

# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Environmental and Resource Studies ERST 311H – Winter 2009

## TRENT UNIVERSITY

### **Instructor and Course Meetings**

Instructor: Philip Niblett  
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Secretary: Deb Mills ES B202 748-1011 ext 7199

Lectures: Friday 12:00 – 13:50 Room OCA 206  
Tutorials: Friday 15:00 – 15:50 Room SC W4  
Friday 16:00 – 16:50 Room SC W4

Students are encouraged to discuss the course and their research or learning objectives with the instructor outside of class times. The instructor will not have fixed office hours. The easiest way of making appointments or asking questions is by email.

### **Course Summary Description**

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process by which information about the environmental effects of a project is collected and analyzed prior to a decision process to determine whether or not the project should proceed. Depending on the nature of the project and the environment potentially affected EIA may include social, economic and natural heritage evaluation. EIA is a process by which a balance among these three primary environmental aspects is assessed and the optimal decision achieved.

Approaches to completing environmental assessments will be explored in this course. Emphasis will be on Canadian federal, provincial and municipal EIA processes with some discussion of the international scope of EIA. Practical methods of conducting assessments, problems with present practices and a review of potential improvements to EIA will all be covered in this course.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

There are four components to course evaluation:

- 1) Essay – Topic – Evaluation of an Environmental Assessment report – 20%
- 2) Major Project – Prepare an Environmental Study Report – 40%
- 3) Class and tutorial participation – 20%
- 4) Final Exam – 20%

During the first tutorial in January case studies will be provided for essay topics and the major project. Students are encouraged to propose alternative projects for their major project which are related to their specific interests or area of study. Students wishing to undertake a group project will require the prior approval of the instructor.

### **Access to Instruction**

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109, 748-1281, [disabilityservices@trentu.ca](mailto:disabilityservices@trentu.ca)) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

**Late assignments will lose 5% of their potential value per weekday overdue.** Deadlines for written assignments may be renegotiated with the course instructor until 2 weeks before the deadline, unless doing so would interfere with course or group scheduling. Requests for changes should be sent to the course instructor by email. A printout of the instructor's response should be attached to the written assignment as the record of the granting of the extension. Only a hard copy of assignments will be accepted. Email submission of assignments will be accepted only as proof of date of submission.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offense and carries penalties varying from failure in an assignment to debarment from the university. Definitions, procedures and penalties for dealing with plagiarism are set out in the Trent University Policy on Plagiarism which is printed in the University Calendar. Other forms of academic dishonesty are also discussed in the Calendar and will be penalized appropriately. Identical reports or portions thereof may NOT be submitted in different courses without the instructor's prior permission.

### **Additional EIA Resources**

- 1) Required texts available at bookstore

Noble, Bram F. (2006) Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment: A guide to Principles and Practice. Oxford University Press. ISBN 13: 978-0-19-542090-6

- 2) Optional text also available at bookstore

Hanna, Kevin S. (2005) Environmental Impact Assessment: Practice and Participation. Oxford University Press. ISBN 13: 978-0-19-541928-3

## **Weekly Schedule of Topics**

09 January – Course Introduction

The lecture will outline the course and the general principles of EIA. The seminar will be devoted to the identification of topics for essays and the major project.

16 January – History of Environmental Assessment

23 January - NEPA – How it all began!

30 January - The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (Federal)

06 February – Provincial Environmental Assessment

13 February – International Scope of Environmental Assessment

20 February – READING WEEK NO CLASSES

27 February – Environmental Assessment Methods

06 March – Problems with Environmental Assessment

13 March – Public Participation – How to Improve EIA Practice

20 March – Alternative Approaches to Environmental Assessment

27 March– Practical Solutions to Recurrent Problems in Environmental Assessment

03 April – Contrasting EIA and ISO