

Course Syllabus

GESC 290 – Natural Resources Management
Department of Geography & Environmental Studies, Faculty of Science, Waterloo Campus
Winter 2026

Land Acknowledgement

Laurier's Waterloo campus is located on traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishnaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples.

The land that Laurier's Waterloo campus occupies is subject to the Haldimand Proclamation of Oct. 25, 1784, wherein the British set aside territory for the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy: "six miles deep from each side of the [Grand] river beginning at Lake Erie and extending in the proportion to the Head of said river, which them and their posterity are to enjoy forever."

Today, the Six Nations of the Grand River reserve covers less than five percent of the territory promised in the Haldimand Proclamation.

As we gather to study natural resource management, let us be mindful of the ways that extractivist resource regimes fuel and perpetuate the dispossession of Indigenous Nations' lands, lives, and lifeways, including their own practices of attending to the more-than-human world, and let us (re)commit ourselves to dismantling settler colonialism, and supporting Indigenous sovereignty, repatriation, and caretaking of these and all Lands facing ongoing colonization.

Instructor Information

Benjamin Kapron (he/him) | 2C13 (Arts C Wing)

Email: bkapron@wlu.ca

Weekly Office Hours: Wed. 4:15-5:15 PM, 2C13 (Arts C Wing) (in-person) or By Appointment

Lecture Times and Location

Mon. 5:30-6:50 PM, LH 1011 (Lazaridis Hall)

Wed. 5:30-6:50 PM, LH 1011 (Lazaridis Hall)

Format

In-Person

*Note: In case of inclement weather, professor may opt to hold synchronous remote lectures via Zoom, in lieu of in-person lectures. Students are expected to check their emails and the course MyLearningSpace page for updates. At the start of the semester, we will collectively decide on a deadline for the professor to make a decision, each week, regarding whether or not the lecture will proceed in-person. If no details have been posted by this deadline, you are to assume that the lecture is happening in-person as usual.

Course Information

This course explores diverse perspectives on human/environment relationships with a focus on natural resource policy, planning, and management in Canada. Through case studies and hand-on projects, students will examine principles and practices for responsible management and sustainable natural resource systems (e.g. forests, water, wildlife, minerals, and energy).

Pre-requisites: GG101 and GG102, or ES110, or both ES101 and ES102

Exclusions: ES290, GG290

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Assess different perspectives on human/environment relationships and how they influence natural resource management.
- Identify modes of governance and stakeholders involved in natural resource management.
- Understand the histories and contexts of how a variety of natural resources are managed in Canada.
- Critically analyze recent and ongoing developments in natural resource management in Canada.

Course Textbooks and Learning Materials

Required Text: *Organizing Nature: Turning Canada's Ecosystems into Resources* by Alice Cohen and Andrew Biro (2023)

Cost: Paperback: \$36.95 | eBook: \$29.95

Notes: Physical copies are available through Laurier Bookstore;
eBook available through University of Toronto Press at:

<https://utppublishing.com/doi/book/10.3138/9781487594848>

Student Evaluation

Assessment	Weighting	Due Date
Assignment #1: Documentary Review	20%	Sun. Feb. 1, 11:59 PM
Mid-term Exam (in-person; in-class)	20%	Wed. Feb. 11, in class
Assignment #2: Media Analysis	20%	Sun. Mar. 8, 11:59 PM
Assignment #3: "Nation Building Project" Profile	40%	Sun. Apr. 12, 11:59 PM
Total	100%	

Learning Activities, Assignments, Tests, Quizzes and Examinations

Assignment #1: Documentary Review (20%)

Due Sunday, Feb. 1, 11:59 PM

On their own time, students are tasked with watching a documentary film related to a natural resource project in Canada, and how communities—including Indigenous communities—respond to the project. Students will then write a **~500-750 word** review of the documentary, examining it in relation to course content.

Further details will be provided on MyLearningSpace and in class.

Mid-Term Exam (20%)

Wednesday, Feb. 11, in class (5:30-6:50 PM)

Students will complete an in-person, in-class exam, assessing their understanding of course content covered in the first half of the semester.

Further details will be provided on MyLearningSpace and in class.

Assignment #2: Media Analysis (20%)

Due Sunday, Mar. 8, 11:59 PM

Students are tasked with writing a **~500-750 word** paper analyzing a recent news article related to a natural resource project in Canada. Students will examine the article with consideration of course material, discussing—for example—the ecopolitical worldview(s) presented in the article, and what stakeholders are (and are not) considered in the article.

Further details will be provided on MyLearningSpace and in class.

