ENST 4000 – Seminar in Environmental Studies
Fall 2014

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Seminars: Mondays, 8.30 am – 11.25 am, Loeb A220

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ENST 4000 is the “capstone” course in the Environmental Studies program. It is an opportunity to consolidate, deepen, and apply the knowledges you have developed in other courses and to think through how these knowledges might translate to environmental policy-making, advocacy, activism, research and governance.

This year we will be focusing on the interactions between housing and the environment, with a particular emphasis on the manner in which biophysical and socio-economic aspects of housing have impacts on one another. Housing is an everyday element of peoples’ lives and it is often overlooked as a subject that matters when it comes to environmental issues. In this course, we will use housing as a gateway for exploring a wide variety of concerns that have been tied to the environment, such as consumption, economic development, and socio-environmental programs and policies. Housing also draws our attention to the complexity of environmental issues and the limits of conceptualizing them only in terms of the ecological. Housing raises issues that range from the intimate to the global. Housing allows one to critically engage with issues of property and land tenure, processes of capital accumulation and distribution, urban development and change, international networks of investment, ecological and health impacts of household energy consumption and waste, and our role in globalized consumption processes.

Our goal this year will be to a) understand the political-economic, regulatory, geographic, and historical contexts that give rise to how housing markets matter environmentally in Canada and internationally; b) analyze the various interests shaping housing markets in Canada and elsewhere; and c) understand the key ecological, social, and political impacts of current housing markets and various strategies for mitigating these impacts; and d) come to terms with our own involvements and investments in housing, and possible avenues for progressive change.

Discussion and participation are an important part of this class: be prepared to speak up, share ideas, and ask questions. Students will also be expected to read 30 to 50 pages each week, to undertake research about a specific housing issue, and to discuss their findings with the class.
Students can expect to develop their critical thinking, analytical, research, and writing skills as the course progresses.

### Course Outline

#### September 8: Introduction to the Course

**Introductions, Objectives**

**Required Reading:**

#### September 15: Housing, Capitalism and Environment

**Required Readings:**

**Supplementary Readings:**

#### September 22: Housing and the State

**Required Readings:**
- Guest Blog by Lauren Mandel, green roof designer, author of Eat UP! [http://shar.es/MaM6T](http://shar.es/MaM6T)

**Supplementary Readings:**
- Maria Kaika, 2005, Chapter 4: “Nature as the Urban Uncanny”, *City of Flows: Modernity, Nature and the City*, Routledge, pp. 51-75 or her IJURR 2004 article on same theme

**September 29: Property, Environment and Inequality**

**Required Readings:**

**Supplementary Readings:**

**October 6: Case Study of Housing in Canada and Ottawa: Overview**

**Required Reading:**
- J. David Hulchanski, 2004, *What Factors Shape Canadian Housing Policy? The Intergovernmental Role in Canada’s Housing System*

**October 13 – Holiday**

**October 20 – – Case Study of Housing in Canada and Ottawa: Affordable and ecological? Ottawa area case studies**

**Required Reading:**

**October 27 – Fall Break**
November 3 – Case Study of Housing in Canada and Ottawa: Financial challenges and initiatives

Required Readings:

November 10 – Housing, Ecology and Inequality: Focus on Energy

Required Readings:

Supplementary Reading:

November 17 – Housing Ecology and Inequality: Focus on Water and Sanitation

Required Readings:

November 24 - Human Right to Housing – Assessing and Mitigating Negative Environmental Impacts

Required Readings:

Supplementary Readings:
December 1 - Political Change

Required Readings:
- Chris Gibson, Leley Head, Nick Gill and Gordon Waitt, “Climate change and household dynamics: beyond consumption, unbounding sustainability”, Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 36: 3-8.

Supplementary Readings:

December 8 – Concluding Thoughts
- No Assigned Readings
- Brief, informal presentation of papers

Evaluation

Participation (20%)

Participation is a crucial component of this class. Participation includes attendance, doing thorough and critical readings of the assigned materials, contributing effectively in class discussions, and responding to your peers’ presentations and interventions.

Reading Responses (15%)

Two reading responses must be submitted before the end of term. You are required to submit a reading response on September 15. The second reading response can be submitted on September 29th OR November 17th. It is strongly encouraged that students complete all three reading responses (September 15, September 29, November 17) in which case, the marks of the best two out of three will be recognized.

Responses are due at the beginning of class and will not be accepted late. They should be no more than 2 pages, double spaced, and should provide brief summaries of the readings and your responses to the readings, including questions and concerns you will bring to class that day.
**Project Proposal (25%) ** Due November 3rd at 8.30 am **

A proposal outlining your final assignment topic, approach, and key sources is due on November 3rd. Proposals should include an annotated bibliography with at least 10 sources (minimum 7 academic sources, and minimum 5 sources from the list of required and supplementary course readings) Proposals should be 6-8 pages long. Details will be provided in class.

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT (40%) ** Due December 8 at 8.30 am **

Final assignments must critically assess a Canadian housing initiative or program or policy that takes ‘the environment’ into account in a manner that is presented as being innovative. Your analysis must be based on academic references and must be 3000-4000 words. Useful information about potentially relevant examples are found at:

1. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund (search under ‘housing’):
2. Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation On-Line Library: