



OTTAWA'S URBAN POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Special Topics in the City: Ottawa's Urban Political Ecology

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

GEOG 4023 Winter 2024

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Office hours: Fridays 2:25 - 3:25 or by appointment

I. Course Description:

We often think of the “city” as a human-made jurisdiction filled with office buildings, glass skyscrapers, apartments, traffic jams, smog, bustling people, and occasionally, if we are lucky, pockets of public greenspace. However, this course takes a closer look at Ottawa's urban landscape, delving into how the city's ecology and the material flow of 'natural' resources influence and are influenced by social power dynamics. And yet, thinking of the city as human-made and “unnatural” ignores the critical roles that nonhuman nature and biophysical processes play in sustaining the city. The city is also the species of grass planted in our lawns, the sands mined to make concrete, the gasoline in our cars, the air we breathe, as well as the calories and nutrients embedded in our food that comes from thousands of kilometers away to sustain our living selves. In this class, we will look at these forms of “nature,” as well as who or what decides how these processes will be transformed and utilized in cities like Ottawa

Students will be introduced to “urban political ecology” and deploy concepts to grasp how concealed material resources and provisioning networks contribute to the shaping and reshaping of the city they inhabit. Theoretical readings will be applied to specific field visits in Ottawa, including: the Lemieux Island Water Purification Plant; the Central Experimental Farm; an indigenous walk around downtown; the Rideau Canal; and a microbrewery. By understanding the complexities of Ottawa's urban political ecology, students gain insights into how intertwined social and ecological relations contribute to the challenges and opportunities in contemporary cities.

II. Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the urban political ecology concept and how it helps explain the provisioning of critical resources in the city of Ottawa.
- Understand the historical and contemporary forces that created (and continue to shape) urban landscapes.
- Possess academic research skills, including identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing arguments in peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Possess critical, self-directed reading habits.
- Possess note-taking skills in practical, experiential field settings.

III. Required Texts:

All required readings will be available on Brightspace.

IV. Course calendar:

Week	Date	Location	Topics	Assignments
1	Jan 12	In class CB 2400 11:25-2:25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Introduction • What is Urban Political Ecology? • How to take field notes 	
2	Jan 19	Field Visit 150 Elgin street Meet inside lobby area 12:00 - 1:30 Notes: Dress warm!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Unsettling Ottawa” • Indigenous Walking Tour 	Field notes due 24 hours after visit
3	Jan 26	In class CB 2400 11:25-2:25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief and discussion of “Unsettling Ottawa” • Discussion of the history of the Central Experimental Farm 	1st Reading summary due via email 8pm
4	Feb 2	Field Visit 960 Carling Ave 1:00 - 2:30 Notes: Parking on the left. Visit may be inside and outside. Dress Warm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of and contemporary issues of Ottawa Central Experimental Farm 	Field notes due 24 hours after visit
5	Feb 9	In class CB 2400 11:25-2:25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The making of the Canadian working class • The making of the Rideau Canal 	2nd Reading summary due via email 8pm prior to class
6	Feb 16	Field Visit 1 Canal Ln 12:00 pm Notes: Dress Warm. Parking may be difficult (or expensive). Try to take public transit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking tour of the Rideau Canal 	Field notes due 24 hours after visit
7	Feb 23	Spring break— No Class		

2) Field Notes	10%	24 hours after each field visit
3) 5 Reading Summaries	20%	Ongoing
4) Mid-term “check-in”	10%	Schedule appt. after winter break
5) Field Trip Reflection Paper Outline	6%	April 5
6) Field Trip Reflection Paper	30%	April 12

Nearly half of all class time will be spent conducting field visits. Students are expected to come to each field visit having read the required texts and have prepared several questions ready to ask the person(s) hosting the class.

Late penalties: A late penalty of 5% of the total value of the assignment will be deducted from the grade per day for late work (including weekend days). Extensions will be granted in the case of illness or other emergencies, with appropriate documentation. If you require accommodation for a disability or long-term illness, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible at

Contesting Grades: A student may contest their grade only under the following conditions: i) they have waited at least 24 hours from the time they received their grade, and no later than two weeks. Please do not contact the instructor immediately after receiving a grade; ii) they have read *in detail* all comments and corrections by the instructor; iii) they describe in writing the specific reason(s) why they believe the grade is unjustified. **This must include reference to the assignment instructions, the assignment rubric, as well as the instructor’s comments;** iv) they send this description in a cordial email to the instructor stating their request for a second evaluation. I will respond to the request within an appropriate time frame.

1 - Participation (24%):

Participation is mandatory for each field visit and in-person class.

As this is a fourth-year seminar class students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the weekly content. I will spend some time in class lecturing, but the majority of class time will provide you, the student, with the opportunity to put into words your thoughts about the issues and

concepts presented in the readings, lectures, and field visits. It is also a space where you are free to ask questions to clarify course content and assignment instructions.

Please note there will be no class on:

- Feb 23 (Winter Break)

You will spend a significant amount of time reading, preparing, attending, and engaging in class. As such, participation is worth 24% of your final grade, and attendance is mandatory (2% per class and field visit). Half of this is based solely on attendance (12%). The other half (12%) is based on the quality of your participation during the classes and field visits. I will provide the participation portion of your grade at the end of the term, based on your overall participation. If you are worried about your participation grade or wish to get a sense of how you are doing throughout the term, I suggest you meet with me during office hours.

