Great Themes in the Humanities

Radical Hope in Feverish Times

What in the (feverish) world is going on, and where in the world can we find points of light in the darkness?

Basic info

Instructor:

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Consultation hours:

- Tuesdays 10:30-11:00 open 'tea time,' Renaissance Café, AQ ground floor, Burnaby campus
- Tuesdays 2:30-3:30, AQ6197, Burnaby campus
- Fridays 10:00-12:00 by appointment, Zoom
- Other times by appointment

Appointments:
Book via e-mail writing "HUM 360 Consultation" in Subject line!

Class meetings:
Tuesdays 11:30am–2:20pm, WMC 3250, Burnaby campus

Brief Course Description

The world seems to have grown feverish. This can be taken both literally and metaphorically, as we live through the hottest years on record, which scientists tell us are indicative of the global climate change they have predicted for decades. Meanwhile, familiar coordinates are destabilized by dramatically increased migration pressures, conflicts over land and resources with the potential for geopolitical confrontations, a resurgence of authoritarian politics, and the continuing potential for viral outbreaks and ecological calamities. On top of all this are the unpredictable technological changes associated with artificial intelligence, disinformation, and the 'post-truth' condition.

In the midst of this 'polycrisis,' what are the potentials for collective action toward positive change? If governments and social institutions seem incapable of addressing these challenges, creative activists working at multiple scales – 'on the ground' in local communities around the world, in the arts and in media, and in international venues where alliances and networks are built and negotiated – continue to pursue the promise of a more socially just and ecologically viable world. What can we learn from previous periods of turbulence and the forms of cultural creativity that emerged from them? Where can we find points of light in the darkness?

The goal of this course will be to identify, articulate, and where possible to connect with, the most promising strands of work toward **eco-social reconciliation**. Intended to suggest a simultaneous reconciliation *between* social groups and between human society and its *ecological* contexts, this term can be a placeholder for others, which we will explore in the course.

The '**hope'** in our title is not intended to be a facile optimism, but a creative, empowering impulse. Creative hope comes from the active effort to find and seize opportunities for shaping a better world than the one being handed to us. It is a *radical* hope (*radic-, radix* is Latin for 'root') because it identifies and removes existing obstructions toward the flourishing of human and nonhuman life in its beauty and diversity. It reverses the reduction of humans to mobile laborers and consumers, and of the world to resource and commodity. To that end, we will explore the work of artists, critical thinkers, digital activists, and communities responding to the challenges of war, authoritarianism, disaster, and climate change in ways that build the possibilities for hopeful, collaborative, and richly more-than-human futures.

Together, we will ask: what are the forms of social, ecological, media, and arts-based activism that address these problems most directly, at local or global scales? What are the critical leverage points at which we could apply our energies to contribute toward such positive change? What are the potential points of connection – in public discourse, mass and social media, and organizational alliance – where these leverage points could be made visible, audible, and evident? Are there movements or communities that embody worthy alternatives, including utopian or 'ecotopian' experiments that might represent the 'prefigurative politics' of a more promising future? How can we, as members of a university community, citizens of a large west coast metropolis, and participants in media and other social networks, contribute to this future-crafting? And how might we learn from previous times of turbulence and creative social transformation?

Given how rapidly the global situation is changing, we will not presume any ready-made answers to these questions. The course will instead set out to be an **open and collective exploration of possibilities**. We will balance a map of possibilities, as set out in this syllabus, with an emergent process whereby unexpected deviations may take us in original and creative directions. We will also incorporate a series of concurrent **webinars** featuring international guests speaking on the topics of our readings and discussions. In addition to reading and research, students will engage in conversation as well as applied and creative projects in the pursuit of more viable futures.

