
GEOG 9120B: Energy and Environmental Justice

Course Outline: Winter 2025

1. Course Information

1.1 Class Time:

Tuesday 10:00-12:00

1.2 Contact Information:

Instructor: Carol Hunsberger

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: chunsber@uwo.ca

The Department of Geography and Environment strives to provide accessibility to all in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Please contact the instructor if you require material in an alternate format or any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also contact Student Accessibility Services at 519-661-2147 for any question regarding an accommodation.

More information about "Accessibility at Western" is available at: <http://accessibility.uwo.ca>

2. Calendar Description

2.1 Course Description:

Current patterns of energy production and use are deeply tangled with questions of social and environmental justice. This graduate seminar explores environmental and social impacts of energy production, equity issues related to energy access, and political and economic forces shaping energy decisions. Theoretically, the course engages with ideas of justice found in moral philosophy, political ecology, and Indigenous thought, building on these perspectives to articulate an interpretation of energy justice. We then apply this framework to a series of themes featuring Canadian and international cases, and examine diverse strategies for pursuing environmental justice by working within, against, and beyond the state.

Major topics include:

- Philosophical, social science, and Indigenous interpretations of justice and fairness;
- How energy projects and constructions of national identity mutually shape each other;
- Energy-related geopolitics and conflicts;
- Strategies for pursuing social change within, against and beyond the state; and
- Contemporary social movements and efforts to enact alternative energy systems.

Format: 2 lecture hours, 0.5 course. This is a small course where everyone is expected to actively contribute to a lively and respectful shared learning experience.

3. Readings

All readings (listed below) will be made available through the course OWL site.

4. Learning Outcomes

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

- Build a theoretical foundation for evaluating competing claims about energy projects, policies and systems;
- Position your thesis research relation to ideas about environmental justice;
- Think deeply about theory and praxis;
- Engage in group discussions, including giving and receiving peer feedback;
- Deliver presentations that synthesize core concepts from readings and communicate the main arguments from your own research paper; and
- Write a paper that immerses you in a key background literature for your research.

5. Evaluation

Task	Percentage of Grade	Due date
Weekly discussion questions (when not presenting)	10%	Ongoing
Presentation: synthesis of week's readings	10%	TBD
Research paper proposal	20%	Feb 11
Peer feedback on a classmate's proposal	5%	Feb 25
Final paper presentation	15%	Apr 1
Final paper	40%	Apr 8

Discussion questions

On the weeks when you are not presenting, you are asked to submit two questions for group discussion. Your questions should build on the assigned readings and engage in depth with the themes of the course. Questions should be posted in the OWL Forum by midnight on the night before class.

Presentation of the week's readings

Once in the semester, you will be responsible for delivering a synthesis of the readings and launching the class discussion. The presentation (around 20 minutes) should highlight key arguments from the readings, contextualize them by providing background about the authors, link to ideas explored in other weeks, give your own critical response, and raise some initial questions for discussion. You may wish to use examples from the news or other sources to illustrate and apply ideas from the readings.

Research paper

The intent of the paper is to connect one or more topics we cover in class to a detailed review of literature relevant to your thesis research questions (consulting at least 15 significant journal articles or book chapters). For instance:

- What opportunities and limits might arise from trying to apply the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to contested energy projects – in Canada or elsewhere?
- How can we understand who constitutes “the community” when considering “local” disputes, e.g. over proposed wind turbines or waste-to-energy facilities?

- In what ways has “the public interest” or “national interest” been framed (by government, project proponents, the media, and project opponents) in relation to a particular case?
- How would existing theories of energy justice need to be modified to describe a just and sustainable energy transition relevant to a country in the Global South?

The proposal should include a preliminary research outline, lines of exploration, and a working bibliography (2-3 double-spaced pages plus 8-10 sources). You are encouraged to discuss your proposed topic with the instructor as you work on the proposal. The paper should be a maximum of 15 double-spaced pages, not including references. You will also present a 15-minute, conference-style summary of your research to the class. Detailed guidelines for the proposal, paper and presentation are provided separately.

