

# HLTH AGE 3S03: GLOBAL HEALTH ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Fall 2020

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## **Course Description**

This course surveys environmental stressors responsible for adverse health outcomes and explores the decision-making processes that lead to the regulation or lack thereof of these environmental stressors. Environmental health includes those aspects of human health, including quality of life, that are determined by physical, chemical, biological, social and psychosocial factors in the environment. It also refers to the theory and practice of assessing, correcting, controlling, and preventing those factors in the environment that can potentially adversely affect the health of present and future generations” (WHO, 2004). This course will focus on the impact of pollution on health and will address the issue of how scientific knowledge about adverse health effects from exposure to environmental factors are converted into policies. It was estimated that in 2015 pollution was responsible for 9 million premature deaths, that’s 16% of all deaths worldwide (Lancet 2017). The course is divided in two parts: the first covers basic concepts of the environmental health decision making process including the concepts of risk, scientific uncertainty, cost-benefit analysis, access to information and the precautionary principle. The second part of this course surveys different environmental health stressors and how (and if) the basic concepts are applied to the respective decision-making processes. The course draws from practical application of decision-making processes and stakeholder participation to the course. The environmental health topics that will be discussed include chemicals, hazardous wastes, air pollution and climate change.

## **Course Objectives**

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

- Understand the complexities of the connections between environmental hazards and human health
- Gain real world experience and develop novel approaches on what instruments may be used to address environmental health threats
- Understand a decision making process from the identification of a possible health impact to the adoption of a risk management measure
- Critically reflect on the role of various stakeholders in a decision making process related to environmental stressors
- Navigate grey and academic literature on environmental health and understand a policy paper.

## **Required Materials and Texts**

Many readings will be selected from the book Environmental Health: From Global to Local by Howard Frumkin (available electronically on the McMaster library). Other materials will include academic articles, newspaper articles, policy papers, and documents from international organizations, government agencies or other relevant stakeholders and will be made available electronically.

## **Class Format**

Classes for the entire fall term will be online. The first part of the course will be partially asynchronous, and the instructor will make available short pre-recorded presentations on the basic concepts of the class. The rest of the class will be online and to facilitate meaningful discussions, the class will be divided in small groups (4-6 students) that will report back to the class or just to the instructor on specific questions.

## **Course Evaluation – Overview**

1. **Written assignment: 10%, due October 2**
2. **Policy memo proposal: 5% due October 16**
3. **Participation, attendance and quizzes: 20%**
4. **Reading responses 10%**
5. **Group presentation: 20% due November 30**
6. **Responses to group presentations 5% due December 7**
7. **Policy Memo 30% due December 11**

## **Course Evaluation – Details**

### **Written assignment (10%) due October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Students will identify and describe an environmental health issue that they are interested in or that is directly relevant to them and describe how it impacts various stakeholders [600 words or less excluding references and bibliography]

### **Policy memo proposal (5%) due October 16<sup>th</sup>**

Students will describe the topic they will be discussing in their final policy brief a current environmental health issue of their choice and explain why it is an environmental health issue, who are the relevant stakeholders and what measure they would be seeking from the decision maker they are addressing. [500 words or less, bullet points]

### **Participation, attendance and quizzes (20%)**

Students will be split in groups and will be having discussions independently in break out sessions. Group members must rotate in presenting the results for the group discussions. Quizzes may be required to ascertain the understanding of the basic concepts of the course.

### **Reading responses (10%)**

Students are expected to read the required readings. Each students individually or in small groups will submit their reading response to the weekly readings and identify 1-2 questions for discussion. Each student will be required to provide 2 responses for the entire course [600 words or less]

### **Debate and Group presentation (20%) due November 30**

A group debate will be organized to simulate a discussion between public officials, public interest advocates and private interest advocates. The discussion will aim at verifying that students understand and master the tools of environmental health decision

making. The debate will be asynchronous, and students will pre-record their presentation (max 20 minutes).

**Responses to group presentations (5%) due December 7**

Opposite groups in the debate will have the chance to provide a rebuttal and a critical response to another group's presentation (5-7 minutes).

**Policy brief (30%)**

A Policy brief will be 2500-3000 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. The research memo must be informed by extensive research that is cited appropriately. The policy brief should argue in favor of a policy change on an environmental issue and should be address to a decision maker at any level (city council, provincial government, federal government, conference of party of an international convention).

**Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

**Week 1 (Monday, September 14, 2020)**

Introduction to environmental health, policy and law

**Week 2 (Monday, September 21, 2020)**

Risk and hazard, the risk assessment process

**Week 3 (Monday, September 28, 2020)**

Cost-Benefit analysis and the precautionary principle

**Week 4 (Monday, October 5, 2020)**

Transparency and access to information

**Week 5 (Monday, October 12, 2020)**

Reading Week

**Week 6 (Monday, October 19, 2020)**

**Industrial chemicals**

**Week 7 (Monday, October 26, 2020)**

**Air pollution**

**Week 8 (Monday, November 2, 2020)**

**Climate change**

**Week 9 (Monday, November 9, 2020)**

**Pesticides and food security**

**Week 10 (Monday, November 16, 2020)**

**Hazardous waste**

**Week 11 (Monday, November 23, 2020)**

**Plastic pollution**

**Week 12 (Monday, November 30, 2020)**

**Debate (Covid-19 and pollution - tentative topic)**

**Week 13 (Monday, December 7, 2020)**

**Debate rebuttals and course wrap-up**

**Course Policies**

**Submission of Assignments**

All written assignments must be submitted through Avenue to learn on the stated deadline dates at the stated deadline times (or by 23.50 if not stated otherwise).

**Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

## **Late Assignments**

Late assignments submitted within 1 hour of the deadline will receive a deduction of 10%. Assignments submitted within 24 hours will have a penalty of 25%, within 48 hours of 50%, within 72 hours of 75%. After that will not be accepted and will receive a mark of 0. Note that this is the default situation.

## **Academic Integrity Statement**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic 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 behavior 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 your 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 [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## **Requests For Relief For Missed Academic Term Work**

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

## **Copyright And Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## **Avenue to Learn**

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. 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.

## **Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection**

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

## **Course Modification**

The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of the course during the term. If any modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

## **University Policies**

### **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on



online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

### **Academic Accommodation of Students With Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

### **Academic Accommodation For Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

### **Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail 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.

### **Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.