Learning objectives

Students successfully completing this course can expect to have gained the following:

1. Broad exposure to global social and ecological challenges and radical proposals for addressing those challenges;
2. A basic understanding of major theories of social change, as found in fields including cultural and media studies, communication studies, political theory, and the sociology of social movements;
3. A working understanding of diverse perspectives on contemporary controversies over the ethical and political implications of digital information technologies, including artificial intelligence;
4. An extended experience in applying relevant theoretical perspectives to the critical analysis of a select activist initiative, group, or community;
5. An opportunity to apply relevant theoretical perspectives to a creative, advocacy, or service project related to course themes;
6. And practice in critical thinking, reading, writing, researching, analysis, and presentation (verbal and/or audio-visual) appropriate to an upper-level university Humanities course. (Please see Appendix 2.)

Class Format

The class will be run primarily as a seminar, with class discussions supported by short lectures, and readings and research complemented by critical reflection on cultural, activist, media, and/or policy initiatives, and by applied projects incorporating media, arts, activism, and/or service learning. Three class hours will be supplemented by one hour of viewing or other audio-visual work per week. Course content will be driven by theoretical readings, which we will explore in connection to issues at large in the world, e.g. climate change and climate action, racial and environmental justice, public responses to environmental and political developments, media information campaigns and anti-disinformation efforts, open-source intelligence projects, et al. Additionally, we will incorporate a series of **online public expert panel-webinars**, organized through the SFU Institute for the Humanities and the J. S. Woodsworth Chair in the Humanities, to take place during class three times during the term (see Course Outline).

Readings

Students should expect an average of 50 pages of reading material, of varying difficulty, per week, in addition to listening and video viewing. Most, with a few exceptions, will be made available in Canvas. The following books are recommended to be obtained for reading and consultation. Both are available in electronic format from SFU libraries.

- Stefania Barca, *Forces of Reproduction: Notes for a Counter-Hegemonic Anthropocene* (Cambridge U. Press, 2020)
- Luke Martell, *Alternative Societies: For a Pluralist Socialism* (Bristol University Press, 2023)

We will also build a small library of online resources including podcasts, online news and analysis sites, and recommended reading selections. Please see Appendix 1 for a bibliography of recommended work connected to the themes of the course.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

The following will be the standard expectations for this course, with points equaling % of your grade. "Adj." means that grade adjustments can be made; see details below. Depending on class size and other factors, I will be open to additional exceptions and variations to account for different learning styles, competing obligations, time conflicts, et al. These should be requested in writing by the end of the **third week** of classes. For details on how your work will be graded, please see "Grading policy" in the Appendix (back section of the syllabus).

Attendance & Participation	Active presence in seminar & online lab; includes sharing "found objects"	10
Reading Responses	5 short responses (300+ words or creative equivalent); due Mondays 6 pm	10
Class Discussant	Lead discussion once; provide commentary & collective exercise	10
Midterm Quiz	In-class (Week 6)	15 (adj.)
Final Exam	Scheduled after classes	20 (adj.)
Project & Paper	Proposal (2), Presentation (8), Draft (5), Final Paper (20).	35
Optional Applied Project	Creative/advocacy project in place of up to 25 pts from exams/paper.	0–35
	Total:	100 points

Flexibility

- You may request adjustments (alternate formats, point weighting shifts, etc.) by end of Week 3
- If you do poorly on the midterm, its weight can shift to the final exam
- Optional applied (creative or community-based) group project can replace part of final exam and/or paper requirements.

1A. Attendance & participation (10 pts.)

To do well in this course, you will need to attend all classes and keep up with the readings and assignments. Most classes will introduce new materials and provide background and context for the week's readings. If you need to miss a class or a deadline, please let me know in advance, and follow up with other students to see what you missed.

"**Found objects**": We will regularly set aside time for sharing "found objects" relevant to the course. These can be articles, memes, video clips, photos, or physical objects students have come across in their monitoring of real-world media related events that connect to course themes. These can be shared directly or through online links and introduced with a brief commentary (1–2 minutes). You are required to do this at least **once**, but additional sharing of insightful and relevant objects will add to your participation grade.

1B. Reading responses (10 pts.)

