

**MCMASTER UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**Institute on Globalization & the Human Condition**  
**GLOBAL ST 732: Global Health and Environment Policy**

**INSTRUCTORS:** Vito A. Buonsante ([buonsanv@mcmaster.ca](mailto:buonsanv@mcmaster.ca))

**OFFICE HOURS:** By appointment

**TERM:** January to April 2018

**LOCATION:** LRW 5001

**SEMINARS:** Mondays 11:30AM to 2:20 PM,

**SLACK:** <https://globalst732.slack.com/>

### **COURSE SUMMARY**

This course explores the challenges in tackling the health impacts from environmental pollution (e.g. chemicals, waste, and climate change) at a global level. The course will address the issues on how scientific knowledge about adverse health effects from exposure to environmental factors is converted into policies. The focus will be both on the environmental stressors to human health and on what are the trade offs that must be considered when decisions are taken or not taken to tackle these issues. The roles of civil society organizations, national governments and intergovernmental organizations to drive decision-making about environmental health issues will be considered.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the economic, social and political implications of today's most pressing environmental health challenges for both developed and developing countries.
- Identify the critical factors that drive various decision-making processes about environmental health issues and the key players that influence them.
- Comfortably navigate the academic and grey literature related to environmental health.
- Understand government relations and lobbying and how they apply to environmental health.

### **SEMINAR FORMAT**

Students will explore some of the core issues in environmental health policy through instructor and guest lectures and a series of interactive discussions. Students will consider the unique content of environmental health, its importance, the type of players involved and the current political environment in which environmental policy is developed. Seminar sessions may feature discussions on a particular method of environmental health policy and/or problem-based learning exercises with role-playing.

Policy Discussions: Throughout the course, students will consider a variety of environmental health policy tools, discussing their possible uses and considering their potential effectiveness in different contexts. The focus will be on identifying the various ways in which environmental health policies are shaped. The specific tools discussed will range from formal legal instruments to amorphous innovations, and may include: activities of professional associations; environmental litigation; journal editorials; media coverage; shadow reports; policy linkage strategies; celebrity hype; conference diplomacy; donor funding; social media; and international treaties, conventions and "soft law" mechanisms.

Problem-Based Learning Exercises: Some seminars will also feature a hypothetical or current environmental health policy challenge which students will discuss and analyse to determine how they

would choose to tackle it. To help consider every angle of the presented problem, students will take on the roles of various players (e.g., heads of relevant governmental, civil society, corporate and UN organizations) that are particularly relevant to the issue.

### **SEMINAR TOPICS & SCHEDULE**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Guest(s)</b>
Week 1   Monday January 8 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction to GLOBAL ST 732/ Introduction to Global Environmental Health	
Week 2   Monday January 15 <sup>th</sup>	Concept of risk and risks assessment	
Week 3   Monday January 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Precaution and cost-benefit analysis	
Week 4   Monday January 29 <sup>th</sup>	Industrial chemicals, POPs	
Week 5   Monday February 5 <sup>th</sup>	Mercury and the Minamata Convention	
Week 6   Monday February 12 <sup>th</sup>	Highly hazardous pesticides and the Rotterdam Convention, Stockholm convention	
Week 7   Monday February 19 <sup>th</sup>	NO CLASS – MIDTERM RECESS	No in-class lecture
Week 8   Monday February 26 <sup>th</sup>	Mid-term presentations	
Week 9   Monday March 5 <sup>th</sup>	Food Security and pesticides	
Week 10   Monday March 12 <sup>th</sup>	Access to information	
Week 11   Monday March 19 <sup>th</sup>	Nanotechnologies	
Week 12   Monday March 26 <sup>th</sup>	Air pollution	
Week 13   Monday April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Hazardous waste	
Week 14   Monday April 9 <sup>th</sup>	Final presentations	

**Class times may be subject to change depending on factors such as guest lecturer availability. Student conflicts will be taken into consideration as long as advance notice is provided to the instructor.**

### **MATERIALS NEEDED**

All required readings for the course will be made available to students through the class Slack.

### **ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION**

#### **Environmental Health Policy Workshop – Final Product(s) and Presentation (30%)**

The Environmental Health Workshop involves experiential learning: students' work to address research questions identified as priorities by partner environmental health organizations or identified by students. Students will be trained and supervised by the instructor with the support of a diverse team of environmental health experts (guest lecturers). Our hope is that through contributing to the current work of a partner environmental health organization, students will be exposed to realities of the field, and will develop skillsets that will propel their budding environmental health policy careers forward.

