

**Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change
York University**

**ENVS 8102
Environmental Studies PhD Research Seminar
Fall, 2024**

Course Director:

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HNES 251

Course consultation hour

Thursdays, 10:15 – 11:15 am or by appointment
Virtual meetings available on request

Time and Location:

HNES 102

Tuesdays, 9:30 am to 12:20 pm

Course Objectives:

ENVS 8102 offers an advanced introduction to selected themes and issues in, and approaches to, doctoral work in Environmental Studies. Based in part on student research interests, the seminar is intended to stimulate interaction and discussion of substantive issues, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and varied forms of intellectual praxis in Environmental Studies. After a general overview of selected issues in Environmental Studies research (including questions of interdisciplinarity, intersectionality, epistemology, methodology, and justice) readings will be shaped according to students' areas of study.

Seminar readings are not meant to be exhaustive, and discussions are not meant to be conclusive; rather, they will critically explore research problems and address questions emerging from diverse research fields in order to consider and reflect on the diversity of our approaches. The success of the seminar will depend on students' thoughtful preparation of readings and other materials; on their generous participation in weekly discussion sessions and peer review forums; and on their iterative work on their PhD Program Plans demonstrated in the successful and timely completion of assignments.

Specific course objectives are intended to allow students to:

- critically engage and review a range of substantive issues, epistemological positions, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and forms/contexts of critical and creative practice related to Environmental Studies research;
- develop breadth of knowledge through exposure to a range of interdisciplinary topics, theoretical perspectives, current research issues, and research methods;
- effectively develop and communicate their ongoing research interests and issues;
- develop depth in their research topics and prospective comprehensive areas;
- complete a solid first draft of the PhD Program Plan; and
- develop a preliminary, partially-annotated bibliography for their first Comprehensive area.

Course Requirements:

All first year ES PhD students must be enrolled in this course. Students should attend class sessions every week; prepare in advance all required readings; complete all presentation and writing assignments on time as specified below; and participate in peer review of colleagues' work.

Students are also expected to participate in EUC and other York research and professional development activities and events such as lectures, symposia, and workshops related to Environmental Studies in general and to their individual research areas.

Required Readings:

One required book is available at the Scott Library and other public libraries and independent bookstores:

David Chariandy, *Soucouyant*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2008.

One required book is available for free download from Punctum Books (a donation has been made on your collective behalf). <https://punctumbooks.com/titles/how-we-write/>

Suzanne Conklin Akbari, ed. *How We Write: Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blank Page*. New York: Punctum Books, 2015.

Please also consult the *ES PhD Program Handbook* as required over the course of the term, available in the dossier and on the 8102 eClass site.

Other readings are, unless otherwise indicated, available through the course eClass site, online (open access), and/or through the York University Library collection. As below, students will add further readings to the list of required texts and are asked to make use of the Library collection and open access sources in their choices. We can negotiate some of the individual texts to address student interests, as will be discussed in class.

Course Organization:

This course is an introductory, participatory seminar that depends entirely, for its success, on class members' generous engagement with the course materials and each other's work and ideas. We will meet weekly, in person, for a three-hour class to present and discuss the required readings, some of which will be chosen by students in relation to their programs of study. Students are also expected to share iterative, draft materials related to the Program Plan via the ENVS 8102 eClass site for collective reading and commentary.

Course Evaluation:

1. Participation

Participation in this course involves two primary elements:

- a) Engaged, prepared, generous, and respectful participation in weekly seminars, including preparation of in-class assignments, reflections, and questions for presenters; and
- b) Submission of draft materials related to the Program Plan on the course eClass site, and critical/helpful commentary on others' materials in the designated discussion forums.

2. In-class Presentations

Over the course of the term, students will undertake two forms of presentation:

- a) On **October 1, 8, 22 and 29**, two students per week will be responsible for "teaching" the assigned readings for the week (see course schedule below). Presentations should briefly address the main arguments of the readings in relation to the themes for the week and then raise points for class discussion, including relevant connections to their own work; each presenter should expect to lead approximately an hour of class. Creative pedagogical approaches are welcome. Students should confer in advance about who will address which readings as they all need to be covered in a given week.

- b) On **November 19 and 26**, four students per week will be responsible for choosing two thematically-related, article-length readings each from their developing Comprehensives lists and presenting their respective research areas to the class through these readings. Gesturing toward an academic conference format, presentations should be no more than 20 minutes; unlike a conference, each presenter will have 40 minutes in total including time for discussion.

Students will sign up for presentation slots in the second week of class.

For the November presentations, students should submit their two chosen readings to the Instructor at least two weeks before the class in which they are presenting so the readings can be made available via eClass in ample time for others to prepare them. Non-presenting students are expected to bring to their colleagues informed and thoughtful questions about their chosen texts and areas of research: at the very least, one generous, generative question for each presenter.