You are asked to write **5 reading responses**, of 300 words or more (or equivalent in audio-visual format) across the semester, in weeks of your course *except the week in which you serve as a Discussant.* Specific questions or prompts may be provided to guide your responses.

- Responses are due by **Monday 6 pm** (the evening before Tuesday class) so discussants can review them.
- Each response should demonstrate engagement with themes connecting *all* of the week's required readings.
- Creative responses are welcome: short podcasts, zines, visual reflections, speculative vignettes, etc.
- You may submit **responses-to-responses** (200+ words each). Two of these count as one full response.

Each submission = 1 pt. for on-time submission (0.5 if late but before class). At semester's end, your responses will also be given a quality/depth grade out of 5. Please see Grading Scheme described in the Appendix.

1C. Class discussant (10 pts.)

Each student will serve as a **discussant** once, individually or in pairs (depending on class size). Modeled after conference discussants, your role is to:

1. research background and context for the readings (using scholarly sources, e.g. SFU library databases),
2. review students' reading responses,
3. provide a **5–10 min commentary** highlighting key stakes in the readings and responses and offering new angles,
4. conclude with at least one **question or exercise** for the class.

Discussants may also lead a short collective activity (mapping, breakout, creative provocation). Please request extra time in advance if you'd like to extend your exercise.

2. In-class midterm quiz & final exam (35 pts.)

These will be opportunities to provide written evidence of your participation in this class, your reading of course materials and in-depth engagement with course topics, questions, and themes.

- **Midterm Quiz (Week 6, Oct. 21, 15 pts):** 1 hour, in-class, w/ multiple-choice and short-answer questions.
- **Final Exam (date scheduled by registrar, 20 pts.):** 10 pts. will be similar to quiz, and 10 pts. will be an essay question requiring synthesis of course themes.

Sliding scale: If you perform poorly on the midterm, part or all of its weight may shift to the final. A weak final may be supplemented by a brief oral exam (within 2 days of receiving grade) to raise your grade by up to one letter.

3a. Activism Analysis Project & Paper (35 pts.)

Students will research, present in class, and produce a written analysis of an activist group, organization, or initiative that exemplifies "radical hope for feverish times." Work may be done individually or in pairs.

Components:

- **Proposal (2 pts.), due Oct. 10**: A 1–2 pages, including (a) name of the subject group or initiative, (b) description of the specifics to be examined, (c) analytical approach (i.e., what theoretical perspectives or questions you will bring to your analysis), (d) proposed date for your in-class presentation, and (e) annotated bibliography of at least 8 print or online informational sources, specifying how/why they are relevant and how you will use them.
- **First draft of paper (5 pts.), due Nov. 18**: This should include a complete (in-progress) Introduction and part of the Analysis (which may be in outline form), as well as a Bibliography and "process statement" (see below) including work done so far, left to do, etc.. The more you provide, the more feedback you will receive.
- **Class Presentation (8 pts.)**: 10–12 minute presentation, including visuals/audio, to be scheduled between weeks 9 and 11. These should be well-crafted, well-researched, and responding to class themes. Evaluation will be based on research, substance, and relevance to class (4 pts.), organization and delivery (2 pts.), and quality of visuals or other materials used (2 pts.).
- **Profile & analysis paper (20 pts.), due Dec. 10**: 2200–2500 words (individual) or 3500–4000 words (pair).* Detailed and thorough scholarly analysis of the subject using one or more analytical perspectives introduced in the course. Please include:

  (a) **Introduction**: introduces the topic, analytical methodology, and summary of available relevant literature;
  (b) **Analysis**: in-depth analysis of the organization, group, or initiative as a form of social, political, and/or environmental action or advocacy from one or more critical perspectives related to the course;
  (c) **Bibliography**: full bibliographic details on all sources used, in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (it is up to you to ensure that you have found the best and most relevant sources on your topic);
  (d) **Process Statement**: step-by-step description of how you went about researching your topic, sources and people consulted, main search queries used, obstacles and how you addressed them, etc. All use of AI tools should be specified (see "Artificial intelligence" in Appendix 2, section 5).