Assignment #3: “Nation Building Project” Profile (40%)

Due Sunday, Apr. 12, 11:59 PM

The federal Mark Carney government is currently pursuing a number of “nation-building projects.” Students are tasked with researching and reporting on one of these projects, in a **~2000 word** paper, examining the project in relation to course concepts and themes, including historic case studies of natural resource projects in Canada.

Further details will be provided on MyLearningSpace and in class.

Note on Referencing: Your submitted work must include **full, accurate, and proper citations**, with both **in-text citations and a Works Cited or Bibliography**. You are welcome to use any reference style of your choice. I recommend using the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL Purdue) resources if you need assistance with formatting your citations (Google “OWL Purdue APA,” “OWL Purdue MLA,” etc.).

Weekly Schedule

Week # and Date	Topic, Theme or Unit of Study	Lesson Outcomes	Readings, Assessments, and Due Dates
Week 1 Jan. 5 & 7	Introduction to Course	Overview of course: assignments, syllabus, etc. Introduction to key course themes and concepts	N/A
Week 2 Jan. 12 & 14	Ecopolitical Worldviews	Overview of different approaches to understanding more-than-human “nature” including resource-focused, sustainable, critical environmental, and Indigenous perspectives.	Required Reading: <i>Organizing Nature</i> , Ch. 1 & 9

Week # and Date	Topic, Theme or Unit of Study	Lesson Outcomes	Readings, Assessments, and Due Dates
Week 3 Jan. 19 & 21	Resourcification of/in Canada	Examination of how land and different aspects of 'nature' become conceptualized as "resources"; particularly focusing on how this process interacts with settler colonialism	Required Reading: <i>Organizing Nature</i> , Ch. 7
Week 4 Jan. 26 & 28	Resource Governance in Canada	Overview of the natural resource governance regime in Canada	Required Reading: Gibson, D. (1973). Constitutional jurisdiction over environmental management in Canada. <i>University of Toronto Law Journal</i> , 23(1), 54-87. https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/utlj23&i=57 Optional/Supplemental Reading: Centre for Constitutional Studies. (2024, October 29). <i>Environmental jurisdiction</i> . https://www.constitutionalstudies.ca/2024/10/environmental-jurisdiction/
Week 5 Feb. 2 & 4	Stakeholders in Natural Resource Management	Examination of different institutions, organizations, and communities involved in natural resource management	Required Reading: <i>Organizing Nature</i> , Ch. 2 Due Date: Sun. Feb. 1, 11:59 PM Assignment #1: Documentary Review
Week 6 Feb. 9	Mid-Term Review	Review of material that students may be tested on in mid-term exam	N/A
Week 6.5 Feb. 11	Mid-Term Exam		
Reading Week (Feb. 16-20)	Reading Week – No Class		
Week 7 Feb. 23 & 25	Fisheries	Examination of fisheries management in Canada, including case studies related to salmon fisheries in British Columbia and the cod fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador	Required Reading: <i>Organizing Nature</i> , Ch. 3

Week # and Date	Topic, Theme or Unit of Study	Lesson Outcomes	Readings, Assessments, and Due Dates
Week 8 Mar. 2 & 4	Forestry	Examination of forestry management in Canada, including case studies related to forestry in New Brunswick and British Columbia	Required Reading: <i>Organizing Nature</i> , Ch. 4
Week 9 Mar. 9 & 11	Fossil Fuels	Examination of fossil fuel management in Canada, including case studies related to the Alberta oil sands / tar sands, and historic coal mining in Nova Scotia	Required Reading: <i>Organizing Nature</i> , Ch. 5 Due Date: Sun. Mar. 8, 11:59 PM Assignment #2: Media Analysis
Week 10 Mar. 16 & 18	Water	Examination of water management in Canada, including case studies related to hydroelectric power generation in British Columbia and Quebec, and drinking water in Indigenous communities	Required Reading: <i>Organizing Nature</i> , Ch. 6
Week 11 Mar. 23 & 25	Resourcification of Life	Further examination of how different parts of “nature” become conceptualized as “resources,” including case studies related to wildlife and aspects of human bodies	Required Reading: <i>Organizing Nature</i> , Ch. 8
Week 12 Mar. 30 & Apr. 1	Wrap-Up	Make up any missed content Discuss Final Assignments Wrap-up Course	Required Reading: N/A Due Date: Sun. Apr. 12, 11:59 PM Assignment #3: “Nation Building Project” Profile

University and Course Policies

- 1. Academic Calendars:** Students are encouraged to review the [Academic Calendar](#) for information regarding all important dates, deadlines, and services available on campus.
- 2. Accessibility:** Contact [Accessible Learning](#) if you require academic accommodations because of a disability. Review the [Registration](#) page for information about intake and documentation requirements. Deadlines: Students are responsible for meeting posted deadlines for registering with Accessible Learning and booking accommodated exams. Accessible Learning cannot guarantee accommodations for requests received after posted deadlines.
- 3. Library Accessibility Services:** The Library offers accessibility services for people with disabilities, including alternate formats or remediation of Library collections and help accessing materials. For information, please visit the [Library Accessibility Hub](#) or email libaccessibility@wlu.ca.