6. Tentative Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings: see details at end of document
Jan 7	Introduction: Environment, justice, geography	LaDuke and Cowen 2020
Jan 14	Foundations of justice 1: Ideas from moral and political philosophy	Sandel 2009: Ch 1 Rawls 1993: Ch 1 Sen 2009: Ch 11
Jan 21	Foundations of justice 2: Ideas from environmental justice and political ecology	Peet, Robbins, Watts 2011: Ch 1 (p30-end) Schlosberg and Carruthers 2010 Jenkins et al. 2016
Jan 28	Foundations of justice 3: Ideas from Indigenous thought	McGregor et al 2020 Wall Kimmerer 2013: pp 3-59
Feb 4	Case study 1: Colonialism in Canada	McCreary 2024 Intro, Ch 1 & 2 (pp. xv-86)
Feb 11	Case study 2: Extractivism and Indigenous rights	McCreary 2024 Ch 3 & 4 (pp. 89-171)
Feb 18	NO CLASS – Reading Week	
Feb 25	Case study 3: Wet’suwet’en pipeline resistance	McCreary 2024 Ch 5 & 6 (pp. 175-249)
Mar 4	Strategies 1: Consultation and participation in environmental governance	Routledge et al. 2018 Van Lier 2021 Gregory 2017
Mar 11	Strategies 2: Protest, civil disobedience, sabotage	D’Arcy 2014: Introduction (p 1-9) Malm – How to Blow Up a Pipeline Ch 1-2
Mar 18	Strategies 3: Prefiguration and Indigenous resurgence	Jeffrey & Dyson 2021 Gergan & Curley 2023 Estes 2019: Ch 7
Mar 25	Choice of films: Hydroelectricity and identity in Quebec, or temporalities of nuclear waste	Isacsson 1996 (film) and Desbiens 2013: Ch 1 OR Galison 2015 (film) and <u>Subramanian 2022</u>
Apr 1	PAPER PRESENTATIONS	
Apr 8	Environmental justice revisited: progress and efforts to enact alternatives	Materials suggested by the class

7. University Policy Regarding Illness

7.1 Illness

Graduate students should consult their Faculty of registration for information about Academic Consideration. If you have a medical or personal concern that is interfering with your work, please contact your Instructor, Graduate Program Administrator, Supervisor, or SGPS.

7.2 Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes. The professor does not provide access to class notes.

8. Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students

For the complete policy and regulations see: http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/13.html

9. Procedures for Appealing Academic Evaluations

Students may appeal an academic decision or ruling. For the complete policy and regulations see: http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/13.html

10. Support Services

10.1 Support Services

Student Support Services can be reached at: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Services can be reached at: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/ for options about how to obtain help.

10.2 Academic Concerns

If you are in academic difficulty, it is strongly recommended that you see your Graduate Program Administrator, Supervisor, or SGPS.

11. Other Information

For a list of Graduate Regulations please visit:

http://www.grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/index.html

For The University of Western Ontario Senate Regulations, please see the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policies at: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html

12. Reading list (may be updated)

Week 1: Introduction

LaDuke, W. and Cowen, D. 2020. [Beyond wiindigo infrastructure](#). *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 119(2): 243-268.

Further reading:

Sovacool, B. K. (2014). [What are we doing here? Analyzing fifteen years of energy scholarship and proposing a social science research agenda](#). *Energy Research & Social Science*, 1, 1-29.

Week 2: Foundations of Justice 1: Philosophical Perspectives

Sandel, M. (2009). *Justice: What's the right thing to do?* Penguin. [Chapter 1](#), 3-30.

Rawls, J. (1993). *Justice as fairness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. [Part 1](#), 1-38.

Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. [Chapter 11](#), 225-252.

Week 3: Foundations of Justice 2: Environmental Justice, Political Ecology

- Peet, R., Robbins, P., & Watts, M. (2011). *Global Political Ecology*. [Chapter 1](#) (30-47). London: Routledge.
- Schlosberg, D., & Carruthers, D. (2010). [Indigenous Struggles, Environmental Justice, and Community Capabilities](#). *Global Environmental Politics*, 10(4), 12-35.
- Jenkins, K., McCauley, D., Heffron, R., Stephan, H., & Rehner, R. (2016). [Energy justice: A conceptual review](#). *Energy Research & Social Science*, 11, 174-182.

Further reading:

- Sikor, T., & Newell, P. (2014). [Globalizing environmental justice?](#) *Geoforum*, 54, 151-157.
- Svarstad, H. and Benjaminsen, T. (2020). [Reading radical environmental justice through a political ecology lens](#). *Geoforum*, 108, 1-11.
- Salter, R., Gonzalez, C. G., & Kronk Warner, E. (2018). [Energy justice: frameworks for energy law and policy](#). In *Energy Justice*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Walker, G. (2012). *Environmental justice: concepts, evidence and politics*. [Chapter 1](#) (1-15). London: Routledge.

Week 4: Foundations of Justice 3: Indigenous thought

- McGregor, D., Whitaker, S., & Sritharan, M. (2020). [Indigenous environmental justice and sustainability](#). *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 43, 35-40.
- Kimmerer, R. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed editions. [Section I: Planting sweetgrass](#), 3-59.
- Powys Whyte, K. (2020). [Too late for Indigenous climate justice: Ecological and relational tipping points](#). *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 11(1), p.e603.

Further reading:

- Coombes, B., Johnson, J. T., & Howitt, R. (2012). [Indigenous geographies I: Mere resource conflicts? The complexities in Indigenous land and environmental claims](#). *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(6), 810-821.

Weeks 5, 6, 7: Case study: Wet'suwet'en pipeline resistance

- McCreary, T. (2024). [Indigenous Legalities, Pipeline Viscosities: Colonial extractivism and Wet'suwet'en resistance](#). University of Alberta Press.

