

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
College of Social and Applied Human Sciences
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

SOAN*3380 - WINTER 2025
Culture, Society, Nature

Instructor: Karine Gagné
Email: gagnek@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours: by appointment

Time: TBD
Room: TBD

Course Description

What are the common assumptions about the duality of nature and culture? What are the dominant paradigms through which the place of humans in the world is considered? How can qualitative research in various disciplines help us understand the implications of received ideas on the boundary of nature and culture? In this course, we will explore these questions by examining ethnographic studies, sociocultural accounts, theoretical reflections, and ethnographic films. The themes addressed will include the production of environmental knowledge, humans' ethical relationship with nature and with non-human beings, humans' entanglement with various species, and the practices by which the state seeks to tame nature. The topics through which these themes will be explored include conservation politics, pollution and toxicology, life and death, human-animal relationships, climate change, and the Anthropocene. The course will also consider the promises and limitations of the posthuman turn in the social sciences.

Objectives

- Analyze, evaluate and apply anthropological theories to address contemporary, historical, social and global issues;
 - Engage in classical and contemporary scholarly inquiry to identify and address sociological and anthropological questions and issues for academic purposes;
 - Critically reflect on culture, social relations and social structures in order to develop a broader and deeper understanding of social problems;
 - Interpret, use and mobilize historical and contemporary disciplinary knowledge for a variety of audiences;
- Communicate effectively, accurately and professionally, in traditional and innovative written and oral forms;
- Develop and practice intellectual curiosity, analytic, problem-solving, decision-making and listening skills;
 - Demonstrate personal, professional, and academic integrity and ethical reasoning.

Format

This course is designed around asynchronous and synchronous components. The asynchronous sessions will take place on Tuesday and include posting on the discussion board and watching videos and films. After Week 1, the mandatory synchronous session will take place on Thursdays.

Students are expected to participate actively to classroom discussions during the synchronous sessions. This means that students are expected to do the weekly readings and come to class prepared with reflections and questions. Your active participation in the synchronous sessions counts towards 20% of your final grade.

Readings

- All the other readings will be available on CourseLink

Course Requirements and Grades (TENTATIVE/SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

1. In-Class Participation (10%)
2. Weekly posts on the discussion board (22%)
3. Discussant role (6%)
4. Archive of Kindness Project (20%)
5. Presentation on “The Banality of the Anthropocene” (2%)
6. Research Paper Topic Proposal (10%)
7. Final Research Paper - Case Study (30%)