  *If doing this for less than 20 pts. (see #4 below), take 3000 words off for every 5 pt. reduction (e.g., 1600–1900 words for 10 pts.).

  Evaluation will be based on quality and depth of research, showing good understanding of current literature, relevance of your argument, and contextualization within class themes (1/2 of grade); presentation and support of your thesis, clarity and coherence of argumentation (1/4); and writing quality, formatting, citations, and appropriate acknowledgments (1/4).

4. Optional: Applied Project (0 to 35 pts.)

Students may elect to pursue a group project in place of part or all of the final exam (10 or 20 pts.) and/or part or all of the Activism Analysis Project/Paper. This may be a creative arts project, advocacy/activism project, media/informational project (podcast, audio-visual essay, zine, digital storytelling, etc.), or service-learning project conducted with a community partner. The goal is to apply course ideas/concepts and methods/strategies toward a critical interventionist praxis around an issue of current concern. Components will include:

- **Draft proposal (1 pt.), due Oct. 3**: 1–2 paragraph description of theme, medium/venue/format, list of group members, and any experience, skills, resources, or community/organizational connections you will be drawing on. If you have two or more options you are considering, please briefly describe each as well as any pros/cons associated with them.

- **Full proposal (3 pts.), due Oct. 17**: provides details on specific activities, partners and relationships developed with them, a timeline, rationale in terms of course themes, and relevant literature and resources.
- **Progress report (1 pt.), due Nov. 7**: provides details about progress, challenges encountered and how being addressed, and a timeline for remainder of the project.
- **Class presentation (5 pts.), in weeks 9 through 11**: 10-12 minutes with visuals/audio. Describe activities and results and assess them in terms of critical perspectives from course. Evaluation will be based on quality of applied work (and of work with outside partners) (2 pts.), research/substance and course relevance (1 pt.), organization and delivery (1 pt.), and quality of visuals or other materials (1 pt.).
- **Implementation (10–15 pts.):** Evaluation will be based on how well you have implemented your goals, quality of the work done, and ethical interaction with outside individuals, community, or organizational groups. Grade value will be based on the size of the project and effort involved.
- **Individual report (0–10 pts.), due Dec. 10**: This should describe the specifics of what you did, including roles within the group, relationship with outside groups, and relevant documentation (including references as appropriate). Collectively written materials can be included, but each student should submit their own report, which is required in order to receive a project grade. If you are doing this in place of the Activism Analysis Project & Paper (for 10 pts.), then the report should be written in scholarly format, with detailed background information, analysis/self-evaluation of the work done, bibliography, and process statement. Group work will be graded accordingly.

Key Deadlines

- **Sept 16:** Suggested first reading response
- **Sept 23:** Deadline to request evaluation variations
- **Oct 3:** Optional Applied Project draft proposal due
- **Oct 10:** Activism Analysis proposal due
- **Oct 17:** Optional Applied Project full proposal due
- **Oct 21: In-class Midterm Exam (1 hr.)**
- **Nov 7:** Optional Applied Project progress report due
- **Nov 18:** Draft of Activism Paper due
- **Nov 18–Dec 2 (Weeks 11–13):** Activism & applied project presentations
- **Dec 2:** Final class & closing circle
- **Dec 10:** Final Activism Paper & Applied Project report due
- **Final Exam (TBA):** During exam period

CLASS SCHEDULE

Important note: This schedule is tentative and likely to change. Actual reading and viewing assignments will be posted in Canvas.

Please note that weekly themes will be introduced in class the previous week, with themes "straddling" between one week and the next.

1. Feverish times: perspectives on the present

Week 1 (Sept 9): Course introduction. Crisis? What crisis?

Week 2 (Sept 16): Naming the present: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, or what?