Students will work in groups of 4-6, matched to partner organizations based on student interests if possible, or randomly if not. All groups will be required to produce a research memo for their partner

organizations, and have the option of working on additional products or public engagement activities (e.g., 1-pagers, videos, podcasts, promotional materials, conceptualization of or participation in campaigns) based on the needs of the partner organization. Research memos will be 3000-4000 words in length (including abstract and key messages, but excluding references and appendices), with a preference for concise writing that achieves a word count in the lower part of the range. Students will also prepare:

- 3-5 key messages for decision-makers (one sentence maximum for each).
- Provenance statement outlining the individual contributions of each team member (in appendix).

The research memo must be informed by extensive research that is cited appropriately. The Vancouver citation style adopted by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors will be used for referencing source material, except that in-text reference numbers should be superscript, without brackets, and placed immediately following punctuation.

The research memos must also be informed by 3-5 key informant interviews of leaders, advocates or observers who may have relevant insider knowledge on the agenda- setting, prioritization, decision-making and policy processes being studied. The key informants' contact information, invitation letter and interview guide must be approved by the instructor before potential key informants are contacted. Specific requirements for these items will be discussed in class.

The interviews must be completed by Monday March 5th, 2018. The research memo itself should be submitted to the course instructor(s) through Slack on Friday April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 9.00 p.m.

Groups will also be responsible for making a final 30-minute presentation (format of their choosing) to the class and to the partner environmental health organization. This presentation should discuss the group's research and highlight the key points from the group's work in a manner that engages their peers, their partner environmental health organization, and any potential decision-makers.

#### **Group peer review feedback on a different group's draft research memo (3%)**

Groups must submit their draft research memos by Wednesday March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 9.00 p.m. Each group of students will be collectively responsible for providing formal anonymous written feedback to another group on their draft paper. The instructor will discretely assign papers for review to groups and act as an intermediary between writers and reviewers. Peer review feedback on a different group's draft paper is due on Tuesday March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 at 9.00 p.m.

#### **Group response to peer review feedback received from a different group (2%)**

Upon receipt of peer review feedback, each group will make changes to their paper and submit a formal reply to the course instructor that addresses the peer review feedback. A good reply will divide the reviewers' feedback into discrete actionable comments and explain whether, how and why (or why not) each comment was incorporated into the final paper. It is particularly important to justify any decisions by the group to not incorporate the peer reviewers' feedback.

- The goal of the reply is to convince the course instructor that the group's approach is correct in that all constructive feedback was either incorporated into the paper or otherwise considered. As such, the reply should be extremely diplomatic and courteous, respecting the time and care taken by those reviewers who offered the feedback.
- Responses to peer review feedback are due on Wednesday April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 9.00 p.m.

#### **Environmental Health Policy Workshop – Mid-Term Presentation (10%)**

Each group will deliver a 30-minute presentation on their Environmental Health Policy Workshop progress to date on Friday February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to the class and to the partner environmental health organization (in class if the organization representative can attend, or on a mutually agreeable date). Groups will receive feedback from the instructor and their peers at this point in time. Recognizing that this presentation is

early in the term, students are not expected to have a comprehensive product ready; rather, groups will present background research and plans for the rest of the term.

### **Contemporary Issues for Class Discussion (15%)**

Students will work individually to write an analysis based on a contemporary issue in environmental health (maximum 1 page, single-spaced), to be submitted to the instructor by the Friday at 11:59 p.m. prior to the week's seminar. Students must also submit a reading addressing the issue chosen and post it in the assignments folder along with the 1 page report by the Friday deadline. The assignment will include a summary of the issue, a description of its context in the global environmental health system and literature, and a description of its relevance to this class in particular. Topics will either be provided by the instructor or chosen by the student. Sign-up dates will be on a first-come-first-serve basis via Slack. Each student is also responsible for presenting the contemporary issue in class and must incorporate at least one audio-visual component. Each presentation should be no longer than 20 minutes.