3. Reading Reflections

- a) On **September 17**, students should come to class with about two pages of informal writing that relates at least one element of the novel *Soucouyant* to their doctoral work. (Think outside the box: this does not necessarily have to be about content.) These pages will serve as the basis of an exercise and class discussion and will also be submitted at the end of class to the instructor for comment.
- b) From **September 24 to October 29**, students should come to class each week with a 1000 to 1500 word, hard-copy reflection on the week's readings; reflections should identify key themes and problematics and should include **four** of the week's readings. These reflections will both contribute to class discussion and be submitted at the end of class to the instructor for comment. *Students who are presenting in a given week do not have to submit a reflection paper that week.*
- c) On **December 3**, students should come to class with about two pages of informal writing inspired by the essays in the book *How We Write* in conversation with Dumit's essay and Liboiron's chapter. Please use these readings to reflect on your current reading and writing practice: how, where, why, when, with whom, citing whom, to what end, in what mode, and with what kinds of personal stakes? How might you be more aware and reflective about your practice moving forward? These pages will serve as the basis of an exercise but do not need to be submitted to the instructor (although I will be happy to discuss them with you informally).

Please also note other one-off assignments in the schedule below for **September 10**, **November 5**, and **November 15**.

4. Program Plan and Comprehensives Development

Over the course of the term, students will submit, in designated forums on the course eClass page, the following elements in the iterative development of their Program Plans:

- a) **September 27:** a preliminary bibliography of your research area/comprehensives. This preliminary bibliography is not annotated, but must contain at least 30 titles, each with an accurate and complete reference according to your chosen citation style. Titles should be organized under your preliminary comprehensive areas (two or three).
- b) **October 25:** a draft Program Plan. Draft Program Plans must include: a) a brief statement of your research area as a whole; b) a brief description of each of your two (or three) comprehensive areas, including a rationale, key research questions, format of the examination, and a preliminary list of readings; and c) a timeline for degree completion, noting the normative schedule in the ES PhD Program Handbook.

Students should comment on their peers' preliminary bibliographies and draft Program Plans via eClass. The instructor will also respond privately to each student.

- c) **December 6:** a revised Program Plan with a partially annotated bibliography for the first Comprehensive area. Revised Program Plans should respond to comments received on the first draft. In addition, your partially annotated bibliography must contain at least **25** titles related to your first Comprehensive area and include as relevant, for **ten** of these titles, the following: a) an accurate and complete reference for each title; b) a summary of the main argument; c) a description of the theoretical framework(s) used by the author(s); d) definitions for key terms or concepts; e) an outline of key points of debate or contention; f) description of the author's or authors' research design, creative practice, or methodology; g) use of appropriate selected quotes; and h) a brief statement about the relevance and applicability of the work to your first Comprehensive area.

For one approach to creating an annotated bibliography (there are many), please see: <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography>

Submission and Approval of PhD Program Plans

Although the Instructor will provide feedback on your draft and revised Program Plans, your Supervisor and Comprehensives Committee must ultimately approve it during the Winter term (2025). You are strongly encouraged to work with your Supervisor on the development of your bibliography, and to share your draft and revised Program Plans with your Supervisor for substantive feedback and advice during the Fall term. Students are required to submit a further revised copy of their Program Plan to their Supervisor for review in the Winter term, at

which time a Comprehensives Committee will be formed and a meeting convened to review and approve your Program Plan, including your proposal for your first Comprehensive area.

Program Plans should be finalized and approved no later than the end of the Winter term.

Course Schedule:

All readings are required unless otherwise indicated, with the understanding that you will read some more closely than others. I have responded to students' areas of interest in curating the readings, but I am open to substitutions if you think there are better choices especially in the weeks you are presenting. Please feel free to talk to me about them.

Part I: Foundations for Environmental Studies PhD Research

September 10: Environmental Studies in the Neoliberal University

Readings: hampton, "The University as a Site of Struggle"
Seal, "How the University Became Neoliberal"
Muzatti, "Strange Bedfellows"
Fine, "Leaky Privates"
Naylor, "A Feminist Ethic of Care in the Neoliberal University"
Harney and Moten, "The University and the Undercommons"

Resources: *ES PhD Program Handbook*
Leduc and Morley, "Canadian Evolutions"
Viswanathan, *The Deliberate Doctorate*

Assignment: Please bring to class about two pages (double-spaced) of reflection on the following questions as they are addressed in the readings and/or in other texts you may have encountered about the escalating impacts of neoliberalism on higher education. You do not need to submit these pages to the instructor, but you will exchange your work with your colleagues and your ideas will serve as the basis of class discussion.

- 1) What is neoliberalism and how does it shape universities as sites of teaching and learning?
- 2) What are some of the different effects of the neoliberalization of universities on diverse faculty and students?
- 3) What are some of the tensions involved in doing work for social justice, decolonization, and environmental sustainability in the context of a neoliberal university like York?
- 4) What are some of the different forms of resistance/survival presented in the readings?
- 5) How do you understand your own work and academic experience in this context?