- **Reading**: Stefania Barca, *Forces of Reproduction: Notes for a Counter-Hegemonic Anthropocene* (~60pp); Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene" (~4pp)
- **Viewing**: *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch* (2018, 87m, outside class)
- **Activity**: Collective crisis mapping of 'fevers of our time'

Week 3 (Sept 23): The information world disorder

- **Reading**: Ulises Mejias and Nick Couldry, excerpts from *Data Grab: The New Colonialism of Big Tech and How to Fight Back* (pp 1-21, 205-241); Kyle Chayka, "Techno-Fascism Comes to America" (~6pp)
- **Viewing**: *The Social Dilemma* (2020, 94m, outside class)
- **Activity**: Analysis of media feeds for disinformation, echo chambers, algorithmic shaping, etc.

Week 4 (Sept 30): **National Day of Truth & Reconciliation**

- No class; no readings

Week 5 (Oct 7): Indigenous perspectives: Survivance & revitalization

- **Reading**: Kyle Whyte, "Our ancestors' dystopia now" (~8pp); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, excerpts from *As We Have Always Done* (~40pp)
- **Viewing**: *Awake: A Dream from Standing Rock* (2017, 84m, outside class)
- **Activity**: Reflection on "survivance" as distinct from survival or resistance, personal starting points as well as possibilities for solidarity and allyship
- **Webinar #1** with Eglée Zent, Cease Wyss, Chief Rueben George

Week 6 (Oct 14): Black & Global South perspectives

- **Reading**: Excerpts from Achille Mbembe, *The Earthly Community* (~30pp); Alexis Pauline Gumbs, excerpts from *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (~15pp)
- **Viewing**: *The Great Green Wall* (2019, 90m, outside class)
- **Activity**: Dialogue circles comparing Global South vs. Global North framings of crisis, blind spots

Week 7 (Oct 21): Shadow places & sacrifice zones

- **Reading**: Shadow Places Network, "A Manifesto of Shadow Places," https://www.shadowplaces.net/ manifesto (~16pp); Adrian Ivakhiv, "Chernobyl, Risk, & the Inter-Zone of the Anthropocene" (~10pp)
- **Viewing**: *Neptune Frost* (2021, 110m, outside class)
- **Activity**: Group mapping of "shadow places" connected to students' own consumption (rare earths, energy, food); exploration of sensory ethnographies & creativity as hope/despair work

Week 8 (Oct 28): Capitalism & its alternatives: is another world possible?

- **Reading**: Paul Bowles, "How to Think About Capitalism" (~ 6 pp); Natasha Hakimi Zapata, excerpts from *Another World is Possible* and/or Lara Monticelli, excerpts from *The Future is Now* (~30pp)
- **Viewing**: *This Changes Everything* (2015, 89m)
- **Activity**: Mapping and analysis of capitalism(s): what is it and what *isn't* it? Who says? What are its tendencies, potentials, constraints, and possibilities for change and transformation?

II. Futures in the making: prefigurative politics & radical hope

Week 9 (Nov 4): Resurgence in the Global South

- **Reading**: Arturo Escobar, "Thinking-feeling with the Earth" (~20pp); Jorge Marcone, "The Stone Guests" (~7pp); selected excerpts from Stephen Hunt, *Ecological Solidarity and the Kurdish Freedom Movement* and/or A. Pomarico & N. Oleynikov, *When the Roots Start Moving: Resonating with Zapatismo* (~30pp)
- **Viewing**: *What is the Rojava Revolution?* (2014, 23m); *The Communes of Rojava Six Years On* (2024, 50m)
- **Activity**: Comparative analysis workshop: Buen Vivir, African animism, Kurdish case — what shared "eco-social reconciliation" principles emerge from these cases? Project development & peer workshops
- **Webinar #2** with Debbie Bookchin and Brian Tokar

Week 10 (Nov 11): Thanksgiving Day

- No class; no readings

Week 11 (Nov 18): Toward alternative economies

- **Reading**: Luke Martell, from *Alternative Societies,* pp. 1–51, 112-155.
- **Viewing**: *Demain (Tomorrow)* (2017, 118m, assigned excerpts)
- **Activity**: Systems mapping & visioning workshops on select crises (climate, housing, food, addiction, information); Student presentations

Week 12 (Nov 25): Bioregionalism & ecotopia: What's possible?

