Instructor
Dr. Jennifer Silver

Description
This course examines global environmental issues, impacts and governance and it focuses on the interaction of biophysical, socio-economic and political processes at the international and national scales. We will undertake an in-depth examination of the function, contributions and limitations of global institutions, frameworks, negotiations and ‘sustainable development’ initiatives. We will also examine changes driven by industrial sectors and activities, including fisheries, forestry, energy extraction and use, and agriculture. The course will build proficiency in several areas, including:

- Global environmental governance and ‘sustainable development’;
- Climate change and the United Nations Framework Convention;
- International-scale and national-scale indicators used to evaluate social-environmental status/change; and,
- Strengths, limitations and criticisms of global environmental governance and prevailing approaches to monitoring and mitigation.

The major course project is a small-group collaboration where the final product is a country-level socio-environmental assessment and report on national progress on two key Sustainable Development Goals.

Learning Outcomes
1. Recall and describe the history, structure and key functions of the United Nations in global environmental governance;
2. Identify and discuss the strengths, limitations and criticisms of global environmental governance and prevailing approaches to monitoring and mitigation;
3. Demonstrate ability to apply 1 & 2 through critical reflection on international agreements, negotiations and national progress (or lack thereof) towards agreements and targets; and,
4. Identify appropriate national-scale indicators and employ them to assess socio-environmental status.

Territorial Acknowledgement
Acknowledging the territory on which we learn and work honours the relationship between lands/waters and the Indigenous ancestors and stewards of them. This acknowledgement is adapted from the University of Guelph Aboriginal Resource Centre and Student Life:

“The University of Guelph rests on the traditional territory of the Attawanderon people. We therefore acknowledge the Attawanderon people and offer our respect to Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Métis neighbours as the university and community strive to strengthen our relationships with them. We also recognize the significance of the Dish with One Spoon Covenant to this land. The Dish with One Spoon Covenant is a peace agreement made between Indigenous nations before the Europeans arrived. It characterizes our collective responsibility to each other and Mother Earth - we should take only what we need, leave enough for others and keep the dish clean.”
Course readings
Readings are assigned to specific days in the ‘Responsibilities & Readings’ column of the class schedule below; students should complete the readings before class. Readings feature a mixture of academic writing and environmental reporting from bodies within the United Nations. Reading assignments come from one of four documents:


NOTE: Each of these documents are freely available to students -- no textbooks or coursepacks need to be purchased for this course! The U of Guelph library offers digital access to #1, and PDFs of #2, #3 and #4 can be downloaded from the GEOG*3020 Courselink Page by clicking on the ‘Content’ tab. You may also access readings from our course list on the University of Guelph Course Reserve ‘Ares’ site: https://guides.lib.uoguelph.ca/CourseReserves. The bookstore will not be stocking hard copies of #1, but students may order it from an online or other source if they wish.

Overview of assessments:
Tests (2 x 15%): 30% of final grade
There are two in-class tests that cover reading and in-class material. The tests will each feature multiple choice and short answer/fill in the blank. Please refer to the class schedule for dates and information. Students must attend the tests in-person; tests may only be written after the fact with valid documentation.

Major course project: 35% of final grade
A collaborative group project where the final product is a country-level socio-environmental assessment and report on national progress towards one or more of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Self-Assessment: 10% of final grade
Your experience and learning in this course, and its collective success, will depend on everyone keeping up with readings, attending classes and being a good team member through the duration of the course project. The way that you prepare for and participate as a group member is worth 10%.

Take-home Exam: 25% of final grade
The take-home will feature three questions; each are to be answered in 800-1000 words. We will discuss take-home question topics in the last two weeks of semester and the exam will be revealed in the last class. Doing required readings and attending lectures/taking notes will give students the necessary knowledge base from which to develop accurate and well-supported answers on the take-home exam. Please see class schedule for take-home due date.