

ENVI311 Understanding Environmental Issues



COURSE DELIVERY

Lecture

One 1-hour lecture each week (in person & online)

Workshop

One 2-hour workshop each week

In-class discussions and exercises; make your own mini film documentary on an environmental issue!

This paper examines what we know about particular environmental issues, how knowledge is evolving, and how that knowledge is being utilised (or not) to address these problems. Our approach is holistic – we employ a multi-disciplinary approach to environmental issues by bringing together key insights from both the natural and social sciences. We examine three current environmental topics – each representing a major arena of environmental crisis, contestation and response – using a problem and case-based approach.

Commonly covered modules include:

Climate Change in Mountain Regions

Biodiversity Loss and Human Welfare

Climate Change & The Energy Transition

Coral Reef Degradation

Coastal Hazards

Climate Change and Flooding

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It has become increasingly apparent that research into **environmental issues** which is narrow, and often disciplinary-based, has at best failed to assist and, at worst, may have exacerbated the environmental problem.

An alternative approach, which underpins this paper, is to engage with environmental problems by deliberately bringing together different ways of understanding, different sources of knowledge and different questions about the problem. Correspondingly, we use the following three-part conceptual framework to address each environmental issue:

1. The main insights of scientific knowledge production
2. The political, social and cultural construction and contestation of environmental issues
3. The key mechanisms for influencing change, or for regulation or transformation of the particular crisis.



Assessment

Assessment is 40% internal (on-going throughout the semester) and 60% external (final examination)

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the paper students should be able to:

1. Engage critically with scientific and social-scientific framing of environmental issues
2. Recognise the varied processes by which new knowledge and understanding about environmental issues are developed
3. Understand the means by which people engage in political transformation, intervention strategies, tools for change and policy development