- **Reading**: Luke Martell, chapter 3, "Utopianism & Its Critics," *Alternative Societies*, pp. 93-110; Joshua Lockyer and James Veteto, "Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages," in *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia,* pp. 6-19; annie ross, "Indigenous Bioregionalisms", *Canadian Geographer* (2019), 553-571. And read one of: Suryamayi Aswini Clarence-Smith, "Prefiguration and Utopia: The Auroville Experiment"; Jilly Traganou, "The Paradox of the Commons: The Spatial Politics of Prefiguration in the Case of Christiania Freetown."
- **Viewing**: *Demain (Tomorrow)* (2017, 118m, assigned excerpts)
- **Activity**: Student presentations

Week 13 (Dec 2): Conclusions: Hope against hope

- **Reading**: John Holloway, excerpts from *Hope in Hopeless Times.*
- **Activity**: Student presentations
- **Webinar #3** with John Holloway and Katherine Gibson

APPENDIX 1 - RESOURCES

SUGGESTED BACKGROUND READING, BY TOPIC

For students who wish to explore beyond weekly required readings, or for paper and project ideas…

Anthropocene & Environmental Humanities

- Stefania Barca, *Forces of Reproduction: Notes for a Counter-Hegemonic Anthropocene* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2020)
- Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena, and Feifei Zhou. *Field Guide to the Patchy Anthropocene: The New Nature* (Stanford University Press, 2024)
- Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz. *The Shock of the Anthropocene* (Verso, 2016)
- Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016)

Indigenous Thought, Survivance, & Resurgence

- Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017)
- Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (Verso, 2019)
- Robyn Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* (Milkweed, 2015)

Radical Hope, Prefigurative Politics, & Utopian Imaginaries

- Angela Kallhoff and Eva Liedauer, eds., *Greentopia: Utopian Thought in the Anthropocene* (Springer, 2024)
- Lara Monticelli, ed. *The Future is Now: An Introduction to Prefigurative Politics* (Bristol University Press, 2022)
- Paul Raekstad and Sofa Saio Gradin, *Prefigurative Politics: Building Tomorrow Today* (Wiley, 2019)
- John Holloway, *Hope in Hopeless Times* (Pluto Press, 2022)

Eco-Social Futures: Postcapitalist Economies, Agro-Ecologies, Bioregional Visions

- J. K. Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron, and Stephen Healy, *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013)
- Molly Wallace and David Carruthers. *Perma/Culture: Imagining Alternatives in an Age of Crisis* (Routledge, 2017)
- Joshua Lockyer and James R. Veteto, eds., *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages* (Berghahn, 2013)
- William K. Carroll, *Refusing Ecocide: From Fossil Capitalism to a Liveable World* (Routeldge, 2025)
- Kali Akuno & Ajamu Nangwaya, eds. *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi* (Daraja Press, 2017)
- Robert Thayer, *LifePlace: Bioregional Thought and Practice* (University of California Press, 2003)

Eco-Social Justice Movements & Activism

- Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, et al, *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (Tulika, 2019)
- Brian Tokar and Tamra Gilbertson, eds. *Climate Justice and Community Renewal: Resistance and Grassroots Solutions* (Routledge, 2020)
- Max Haiven & Alex Khasnabish, *Radical Imagination: Social Movements in the Age of Austerity* (Zed, 2014)
- Stephen Hunt, ed., *Ecological Solidarity and the Kurdish Freedom Movement* (Lexington, 2021)
- Bruno Latour and Nikolaj Schultz, *On the Emergence of an Ecological Class: A Memo* (Polity, 2022)
- The Commons Social Change Library — https://commonslibrary.org/

