

HLTH AGE 3S03: GLOBAL HEALTH ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Fall 2018

September to December 2018

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Lecture: Wednesday 2.30 – 5.20 p.m.,
McMaster BSB 108

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1.30pm

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Course Description

This course surveys environmental stressors responsible for adverse health outcomes and explores how decision making processes 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 affect adversely the health of present and future generations” (World Health Organization [WHO], 2004). 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 will address the issues on how scientific knowledge about adverse health effects from exposure to environmental factors are converted into policies. The course covers and assesses the concept of risk, scientific uncertainty, cost-benefit analysis access to information and the precautionary principle. The course is students centered and will try to recreate in class policy debates trying to understand the position of various stakeholders (citizens, governments, industry, NGOs). The environmental health topics that will be discussed include chemicals, hazardous wastes, air pollution and climate change.

Course Objectives

- 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 agency or other relevant stakeholders and will be made available electronically.

Class Format

Students will explore some of the core issues in environmental health through lectures by the instructor and a series of interactive discussions. Students will consider the

various environmental pressures that globally affect health, the type of players involved and the current political environment in which environmental health decisions are taken. Seminar session may feature discussions on a particular tool in the decision making process related to environmental pressures to health and/or problem-based learning exercises with role-playing applied to specific case-studies on current or past issues. Participation in this course is crucial; most of the time in class will be dedicated to discussions and activities.

Policy Discussions

Throughout the course, students will consider and discuss a variety of environmental health methods and paradigms, discussing their possible uses and analyze how they are used in the decision making process related to specific environmental health pressures. The focus will be on identifying what are the trade-offs that lead to action (or inaction) in relation to specific environmental health pressures. The specific methods discussed will then inform and be applied in all the discussions and analyses that will range from formal legal instruments to amorphous innovations. The weekly readings will primarily focus on and inform this part of the seminar.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Written assignment: 15%, due September 28
2. Policy memo proposal: 5%, due October 17
3. In class and online participation and attendance: 20%
4. Reading summaries 10%
5. Group presentation: 20%
6. Policy Memo 30%, due December 7

Course Evaluation – Details

Written assignment (15%)

Students will identify an environmental health issue that they are interested in or that is directly relevant to them and describe how it impacts various stakeholders.

Policy memo proposal (5%)

Students will select a current environmental health issue of their choice and explain why it is relevant at a global level, who are the relevant stakeholders and what position they will be defending in their policy memo (a private interest, a public interest, a local interest, etc).

In Class and online participation and attendance (20%)

General participation and asking good questions. This course aims at being as interactive as possible and to maximize interaction, engagement and peer-to-peer learning. Participation will be relevant also online through a Facebook group.

Reading summaries (10%)

Students are expected to read the required readings. Each week a group of students will present the readings to the class and facilitate a critical discussion through activities and case studies.

Group presentation (20%)

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.

Policy memos (30%)

Policy memos 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.

Seminar Topics (tentative)

- Week 1 (Wednesday September 5th): Introduction to Policy, Law and Global Health and the Environment
- Week 2 (Wednesday September 12th): Environmental causes of diseases and policy response
- Week 3 (Wednesday September 19th): Risk and hazard, the risk assessment process
- Week 4 (Wednesday September 26th): Cost-Benefit analysis and the precautionary principle
- Week 5 (Wednesday October 3rd): Transparency and access to information
- Week 6 (Wednesday October 10th): Reading week no classes
- Week 7 (Wednesday October 17th): Industrial chemicals and toxics ignorance
- Week 8 (Wednesday October 24th): Air pollution
- Week 9 (Wednesday October 31st): Climate change and health
- Week 10 (Wednesday November 7th): Pesticides and food security
- Week 11 (Wednesday November 14th): Hazardous waste

- Week 12 (Wednesday November 21st): Nanomaterials (Debates)
- Week 12 (Wednesday November 28th): Water pollution (Debates)
- Week 13 (Wednesday December 5th): Emerging risks

Course Policies

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).

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
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

All assignments must be submitted to the instructor, online or in person depending on the assignment and as outlined in the assignment instructions, on the stated deadline dates at the stated deadline times. 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.

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.

University Policies

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.

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 credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

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 e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

If you require this course outline in an alternate/accessible format, please contact the Department of Health, Aging & Society (ext. 27227 | e-mail: hasdept@mcmaster.ca).

Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student's religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.

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.

Course Modification

The instructor and 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 either type of 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.