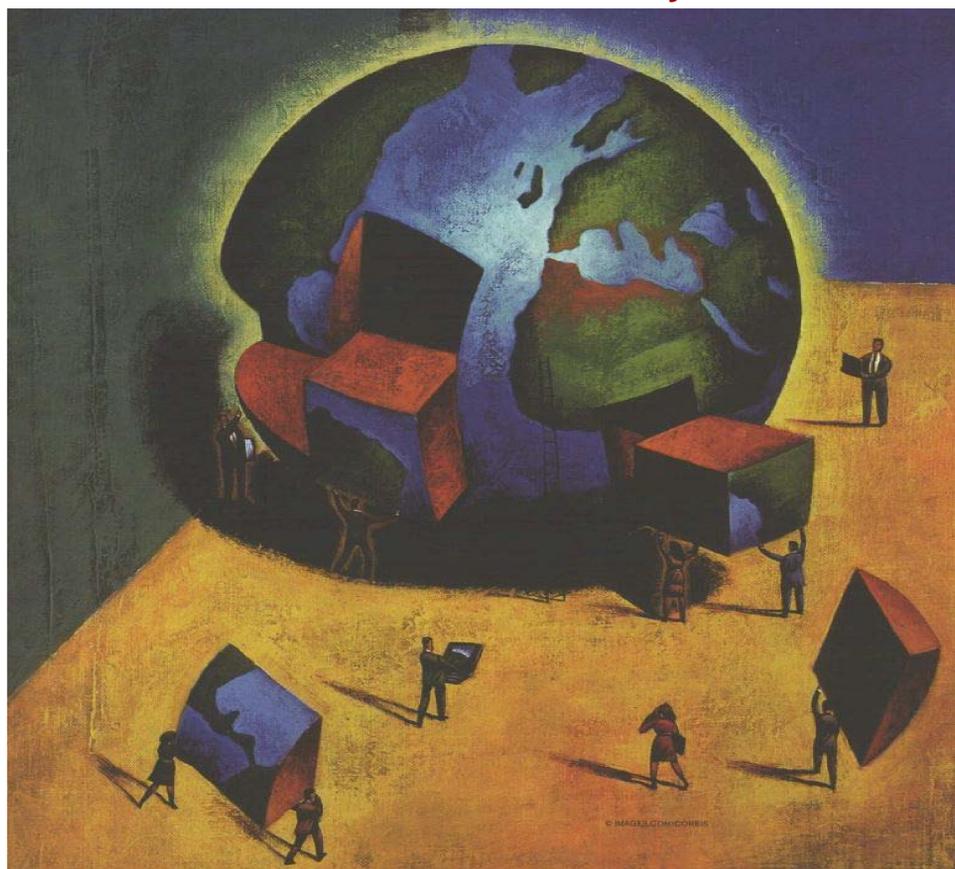


Experiential Learning & the Making of Environmental Leaders

H. Carolyn Peach Brown & Ben Bradshaw

Why a Focus on Environmental Governance?



As exemplified by the case of global warming, solving many of the world's persistent environmental problems requires more than just enhanced scientific knowledge and improved technology – they require new and innovative approaches to governing. Some of this essential need can be met by university graduates who have a solid understanding of environmental governance. The University of Guelph's new environmental governance major, a collaborative effort of the departments of Geography and Political Science, will provide understanding from an interdisciplinary social science perspective through courses like Global Environmental Change and Environmental Policy Formation and Administration.

Coupled with essential exposure to innovative learning, with award-winning faculty across several academic departments, the program prepares students for a career in environmental non-government organizations, and the public or private sector.

Environmental governance refers to the processes and actions through which state and non-state actors, on their own or working together, work to affect positive environmental change.

Postdoctoral Fellow in Geography H. Carolyn Peach Brown, in coordination with Ben Bradshaw, Program Coordinator and Professor of Geography, created the course **Geog*4220: Local Environmental Management**, which Brown taught for one offering. This course is consistent with the design of the new Environmental Governance program, which seeks to enable experiential learning experiences.

Program Coordinator Dr. Ben Bradshaw
bbradsha@uoguelph.ca



GEOG*4220 Local Environmental Management W (3-0) [0.50]

This course explores local environmental management from two perspectives: state-driven (where local government agencies or forums created by governments are used) and non-state driven (where local actors come together in new governance arrangements to undertake environmental management). Through comparing and contrasting these broad perspectives in an experiential learning setting, the course builds understanding of a key trend in environmental governance.

Prerequisite(s): GEOG*3210

The Major includes the experiential learning course GEOG4220. Students completing the major will have the skills and experiences needed to participate effectively in environmental governance.

Experiential Learning Component

- 50% of Grade
- Students, in groups of 3-4, chose a local group to work with based on interest
- Attend one group meeting and Interview group leadership
- Become involved in the work of the group
- Diversity of groups and tasks in the partners
- Students graded on their analysis of the group experience in relation to the lecture material

Lessons Learned

- Volunteer based groups are different to work with than groups run by paid staff
- Semester is a very short period of time to do this work
- More structure is beneficial: local groups already defined projects that students work on
- Open communication/flexibility
- Final Wrap up session for all groups of students for increased learnings
- Student journals or log books are important
- Cap the number of students

Collaborating Local Groups

- Old Growth Forest Project
- Guelph Field Naturalists
- City Green (Cambridge)
- Guelph Waste Management Coalition
- Cambridge Environmental Action Committee
- Wellington County Stewardship Council
- Grand River Environmental Network
- Wellington Water Watchers
- Ontario Farmland Trust
- Speed River Project
- Transition Guelph
- Pollination Guelph
- Trout Unlimited



Students and Community Personal Perspectives

Community: "A fabulous bonus has been continued interest and attendance at our meetings by some of the students! Their energy & well-informed, creative ideas make a great contribution to our work".

Student: "It was amazing to experience people so passionate about an issue that they are willing to give their spare time to a cause".

Student: "Working with local environmental groups gave a better education than class alone as we were able to see first hand what these groups are like".