4. **Plagiarism:** Wilfrid Laurier University uses software that can check for plagiarism. If requested to do so by course instructors, students are required to submit their written work in electronic form and have it checked for plagiarism.
5. **Academic Integrity:** Laurier is committed to a culture of integrity within and beyond the classroom. This culture values trustworthiness (e.g., honesty, integrity, reliability), fairness, caring, respect, responsibility and citizenship. Together, we have a shared responsibility to uphold this culture in our academic and non-academic behaviour. The University has a defined policy with respect to academic misconduct. As a Laurier student you are responsible for familiarizing yourself with this policy and the accompanying penalty guidelines, some of which may appear on your transcript if there is a finding of misconduct. The relevant policy can be found at Laurier's [academic integrity](#) website along with resources to educate and support you in upholding a culture of integrity. Ignorance is not a defense.
6. **References / Citations:** All submitted work must include full, accurate, and proper citations, with both in-text citations and a Works Cited or Bibliography. Students are welcome to use any reference style of their choice.
7. **Generative AI:** The use of generative AI is not permitted in this course. Using generative AI to aid in or fully complete your coursework will be considered academic misconduct and Senate Policy 12.2 Student Code of Conduct: Academic Misconduct will be applied.
8. **Intellectual Property:** The educational materials developed for this course, including, but not limited to, lecture notes and slides, handout materials, examinations and assignments, and any materials posted to MyLearningSpace, are the intellectual property of the course instructor. These materials have been developed for student use only and they are not intended for wider dissemination and/or communication outside of a given course. Posting or providing unauthorized audio, video, or textual material of course content to third-party websites violates the instructor's intellectual property rights, and the [Canadian Copyright Act](#). Recording lectures in any way is prohibited in this course unless specific permission has been granted by instructors. Failure to follow these instructions may be in contravention of the university's [Student Non-Academic Code of Conduct](#) and/or [Code of Academic Conduct](#), and will result in appropriate penalties. Participation in this course constitutes an agreement by all parties to abide by the relevant University Policies, and to respect the intellectual property of others during and after their association with Wilfrid Laurier University.
9. **Late Assignment Policy:** Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized 5% per day that the assignment is late. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Course Instructor but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor's letter).
10. **Final Examinations:** Students are strongly urged not to make any commitments (e.g., vacation) during the examination period. Students are required to be available for examinations during the examination periods of all terms in which they register. Refer to the [Handbook on Undergraduate Course Management](#) for more information.

11. Religious and Spiritual Accommodation: The University welcomes students, staff and faculty from a wide range of backgrounds, beliefs and traditions and has a duty to provide accommodation based on creed (religion and spirituality) under the Ontario Human Rights Code. This obligation requires the University to work with students to provide reasonable accommodation when a student's religious observances or spiritual beliefs creates a conflict with their academic schedule. In order for instructors to provide proper accommodations, students have obligations to request accommodations in a timely manner. All policies, procedures, timelines, and request forms are found on Laurier's [Religious and Spiritual Accommodations and Supports](#) webpage.

12. Gender Inclusivity: This course will be held in a respectful and supportive environment for people of all gender identities and expressions. I've received a class roster based on official enrollment information. If you go by a different name, please feel free to let me know. You're also welcome to share your pronouns, if you'd like.

Everyone is expected to refer to classmates using their preferred name and pronouns. If you're comfortable, you're welcome to let the class know how you'd like to be addressed.

The Centre for Student Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (CSEDI) [shares information](#) on updating your name in systems like Zoom, MyLS, and email, along with details on other supports available.

13. Use of Zoom for Instructional Purposes: Wilfrid Laurier University uses a range of technologies to facilitate in-person and remote instruction. Zoom is currently used for remote course delivery, including lectures, seminars, and group office hours, which may be recorded, stored and shared through MyLearningSpace for access by students in the course. Instructors may require that cameras remain on during class sessions to support engagement and participation. Students who wish to use an alternative display name for privacy reasons may do so, provided they have received prior approval from the instructor. If a Zoom session is being recorded, students have the option to turn off their cameras at any time.

