

Geography 211

STATE OF THE EARTH

Lectures: 10:00 – 11:00 Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Location: Geography Building, Room 100

Instructor: Dr. Loch T Brown

Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday, 15:00 – 16:00 in Room 123 or by appointment.

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TA: TBA

Course Description and Goals

In the early 21st century, humanity is facing a broad range of environmental problems that, for perhaps the first time in history, are truly global in reach. *State of the Earth* explores both the key drivers and consequences of recent human induced environmental change. Designed to get students thinking both critically and “spatially” about environmental issues, this course broadly assesses the state of the global environment in the early 21st century and explores the key drivers of environmental change. Over the course of the semester we will explore and try to make sense of these global environmental problems through examining them from a uniquely geographic perspective. The inherently holistic and interdisciplinary nature of Geography make it particularly well suited for studying contemporary environmental problems. Among other things, a geographically informed perspective on global issues alerts us to the interconnections and inequalities between different people as well as places, the varied ways that humans utilize and alter the landscapes they occupy, the underlying patterns and processes that shape environmental outcomes, and the critical importance of scale.

Students will be introduced to a number of geographic concepts which, when applied to real world phenomena, can help us to gain a greater understanding of the varied and dynamic world we live in. Key topics we will be covering include environmental philosophy, population pressure, consumption, vital resources, scarcity, degradation, resource conflict, & climate change. Whether or not you go on to take more courses in geography, the concepts and questions raised in this class concerning humanity’s past, current and future trajectories should serve you well throughout the rest of your life.

Format

The course is structured around three compulsory lectures per week and a required reading list. If for any reason you are unable to attend a lecture or seminar, please let me know. You are responsible for catching up on the material that you have missed.

Special Accommodations

Every effort is made to insure that students are able to perform at their best. If you have a documented disability, or any other problem you think may affect your ability to perform well in this class, please see me in the first week of class so that arrangements may be made to accommodate you.

Academic Honesty and Misconduct

In line with university policy, *plagiarism and all other forms of cheating are considered academic crimes*. Never (1) turn in an assignment or essay that you did not write yourself, (2) use any text or images from external sources without properly acknowledging the source (3) turn in an assignment for this class that you previously turned in for another class, or (4) cheat on an assignment or exam. If you do so, it may result in a failing grade for the class, and possible suspension from the university. Please see me before submitting your work if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism. *Anyone caught for*

plagiarism or cheating on course work and exams will be dealt with according to official university rules and regulations regarding academic misconduct.

Required Course Textbooks

Ronald Wright. A Short History of Progress: 2004 Massey Lecture. Anansi: Toronto, 2004. (Also available as audio CDs)

UNEP. GEO 5: Global Environment Outlook. Valleta: United Nations Environment Program, 2012. Available free online as a PDF [\[here\]](#).

Weekly readings, handouts, and/or lecture materials will be given out in class, placed on reserve in the Library, and/or posted on the course website. A lecture and reading schedule will be provided in the second week of class.

Assessment

ASSIGNMENTS AND PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED BY EMAIL UNLESS EXPLICITLY STATED. Grades in the course are based on one essay, one midterm exam, and a final exam. Final grades are calculated according to a weighted average of the exam, papers and tutorials as follows:

Assessment	% of Final Grade
Paper (2000 words)	30%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	40%

Paper: There is one 2000 word paper required for this course. The essay is to be handed in to the instructor at the beginning of lecture on or before the due date. Papers submitted after the first 10 minutes of the lecture period will be considered late. Essay topics will be handed out during the second week of class. Early submission of papers is encouraged. If for any reason you know you will not be able to submit your papers on time, contact me or better yet come see me well before the due date. **All late essays will receive a 10% penalty per day (or part thereof).**

Midterm & Final Exam: The midterm exam will 50 minutes in length and held in class on October 12th. The final exam will be 2.5 hours and held during the regularly scheduled exam period. Exams are designed to test your understanding of the material covered in the course and will draw from lectures, readings, as well as additional materials such as short films shown during class time. Attendance in lectures is critical if you wish to do well on the exams. The final exam will only cover material from the second half of the semester (ie. after October 12th).

Important Dates

September 5th	First Day of Classes
October 8th	Thanksgiving: University closed
October 12th	Midterm Exam
November 11th	Remembrance Day: University closed
November 19th	Essays Due
November 30th	Last Day of Classes
December 5th to 19th	Final Exam Period