Week 8: Strategies 1: Working within the state

- Routledge, P., Cumbers, A., & Derickson, K. D. (2018). [States of just transition: Realising climate justice through and against the state](#). *Geoforum*, 88, 78-86.
- Gregory, R. S. (2017). [The troubling logic of inclusivity in environmental consultations](#). *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 42(1), 144-165.
- Van Lier, N. (2021). [Reconciliation 2.0: Resolving Contradictions in the Production of Settler Colonial and Capitalist Space in Canada](#). *Antipode*, 53(2), 607-626.

Further resources:

- Klein, S. (2020). *A good war: mobilizing Canada for the climate emergency*. ECW Press. [Chapter 1](#), 3-22.
- Taylor, A. (director). [What is Democracy?](#) National Film Board of Canada. Video, 107 min.

Week 9: Strategies 2: Working against the state

- D'Arcy, S. (2013). *Languages of the Unheard*. Zed Books. Introduction, 1-9.
- Malm, A. (2021). *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*. Verso. Chapters 1 and 2, 5-132. [Unofficial PDF link](#)

Further resources:

- Simpson, L.B. (2020). A short history of the blockade. [Video recording of CLC Kreisel lecture](#).

Week 10: Strategies 3: Working beyond the state

- Jeffrey, C. and Dyson, J. (2021). [Geographies of the future: Prefigurative politics](#). *Progress in Human Geography* 45(4), 641-658.

Gergan, M.D. and Curley, A. (2023). Indigenous Youth and Decolonial Futures: Energy and Environmentalism among the Diné in the Navajo Nation and the Lepchas of Sikkim, India. *Antipode*, 55(3), 749–769.

Estes, N. (2019). *Our History is the Future*. Verso. Chapter 7: Liberation, 247-257.

Further reading:

Coulthard, G. 2013. For our nations to live, capitalism must die. Unsettling America (blog).

Powell, D. E. (2015). The rainbow is our sovereignty: Rethinking the politics of energy on the Navajo Nation. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 22, 54.

Waziyatawin. (2012). The paradox of Indigenous resurgence at the end of empire. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 68-85.

Yates, Luke. 2015. Rethinking prefiguration: Alternatives, micropolitics and goals in social movements. *Social Movement Studies* 14(1): 1-21.

Week 11: Energy, identity and nationalism OR temporalities of nuclear waste

OPTION 1: Hydroelectricity and identity in Quebec

Isacsson, M. (1996). *Power: One River, Two Nations*. Documentary film, 76 minutes.

Desbiens, C. (2013). *Power from the North*. UBC Press. Chapter 1, The nexus of hydroelectricity in Quebec (19-39).

Further reading:

Bourassa, R. (1985). *Power from the North*. Prentice-Hall. Chapter 1 (1-8).

Boyer, D. (2017). Revolutionary infrastructure. *Infrastructures and Social Complexity* 174(186), 174-186.

Davine, T., Lawhon, M., & Pierce, J. (2017). Place-making at a national scale: Framing tar sands extraction as “Canadian” in The Globe and Mail. *The Canadian Geographer*, 61(3), 428-439.

Jasanoff, S., & Kim, S.-H. (2013). Sociotechnical Imaginaries and National Energy Policies. *Science as Culture*, 22(2), 189-196.

Scott, D. N. (2013). Situating Sarnia: 'Unimagined Communities' in the New National Energy Debate. *Journal of Environmental Law and Practice*, 25, 81-111.

OPTION 2: Temporalities of nuclear waste

Galison, P. and Moss, R. (2015). *Containment*. Documentary film, 81 minutes.

Subramanian, S. (2022). Dismantling Sellafield: the epic task of shutting down a nuclear site. Guardian online, Thurs Dec 15.

Further resources:

Hamilton, V. & Sarathy, B. (2018). Introduction and Epilogue. In *Inevitably toxic*, B. Sarathy, V. Hamilton and J. Farrell Brodie (Eds). University of Pittsburgh Press. 3-19 and 284-302.

McCreary, T. (2020). Between the commodity and the gift: the Coastal GasLink pipeline and the contested temporalities of Canadian and Witsuwit'en law. In *From Student Strikes to the Extinction Rebellion*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Week 12: Paper presentations (no readings)

Week 13: Building Alternatives

Materials to be suggested by the class.

Further reading:

D’Arcy, S. (2014). Secondary targeting: A strategic approach to tar sands resistance. Pages 286-296 in: *A line in the tar sands: Struggles for environmental justice*. T. Black, S. D’Arch, T. Weis, J.K. Russell (Eds). Toronto: Between the Lines.

Fisher, D. R., & Nasrin, S. (2020). Climate activism and its effects. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, e683.

Klein, N. (2015). *This changes everything: Capitalism versus the climate*. Simon and Schuster. Conclusion, 449-466.