14. Recording Synchronous Classes: In cases of inclement weather, synchronous (live) class sessions will be delivered through a university-supported video platform. Steps have been taken to help protect the security of shared information. For details on Zoom and Office365 (including Teams), visit [ICT's Tech Support and Services page](#).

These class sessions may be recorded, including video, audio, and in some cases transcriptions. These recordings will be made available to students in the course in MyLearningSpace for the duration of the term. Recordings may capture your name, image, or voice. By attending live classes, you consent to the collection of this information for the purposes of course delivery and associated course work. You may turn off your camera at any time during a recorded session.

If you have concerns about the use or collection of your personal information in the class, please contact the instructor to identify possible alternatives. To learn more about how Laurier collects, uses, and discloses personal information, see the university's [Notice of Collection, Use, or Disclosure of Personal Information](#).

15. Hawk Walk, the Wellness Centre, Student Supports, and the Student Food Bank:

Multi-campus Resources (provided through Your Students' Union):

- [Student Rights Advisory Committee](mailto:studentsrights@wlu.ca) | studentsrights@wlu.ca | The Student Rights Advisory Committee exists to provide you with information about your rights when it comes to landlord-tenant issues or academic appeals. While in no way legal representation, it can help to inform you about your options to make difficult situations easier to navigate.
- [Empower Me - Mental Health Resources provided by Dialogue](#): Empower Me is a free, 24/7 mental health and well-being service available to undergraduate students all year-round. It offers confidential, multilingual, and inclusive support through professionals in areas such as psychology, psychotherapy, nutrition, financial literacy, career services and more. You can access these services by phone, video, or in-person.
- [The Essentials - Legal Care Program](#): Essentials Legal Care gives students access to certified legal advice for issues like housing, employment, academic disputes, and more. After submitting the Support Form, you can expect a response from legal counsel within 48 business days.

Multi-Campus Resources (provided by the University):

- [Student Wellness Centre](#): The Student Wellness Centre supports your physical, emotional, and mental well-being through a wide range of services. You'll have access to doctors, nurses, counsellors, mental health nurses, dietitians, and sexual health support, all in a safe and welcoming environment. Taking care of your whole self is key to your success, and we're here to help.
- [Dean of Students Office](#): If you're dealing with complex challenges or extenuating circumstances that are impacting your academics, the Student Care and Support team in the Dean of Students' Office can help. They offer coordinated support for situations like hospitalizations, personal or family emergencies, or issues that involve multiple areas of campus. They'll work with you to connect to resources and create a plan for moving forward.
- [Accessible Learning](#): If you're experiencing challenges that affect your learning, Accessible Learning can help. They support students with permanent, temporary, suspected, or ongoing disabilities by creating individualized accommodation plans. These plans adjust tasks, activities, or learning environments to support your access and success. You don't need a diagnosis or documentation to reach out and explore what support may be available to you.
- [Financial Literacy & Money Management](#): Dollars and Sense is Laurier's money management program designed to help students decrease their financial stress and increase their financial wellness. They provide the necessary information, one-on-one financial coaching, resources and tools so that students can make the financial decisions that are right for them.
- [Find Your Support Resource](#): Laurier offers a wide range of mental health resources designed to support both your academic success and personal well-being. We understand that knowing where to begin can feel confusing, but help is available. Every department provides

specialized support, so don't hesitate to contact any office. The staff are here to guide you through your options and help you find the support that best fits your needs.

- [Emergency Services / After-Hours Assistance](#) | wellness@wlu.ca
 - If you're in crisis or need immediate assistance, you can call 911 or Laurier's Special Constable Service at 519.885.3333.
 - For mental health crises, call or text 988, or contact Here 24/7 at 1.844.437.3247

Kitchener/Waterloo Campus Resources:

- **Emergency Response Team** | ert@wlu.ca | The Emergency Response Team provides medical assistance to students on campus. ERT can be booked for on-site event support by filling out the online booking request form on their website.
- **Hawk Walk** | 519.886.3668 | walkw@wlu.ca | Hawk Walk is a volunteer-run safe walk service available every evening. Pairs of volunteers can escort students to and from campus or nearby locations. Visit them on the 2nd floor of the Fred Nichols Campus Centre, next to the Dean of Students Office.
- **Food Bank** | foodbank@wlu.ca | Food Bank provides food parcels to cater to the nutritional and dietary needs of students. All students are eligible to use this service, regardless of circumstance or financial situation. Request a package at:
<https://www.yourstudentsunion.ca/food-bank>

For more information about all the services provided through your Students' Union visit [yourstudentsunion.ca/wellness](https://www.yourstudentsunion.ca/wellness)