



Degrowth & Political Ecology (POLS-2950 / SOCI-2450)

Winter Semester 2022-23, Tuesday 6-8.45 PM, Room D176

Instructor: James Magnus-Johnston

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"Nothing so important... as a land ethic is ever 'written'. It arises in the minds of a thinking community"
- Aldo Leopold

Summary: Contemporary social, ecological, and financial challenges might be viewed as symptoms of a deeper spiritual and cultural conflict: separation from one another, our inner-beings, and the land. We will examine adaptive (and maladaptive) governance and lifestyle possibilities that might foster re/connections to people and place. Themes include the appropriate use of technology, the concept of work, traditional knowledge, gift cultures, the social safety net, alternative financial instruments, biological infrastructure, and other examples from around the world.

Note: The course will culminate in a one-day colloquium, organized by its participants, highlighting ideas and initiatives related to ecological stewardship.

Objectives:

1. Become familiar with heterodox approaches to economics and underpinning eco-philosophy
2. Consider warrants for the use of technology and fossil energy
3. Nurture real-world connections to land and community
4. Consider "citizenship" as a way of enacting justice
5. Become aware of the connection between spiritual health and immersion in nature
6. Cultivate a contemplative learning practice through independent reading and study

Deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty: March 7

Reading List

REQUIRED TEXTS (PROVIDED)

Download at postgrowth.ca/poleco

D'Alisa, Giacomo, Federico Demaria, and Giorgos Kallis, eds. *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era*. Routledge, 2015.

Eisenstein, Charles. *Sacred Economics: Money, Gift, & Society in the Age of Transition*. Berkeley, California: Evolver Editions, 2011.

Ibn Khaldūn. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (1377). Translated by Franz Rosenthal. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.

Schumacher, E. F. *Small Is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered: 25 Years Later ... with Commentaries*. Point Roberts, Wash: Hartley & Marks Publishers, 1999.

Assignments and Grades

Commonplace notebook (Feb 11 / Apr 4)	10%
Attendance and Participation (ongoing)	10%
Presentations (ongoing)	20%
Project proposal and bibliography (Mar 18)	20%
Final project (Apr 4)	20%
Colloquium (Apr 4)	20%

Letter	Percentage	GPA	Descriptor
A+	90-100	4.5	Exceptional
A	80-89	4	Excellent
B+	75-79	3.5	Very Good
B	70-74	3	Good
C+	65-69	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-64	2	Adequate
D	50-59	1	Marginal
F	0-49	0	Failure

An “excellent” assignment (A) would display:

1. Original thinking and a superior grasp of the subject matter
2. A highly developed capacity for critical evaluation, synthesis, and creativity
3. Appropriate descriptions and quotations
4. Organizing and subordinating information well; writing and/or speaking clearly
5. The use of research sources using *any* recognized style format. For reference, see: Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. Eighth edition. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018

Commonplace notebook: In order to catalyze conversation for in-class discussions, students will be expected to maintain a notebook that keeps track of direct and indirect connections to course material. In your notebook, you will be expected to record daily experiences, quotations of readings, facts, and summaries of information that you might use throughout the course. You might also record something provocative or interesting from class discussion, a link to relevant online material, a relevant photograph you have taken, or a summary of a presentation, newscast, sermon, speech, or film that you experienced. You can be creative: draw diagrams, write in point form, take pictures, record sounds, or come up with some other brilliant way to share information with the class. Some class time will be designated for free writing reflections, exercises, and peer evaluation.

Here are some online tools that provide some examples and ideas for record-keeping:

<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Commonplace-Book>

<http://www.marknagelberg.com/creating-a-commonplace-book-with-google-drive/>

Attendance / Participation: To foster more active discussions on class readings, your participation will be graded. You will be graded on the quality and quantity of interaction – that is, not only the volume of interaction, but its quality and consistency. Regular contributions, however, are required. I will partly gauge your attendance by virtue of your use of a peer review form (outlined below). Your participation grades will be posted at the middle and the end of the semester.

Note: When/if the weather cooperates, classes will be held outside or at alternative venues. Destinations won't always be pre-determined.

Presentations: Much of this class draws upon the required reading. Our first exercise will be for you to come up with a reading schedule to designate time outside of class to read; you will be expected to hold yourself accountable to this reading schedule. If helpful, you can arrange peer group reading sessions.

For each reading, students will prepare a presentation that summarizes the main argument of the reading in order to catalyze in-class discussion. Presentations are intended to be substantive, yet conversational. Those performing the presentation will be asked to consider and summarize: the main argument/point; the sub-sections in support of the main argument/point; the implications and conclusion.