Please review the participation rubric on Brightspace.

2 - Field Notes (10%):

Students are expected to take hand-written field notes that demonstrate their engagement with the visit. We will spend some time during the first class going through note-taking strategies which should be applied during our field visits. I understand this might be new to some students and you will be graded more for your effort and improvement throughout the term, rather than the “completeness” of your field notes.

Field note submissions will consist of two elements.

- 1) Students will take a picture of their handwritten notes and send the photo(s) of their notes to my email within one day following the field visit.
- 2) Students will spend time typing up their handwritten field notes, filling in blanks, and other information they remember into more readable notes. These do not need to be well-written paragraphs but should be more legible and clearer than their handwritten notes.

See the Field Notes rubric on Brightspace.

3 - Reading Summaries: (20%)

Students will provide reading summaries for each week's **in-class readings** (summaries are not necessary for the field visit dates or the first day of class). The summaries should be between 250 and 500 words and must include the following:

- a) a statement of the author's overall argument *in the student's own words*. The first sentence of each response should begin with "In this article, (Author's last name + year of publication) argues..."
- b) an evaluative analysis of the author(s) argument (what did you think about the author's argument? Did it make you think differently? Did it make sense? What, if anything was missing?)
- c) One or two questions that will stimulate in-class discussion.

For weeks with two or more academic readings, students can select one reading to complete the summary. Please do not select newspaper articles as your reading summaries.

Summaries should be **emailed** to me by **8 pm** on each Thursday before class. This will help me organize class discussion. Also have your summaries available during class (on your computer or a print out).

See the Reading Summaries Rubric on Brightspace.

4 - "Mid-term" check-in (10%)

The "mid-term" check-in is an online, one-on-one discussion about the course content that will last between 10 and 15 minutes. It is not meant to be stressful and does not require any extra studying. I will not ask you to define any terms or pose difficult questions. It is meant to be an academic discussion about the course readings, class discussions, and field visits. I want to hear about what course content interests you the most, what you have learned in the first half of the course, and perhaps what you wish to learn more about in the second half of the course. You can also use this time to clarify any questions you might have about course concepts.

If you have attended classes, participated in site visits, and read the weekly texts, this will be an easy 10% of your grade. The discussion is simply meant to assess your engagement in the course and your ability to have a conversation about the topics covered in the course. Students are responsible for booking an appointment directly with me after Spring break.

5 - Field Visit Reflection Paper Outline (6%)

Your final assignment will be a 2000-word Field Reflection Paper about one of the sites we visited during the term (see below for details). In this paper, you will combine your personal experience, field notes, and academic readings to make an argument about the field site in relation to the theoretical content in the course.

The outline is meant to help you organize this content for your final assignment. We will spend time on the outline during the March 29th class, sketching ideas and thinking through how to make an argument, which course concepts will be useful, and how this might be arranged for your paper. We will be doing this by hand. Please bring a pencil/pen and blank sheets of paper to class. You will submit this hand-written work along with a typed outline that should be no longer than 2 pages long. The outline can include sentences in point form, text boxes or any other visual aid that will help you organize your thoughts.

The outline should include i) an argumentative statement ii) a list of the concepts you intend to use and a working definition (1-2 sentences) for each. iii) a list of 5 academic sources and how you intended to use them in your final paper. iv) an example of how you intend to use your field notes and observations.

The outline will be due on the final day of class. See Rubric on Brightspace for more details.

6- Field Visit Reflection Paper (30%)

The Field Visit Reflection Paper will use course readings, field visit observations and notes to make an argument about a field site that most interests you. You may structure the paper as an research paper, a policy brief, an op-ed, or any other creative form (approved by the instructor). We will devote at least half a class to discussing potential topics and brainstorm potential arguments for this assignment.

The assignment must include the following:

- 1) An **argumentative statement** that relates directly to one of our field visits. For example, if you decided to write about the Central Experimental Farm you could make an argument about the development of high-rise condos (e.g. “No high-rise condo should be build adjacent to the CEF to preserve long-term research experiments) the preservation of the space (“Despite the need for more affordable housing in Ottawa, we cannot let development occur on the CEP”) or the relationship between research and capitalist agriculture (“The CEF must focus on small scale agro-ecological production research to meet the future challenges of Canada’s future food system.”)
- 2) The argument must be framed within **concepts and readings from the class**. Concepts should be clearly defined and connected explicitly to your topic.
- 3) You must make use of **your field notes** in backing up your argument.
- 4) You must include at least **three academic readings outside of class material**, as well as **five other secondary sources** (NGOs, newspapers, government website, etc) to supplement the research presented.

Written papers should be no longer than 2000 words (excluding bibliography) and must be emailed to me prior to April 12, 11:59pm.

See the Rubric on Brightspace for more details.

VI. A Note on Plagiarism

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

VII. Statement on Student Mental Health

As a University student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you.

[You may include the following list or reference this link (<https://carleton.ca/wellness/>):

Emergency Resources (on and off campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

VIII. Requests for Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Informal accommodation due to short-term incapacitation: Please provide the instructor with as much time as possible for any unexpected absence. Absences will be treated on a case by case basis and may require you to request the Self-Declaration for Academic Considerations form (<https://carleton.ca/registrar/wp-content/uploads/self-declaration.pdf>).

Pregnancy obligation: Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form ([click here](#)).

Religious obligation: Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>