September 17: Interdisciplinarity I

Reading: Chariandy, *Soucouyant*

Resources: Dobson and Chariandy, "Spirits of Elsewhere Past"
Kantock and Chariandy interview

Assignment: Two pages of writing to class, as above

In class: Discussion of preliminary bibliography

September 24: Interdisciplinarity II

Readings: McGregor, "Traditional Knowledge: Considerations"
Underhill et al, "The Coloniality of Modern Water"
Bakker, "Protesting Privatization"
Neimanis, "Imagining Water in the Anthropocene"
Kambic, "Urban Water Visibility in Los Angeles"
Buchs et al, "Challenging the Ecological Economics of Water"
Do Nascimento, "Rain, Rain, Go Away"

Listening: Simpson, "Theory of Ice"

Resource: *Water Alternatives*

Assignment: Reading reflection to class

Notes: Preliminary bibliography due September 27 (eClass)

PhESSA Tri-council peer review workshop 12:45 pm

October 1: Intersectionality?

Readings: Combahee River Collective Statement
Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex"
Clark, "Red Intersectionality"
Amorim-Maia et al, "Intersectional Climate Justice"
Kafer, "Accessible Futures, Future Coalitions"
Puar, "I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess"
Ahmed, "Being in Question"

Resources: Intersectional Environmentalist website
An Intersectional Feminist Housing Agenda for Canada
Caring for Change

Assignment: Reading reflection to class
In class: Discussion of comprehensives: fields, lists, outputs

October 8: Epistemology

Readings: Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy"
Collins, "Black Feminist Epistemology"
Haraway, "Situated Knowledges"
Spivak, "Global Marx"
Brenner and Schmid, "Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban"
Collado-Ruano and Sarmiento, "Ecological Economics Foundations"
Ben-Moshe, "Dis-epistemologies of Abolition"

Resource: Grosfoguel, "The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities"

Assignment: Reading reflection to class
In class: Discussion of program plan format and requirements
Note: SSHRC applications due today

October 15: No class (Reading Week)

October 22: Methodology

Readings: Kanngieser and Todd, "From Environmental Case Study"
Reece and Edwards, "Critical Collaboration"
Oliveira, "A Methodological Framework"
Dominguez and Cammarota, "The Arc of Transformation"
Springgay, "Conditions of Feltness"
Davis et al, "Innovating Methodologies for Examining Gentrification"
Brannelly and Barnes, "Caring, Knowing, and Making a Difference"

Resource: *Jane Finch Community Research Partnership Principles*

Assignment: Reading reflection to class
Note: Draft program plan due October 25 (eClass)

October 29: Justice

Readings: Whyte, "Too Late for Indigenous Climate Justice"
Opperman, "The Need for a Black Feminist Climate Justice"
Wilkins and Datchoua-Tirvaudey, "Researching Climate Justice"
McKee, "Divergent Visions"
Soja, "Building a Spatial Theory of Justice"
Williams, "Care-full Justice in the City"
Ross and Solinger, "Reproductive Justice in the 21st Century"

Resources: <https://transformharm.org/>
Sins Invalid, "Ten Principles of Disability Justice"

Assignment: Reading reflection to class

Note: Workshop on comprehensives strategies and success 12:45 pm

Part II: Selected Topics in Environmental Studies Research

Note: The readings for the weeks of November 19 and November 26 are student-generated. Each student is responsible for assigning two article-length readings for the week in which they will present.

November 5: "It's Just a Dissertation"

Reading: Your choice

Assignment: Please find a York University doctoral dissertation in your general research area, written within the last ten years. Read it, make notes on it, and come to class prepared to present and discuss it using the following questions as guides.

- What is the dissertation about and what is its main argument? What are the major disciplines and fields of the work?
- Can you find a simple statement of the primary research question? How does the chosen theoretical framework/methodology respond to the question?
- What does a dissertation look like? How many chapters, pages, references, tables, images (etc.) are there? What are the chapters?
- Is it a relatively conventional work or does it involve creative or multimedia elements? Is it manuscript-based? (Look at the FGS guidelines for "types of dissertations.")
- Is it well written? Convincingly argued? Do you see any flaws or limitations? Does the author mention any in the conclusion?

- What do the acknowledgements tell you about the author's journey?
- Google the author: Has the work subsequently been published elsewhere as articles or a book? Compare the dissertation with the published work.

York University doctoral dissertations can be found at:

<https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/handle/10315/26310>

FGS doctoral dissertation requirements guidelines can be found at:

<https://www.yorku.ca/gradstudies/students/current-students/thesis-and-dissertation/doctoral-dissertation/>

Please bring your thoughts to class.

November 15 FRIDAY: PhD Research Day in HNES 140

Assignment: Attend PhD Research Day (as much of the day as possible). Choose one panel and write a two-page review of it, submission via eClass.

- What was the topic/theme/organizing question of the panel?
- Briefly reflect on the panel and/or any of the presentations: What stood out as successful? Problematic? Interesting? Relevant to your own work?
- Name and discuss one thing you have learned from this panel about what makes an effective academic presentation.

November 19: Topics TBD (four presenters)

Readings: TBD

November 26: Topics TBD (four presenters)

Readings: TBD

December 3: Reading, Writing, Citing

Readings: Conklin, ed. *How We Write*
Dumit, "How I Read"
Liboiron, "Introduction"

Assignment: One to two pages of writing to class, as above

Note: Revised Program Plan due December 6