### **Reading Summary Activity (15%)**

Students will work individually to prepare a problem-based learning (PBL) activity on the week's readings. The readings assigned to each student will be finalized in discussion with the instructors, as far in advance of the activity date as possible. Each PBL activity should be no longer than 1 hour, and engage students on the content of the readings. Students should provide their classmates with appropriate context for the PBL activity, which may be done through a written brief on the readings, or another discussed format. As such, any background materials should be maximum 1 page, single-spaced, and should be submitted to instructor and the class folder by the Friday at 11:59 p.m. prior to the seminar in which the readings will be discussed. Students should provide their peers with an understanding of what the authors of the readings are arguing and on what basis; they need not be critical. Sign-up dates will be on a first-come-first-serve basis via Slack.

More information about PBL can be found below, students are not expected to know the content of the following documents, they are being given for reference purposes:

General Information (1): <http://cfl.mcmaster.ca/resources/pbl.html>

General Information (2): <https://www.cte.cornell.edu/teaching-ideas/engaging-students/problem-based-learning.html>

Designing a PBL Case: [http://cfl.mcmaster.ca/resources/pdf/How\\_do\\_you\\_Design\\_a\\_Case.pdf](http://cfl.mcmaster.ca/resources/pdf/How_do_you_Design_a_Case.pdf)

### **Classroom and Slack Participation (25%) [Marked by instructors with guest lecturer input]**

Participation will be evaluated based on general participation and asking good questions of guest presenters. This course has been designed to maximize interaction, engagement and peer-to-peer learning such that seminar participation is a basic requirement. Students are particularly expected to engage with guest lecturers by asking them thoughtful questions that demonstrate an understanding of the topic. Slack discussion participation will be considered, though in-class participation will be prioritized.

### **Additional Information**

Grades may be adjusted by 5% at the discretion of the instructor but under exceptional circumstances. Final work will be submitted to the instructor via email/slack in both MS-Word and PDF format unless otherwise specified (e.g., scanned written feedback from the workshops should be submitted in PDF format). Students are expected to adhere to the principles of McMaster University's Academic Integrity Policy for all elements of this course (see Appendix). Late assignments will not be accepted and will result in a grade of zero - unless there are extenuating circumstances supported by appropriate documentation. Assignments that are to be delivered on a certain day (e.g., presentations) must be delivered on the assigned date unless a prior arrangement has been made with the instructor. It is expected that any

assignments involving group work have an equal distribution of responsibilities between group members. Extensions negotiated in advance and emergency situations will be considered.

## **ASSIGNMENT EXPECTATIONS**

For all assignments, conveying information in a logically organized and clear manner should be prioritized. Remember that this is an environmental health class – how you convey your message in every assignment is extremely important.

### **Written pieces will be evaluated based on the following expectations:**

- Sufficient coverage of topic.
- Sufficient depth of analysis and substance.
- Logical structure and organization.
- Presentation and design.
- Clear and concise writing style.
- Use of evidence and sources.
- Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Appropriate use of given space.

### **Presentations/Activities will be evaluated based on the following expectations:**

- Sufficient coverage of topic.
- Sufficient depth of analysis and substance.
- Engaging presentation style.
- Use of evidence and sources.
- Appropriate use of aids (e.g., visuals, slideshows) to enhance presentation.
- Facilitation of engaging and balanced discussion.
- Appropriate use of given time.

## **APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION**

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials students earn are rooted in principles of honesty and integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: „Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is each student’s responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.

3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## **SLACK**

In this course we will be using Slack. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **COURSE MODIFICATIONS**

The instructor(s), program and the university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If modifications become necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given. Students will be provided with an explanation and an opportunity to comment. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and the course website/Slack daily during the term.

## **A NOTE ON WRITING**

Good writing is an essential skill for advocacy and an important part of this course. In assignments, students should always thoughtfully consider their target audience and the way this should change their writing style. For decision-makers who are always pressed for time, shorter is better. Simple, jargon-free language and point-first writing is preferred over fancy words and long suspenseful prose. Writers should examine every sentence to ensure it actually adds value to their work; if not, it should be cut. Setting the right tone at the beginning is important, as is concluding with actionable messages. The summary is the most important section because it is usually the only part of a paper that is actually read.

## **PROFESSIONALISM**

Students are expected to display professional integrity and behaviour towards the professionals and organizations with whom they interact through this course. If any questions or clarification about professional behavior are needed, please discuss this with the course instructor(s).

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext 28652 or email [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

## **FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES EMAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, *must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account*. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.