction to the Course: The Anthropocene and the Crisis of Nature	
Week 2 Sept 12, 2019	Why this Crisis: The Anthropocene or Capitalocene	
Week 3 Sept 19, 2019	Climate Justice and Activism/ Climate Justice Movements	
PART II: Nature Conservation: Rethinking Nature, Conservation and Human Place in Nature		
Week 4 Sept 26, 2019	Nature Conservation: Whose Nature, What Nature?	Assignment I (Youth Climate Activism) Due Groups will be formed in class
Week 5 Oct 3, 2019	Social Impacts of Fortress Conservation	Film: Milking the Rhino
Week 6 Oct 10, 2019	Indigenous Knowledge and the Environmentalism of the Poor	
Week 7 Oct 17, 2019	Conservation Debates and Alternative Approaches to Conservation	Assignment II (Book/ Film Review) Due
PART III: Urban Nature Conservation, Justice, and Ways Forward		
Week 8 Oct 24, 2019	Urban Nature Conservation	Student Presentations

Week 9 Oct 31, 2019	Rights, Justice and Conservation	Student Presentations Paper Proposal & Annotated Bibliography Due
Nov 7, 2019	Fall Break: No Class	
Week 10 Nov 14, 2019	The Commons: What are they and why do they matter?	Student Presentations
Week 11 Nov 21, 2019	Degrowth, Nowtopias and other alternatives	Student Presentations
Week 12 Nov 28, 2019	The Great Work of Our Times: Challenges and Opportunities	Student Presentations Final Paper Due

Course Readings¹

Part I: Setting the Stage: The Current Environmental Crisis in Context

Week 1 | September 5, 2019

Introduction to the Course: The Anthropocene and the Crisis of Nature

Klein, Naomi. 2014. "One Way or Another, Everything Changes." Introduction Chapter.

In "This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. the Climate."

Margaret Atwood. 2009. Time Capsule found on a Dead Planet. (short 2 pages).

Reproduced in "I'm with the Bears: Short Stories from a Damaged Planet". Verso. 2011

Week 2 | September 12, 2019

Why this Crisis? : The Anthropocene or Capitalocene

Klein, Naomi. (2015). "Beyond Extractivism" in "This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. the Climate". Vintage Canada.

Unearthing the Capitalocene: Towards a Reparations Ecology by Jason Moore and Raj Patel <https://roarmag.org/magazine/moore-patel-seven-cheap-things-capitalocene/>

Opinion by Raoni Metuktire: "We, the peoples of the Amazon, are full of fear. Soon you will be too" <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/02/amazon-destruction-earth-brazilian-kayapo-people>

Recommended:

Davis, H., & Todd, Z. (2017). On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 16(4), 761-780.

¹ This list of course readings is tentative. I may modify some of the readings to suit the needs and interests of the class. If I do so, you will be notified by class email no later than the week prior to the assigned readings. The readings will accordingly be updated on Quercus.

Recommended Videos:

https://www.ted.com/talks/johan_rockstrom_let_the_environment_guide_our_development

TEDxCanberra - Will Steffen - The Anthropocene

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABZjlfhN0EQ>

Week 3 | September 19, 2019

Climate Justice and Youth Activism

"People and Planet First": On the Moral Authority of Climate Justice and a New Economy
by Naomi Klein

<http://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/07/01/people-and-planet-first-moral-authority-climate-justice-and-new-economy>

Op-Ed: Welcome to the US, Greta. With your help we can save the planet and ourselves
by Rebecca Solnit

<https://www.theguardian.com/global/commentisfree/2019/aug/29/us-greta-thunberg-climate>

“The seas are rising and so are we”:

<https://time.com/5665835/greta-thunberg-united-nations-protest/>

Check out the following resources:

Fridays for Future: <https://fridaysforfuture.ca>

Global Climate Strike, September 20-27th

<https://globalclimatestrike.net>

Assignment I:

Youth Climate Activism: I encourage you to attend event(s)/ protests as part of the global climate strike week (September 20-27th) and reflect on this experience. Your action to support Climate Strike and activism can take a variety of forms – such as attending or organizing an event, learning more about climate activism (Fridays for Future, Extinction rebellion etc.) and/or writing to your political representative to demand action. Please share this experience with class through a brief reflection note (300 to 500 words) drawing upon course readings as needed. You can add a photograph, series of tweets, or an article that links to the event with your note. Due on September 26th by midnight.

Part II: Nature Conservation: Rethinking Nature, Conservation and Human Place in Nature

Week 4 | September 26, 2019

Nature Conservation: Rethinking Nature and Wilderness

Groups will be formed in Class

Dowie, Mark. 2009. “Nature” in “Conservation Refugees: The Hundred Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples” p. 15-22.

Cronon, W. (1996). The trouble with wilderness or getting back to the wrong Nature. Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature. New York, W.W. Norton & Co.: 69-90.

Dowie, M. (2009). Vital Diversities: Balancing the Protection of Nature and Culture. In “Conservation Refugees: The Hundred Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples.” The MIT Press. p. 263-269.

Optional:

Ceballos, G., Ehrlich, P. R., Barnosky, A. D., García, A., Pringle, R. M., & Palmer, T. M. (2015). Accelerated modern human-induced species losses: Entering the sixth mass extinction. *Science advances*, *1*(5), e1400253.

<http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/1/5/e1400253>

Week 5 | October 3, 2019

The Social Impacts of “Fortress” Conservation

Film: Milking the Rhino

Mark Dowie’s article on Conservation Refugees.