Please also provide a critical analysis, including a series of questions to engage discussion. Consider whether or not there was a problem with the author's argument. Is there something that wasn't considered? Questions should lead the class to defend/critique the reading and may be posed throughout the presentation or at the end of it. Be sure to sign up early for your timeslot. *Note that a portion of your grade will be provided by your peers, but that peer reviews are accepted only as recommendations to the instructor. Final grades will be vetted and adjusted by the instructor.*

Essay/speech proposal + Annotated bibliography: In preparation for your final work and eventual class colloquium participation, you will be expected to identify a topic of interest relatively early in the course. For this proposal, you are expected to identify a problem and pose a research question, which will inform the scope of your research (related to economics, political ecology, energy/environmental policy, land use, or citizenship). Your annotated bibliography gives an account of the research that has been undertaken on a given topic. In addition to bibliographic data, an annotated bibliography also provides a concise summary of each source and some assessment of its relevance to your paper. Please include 8-10 sources, and ensure that approximately half of them are scholarly journals or books.

Final essay / speech: Write a 1500-word essay or speech dealing with an issue related to the course material, with adequate coverage (or defence) of a contrary position. Your final product will be evaluated on its appraisal of the issue, its quality of argument, and the topic's relevance to the subject matter covered in the course. Following the work you will have undertaken in your proposal, your paper must interrogate the problem and prescribe potential solutions. The essay will be used as the basis for your participation in a final colloquium, in which you will participate in a panel discussion with other participants.

Class colloquium: In lieu of a final exam, you will be expected to participate in a student-led final colloquium. Students will be expected to organize and participate in a round-table discussion, in which you will discuss the contents of your final paper. Your contribution to this will be peer-reviewed through a web-based form.

Peer grading: *A number of assignments will be peer-reviewed using a web-based form; grades and feedback will be “crowdsourced” and recommended to the instructor (the instructor reserves the right to adjust grades up or down). Peer-reviewed assignments include presentations and final colloquium participation.*

Policies

Final grades: Grades submitted by instructors become final only after they are vetted by the Dean’s Council. That process occurs early in January for fall semester grades and early in May for winter semester grades.

Academic integrity: *Academic Integrity—All material referred to in any assignment MUST be appropriately referenced. Plagiarism is a serious matter. Students should be aware of CMU Academic Policies, particularly those regarding academic misconduct (plagiarism and cheating), which apply to all University courses. These are detailed on CMU’s [website](#) and in the CMU Calendar. If you still have questions about appropriate referencing and what plagiarism is, a useful tutorial can be found [here](#). For more information on CMU policies regarding grades, academic misconduct, appeals, and other matters, please see CMU’s *Academic Calendar*.*

Accessibility: CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loepky, Coordinator of Accessibility Programs at sloepky@cmu.ca or 204.487.3300 x.340. In recognition of individuals with asthma, allergies and severe environmental/chemical sensitivities, CMU is striving to become a scent-free campus. Students, staff and guests are asked to refrain from wearing fragrances and scented personal care products at CMU. This includes perfumes, colognes, aftershave and scented hair products. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by those affected.

Academic support services: Student studying, tutoring, and the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) program are offered to CMU students free of charge in the Marpeck Mezzanine.

Counselling: University students face many challenges and at times may benefit from having a trained professional to talk to. There are qualified counsellors at CMU who volunteer their services free of charge to students on the CMU campus. Students wishing to book an appointment with a counsellor are asked to contact the North Side Receptionist at 204.487.3300 or info@cmu.ca. Confidentiality is maintained at all times. The counselling office is located at C365 (north side) and is free for CMU students.

Course Schedule

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Topic		D'Alisa et al	Schumacher	Eisenstein	Khaldun	Add-ons
Jan	7	Class 1: Introduction to the Course and the Concept of Degrowth	1-8	1	1-2	1 James MJ
	14	Class 2: The Role of the State: Capitalism and Autonomy	9-11	3	3-4	2
	21	Class 3: Social Cohesion: Care, and Conviviality	14-15	5	5-6	3 Jay, Leung
	28	Class 4: Economic Factors, Commodification, and Commons	12-13	6	7-8	4 Latouche I/II
Feb	4	Class 5: Cultural change vs. Growth + Dematerialization	16-17	7	9-10	5 Leopold
	11	Class 6: Decline: Disaster Pedagogy, and Entropy (book due!)	18-21	8	11-12	6 Burch (Edu)
	25	Class 7: Growth, Happiness, and New Imaginaries	22-25	9-10	13-14	
Mar	4	Class 8: Energy, EROI, and simplicity	26-30	11	15-16	Tverberg; Hall/Day
	14	Class 9: Subsistence: Back-to-the-landers, Basic Income	31-33	12	17	Alexander; Burch (Tech)
	11	Class 10: Debt and Alternative Structures	34-36	15-16	18-19	
	18	Class 11: Resistance: Eco-communities (proposal due!)	37-38	17-18	20-21	Graeber
	25	Class 12: Other Ways and Experiments	39-47	19	22-23	Korten; Weber
Apr	1	Colloquium				
Final paper and commonplace book due						