<https://orionmagazine.org/article/conservation-refugees/>

Guha, R. (2003). The authoritarian biologist and the arrogance of anti-humanism: wildlife conservation in the third world. *Battles over nature: Science and the politics of conservation*, 139-57.

Billionaire's elephant-hunting safaris implicated in "Pygmy" abuses

<http://www.justconservation.org/billionaires-elfphant-hunting-safaris-implicated-in-pygmy-abuses>

Vandermeer, J. and I. Perfecto (2005). Slicing up the rainforest on your breakfast cereal. In *Breakfast of Biodiversity: The political ecology of rainforest destruction*. J. Vandermeer and I. Perfecto. Oakland, California, Food First Books: 1-15.

Recommended/ Optional:

West, P., Igoe, J., & Brockington, D. (2006). Parks and peoples: the social impact of protected areas. *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.*, *35*, 251-277.

Week 6 | October 10, 2019

Indigenous Knowledge and the Environmentalism of the Poor

Kimmerer, R. W. (2017). Learning the Grammar of Animacy. In *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed Editions). (and other chapters from Robin Wall Kimmerer’s Braiding Sweetgrass).

Berry, W. (2002). The Whole Horse. *The Art of the Commonplace: Agrarian essays of Wendell Berry/ edited and introduced by Norman Wirzba*. W. Berry. Washington DC, Counterpoint: 236-248.

Shiva, V. (2010). Earth Democracy: Beyond Dead Democracy and Killing Economies. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, *21*(1), 83-95.

Anguelovski, I., & Alier, J. M. (2014). The ‘Environmentalism of the Poor’ revisited: Territory and place in disconnected glocal struggles. *Ecological Economics*, *102*, 167-176.

Week 7 | October 17, 2019

Conservation Debates and Alternative Approaches

Berkes, F. (2007). Community-based conservation in a globalized world. *Proceedings of the National academy of sciences*, *104*(39), 15188-15193.

Buscher, B., Robert Fletcher, Dan Brockington, Chris Sandbrook, W. Adams, Lisa Campbell, C. Corson et al. "Half-Earth or Whole Earth? Radical ideas for conservation, and their implications." *Oryx* (2016).

Sullivan, S. (2009). Green capitalism, and the cultural poverty of constructing nature as service-provider. *Radical anthropology*, *3*, 18-27.

Singh, N. M. (2015). Payments for ecosystem services and the gift paradigm: Sharing the burden and joy of environmental care. *Ecological Economics*, 117, 53-61.

Recommended:

Gavin, M., McCarter, J., Berkes, F., Mead, A., Sterling, E., Tang, R., & Turner, N. (2018). Effective biodiversity conservation requires dynamic, pluralistic, partnership-based approaches. *Sustainability*, 10(6), 1846.

Assignment II: Book/ Film Review Due by midnight.

Part III: Urban Nature Conservation, Justice, and Ways Forward

Week 8 | October 24, 2019

Urban Nature Conservation and Justice

Moore, S. A., Wilson, J., Kelly-Richards, S., & Marston, S. A. (2015). School gardens as sites for forging progressive socioecological futures. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 105(2), 407-415.

White, M. M. (2011). Sisters of the soil: Urban gardening as resistance in Detroit. *Race/ethnicity: Multidisciplinary global contexts*, 5(1), 13-28.

https://www.ted.com/talks/ron_finley_a_guerilla_gardener_in_south_central_la?language=en

Recommended:

Poe, M. R., McLain, R. J., Emery, M., & Hurley, P. T. (2013). Urban forest justice and the rights to wild foods, medicines, and materials in the city. *Human Ecology*, 41(3), 409-422.

Week 9 | October 31, 2019

Rights, Justice and Conservation

Schlosberg, D. (2004). Reconceiving environmental justice: global movements and political theories. *Environmental politics*, 13(3), 517-540.

Femke Wijdekop, "Against Ecocide: Legal Protection for Earth," *Great Transition Initiative* (August 2016), <http://www.greattransition.org/publication/against-ecocide>. (Read the Essay and commentaries on the essay from the website).

Week 10 | November 14, 2019

The Commons: What are they and why do they matter?

Feeny, D., Berkes, F., McCay, B. J., & Acheson, J. M. (1990). The tragedy of the commons: twenty-two years later. *Human ecology*, 18(1), 1-19.

Bollier, D. and Helfrich, S. (2019). Chapter 2 of *Free, fair and alive. The insurgent power of the commons*, Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

Bollier, David. 2015. The Potato Park of Peru. In *Patterns of Commoning*.

Other Resources:

<https://p2pfoundation.net>

<http://bollier.org>

Week 11 | November 21, 2019

Ways Forward: Degrowth, Nowtopias and Other Alternatives

Muraca, B. (2012). Towards a fair degrowth-society: Justice and the right to a 'good life' beyond growth. *Futures*, 44(6), 535-545.

Singh, N. M. (2019). Environmental justice, degrowth and post-capitalist futures. *Ecological Economics*, 163, 138-142.

Also see:

<https://www.degrowth.info/en/> (Links to an external site.)

and this short article:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/12/doughnut-growth-economics-book-economic-model>

Week 12 | November 28, 2019

The Great Work of Our Times: Challenges and Opportunities

Berry, T. (2011). *The great work: Our way into the future*. Crown.

Escobar, A. (2011). Sustainability: Design for the pluriverse. *Development*, 54(2), 137-140.