Media, Information Disorder, & Disinformation

- Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias. *Data Grab: The New Colonialism of Big Tech* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2024)
- Lee C. Bollinger and Geoffrey R. Stone, eds., *Social Media, Freedom of Speech, and the Future of our Democracy* (Oxford U. Press, 2022)
- Ben Tarnoff, *Internet for the People: The Fight for Our Digital Future* (Verso, 2022)
- Philip N. Howard, *Lie Machines* (Yale University Press, 2020)
- Pomerantsev, Peter. *This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality* (Public Affairs, 2019) Safiya Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression* (NYU Press, 2018)
- Safiya Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression* (NYU Press, 2018)

ECO-SOCIAL INITIATIVES & COMMUNITIES

*This list is intended to offer a range of communities, movements, and experiments in "radical hope" and eco-social reconciliation. Students may select from these for their papers or projects, or propose others. Those in **bold** are especially recommended.*

Autonomous / liberation / Indigenous revitalization movements

- **Rojava** (Northern Syria) — Experimenting in *democratic confederalism* inspired by Murray Bookchin's social ecology, Rojava emphasizes gender equality, ecological sustainability, and grassroots democracy—even while under wartime siege. Rich material exists in academic and activist sources.
- **Zapatista Communities** (Chiapas, Mexico) — Semi-autonomous Indigenous communities practicing grassroots democracy, agroecology, and resistance to neoliberalism since their 1994 uprising. They combine traditional practices with new models of education, agroecology, and health care.
- Kanatsiohareke (New York, USA) — Haudenosaunee cultural revitalization community.
- Buen Vivir Communities (Ecuador & Bolivia) — Indigenous post-extractivist ways of living.

Eco-justice direct action communities, climate camps, & Indigenous land encampments

- **Standing Rock Encampment** (North Dakota, USA) — 2016–17 #NoDAPL encampments united Indigenous water protectors with global allies against the Dakota Access Pipeline. A powerful case of survivance, solidarity, and resistance against extractivism.
- **Ende Gelände** (Germany) — Mass climate justice movement known for occupying coal mines and infrastructure. Temporary encampments blend direct action with care and solidarity.
- Idle No More (Canada) — Indigenous-led ecological and social justice movement.
- Unist'ot'en Camp (Wet'suwet'en territory, Canada) — Indigenous-led resistance camp defending land from pipelines.
- Fairy Creek Blockade (Vancouver Island, Canada) — Forest defense encampment against logging.
- Mapuche Resistance (Chile & Argentina) — Indigenous land and forest defense movements.
- Mauna Kea Protectors (Hawai'i, USA) — Opposition to telescope construction on sacred mountain.
- Extinction Rebellion Encampments (global) — Nonviolent civil disobedience for climate justice.
- Climate Camps (Europe, UK, etc.) — Pop-up communities for protest and education.

Solidarity economies, urban experiments, anarchist enclaves, & 'free cultural spaces'

- **Barcelona en Comú** (Spain) — Municipalist political platform that won control of Barcelona's city council in 2015. Promotes participatory democracy, feminist politics, and ecological urban policies.
- **Cooperation Jackson** (Mississippi, USA) — Black-led cooperative economy initiative.
- **Christiania** (Copenhagen, Denmark) — "Free town" established in 1971 on abandoned military land, known for communal self-governance, arts, and alternative urban culture.
- Mondragón Cooperatives (Basque Country, Spain) — Large federation of worker-owned cooperatives, rooted in principles of participatory/economic democracy.

- Recuperated Factories (Argentina) — Since Argentina's 2001 crisis, workers have occupied and self-managed hundreds of factories. These "empresas recuperadas" show how communities can reclaim production and create alternatives to capitalist collapse.
- Ruigoord (Amsterdam, Netherlands) — Anarchist "free cultural space" with arts and ecological activism.
- Metelkova (Ljubljana, Slovenia) — Autonomous cultural and political center.
- Exarchia (Athens, Greece) — Neighborhood with strong anarchist and solidarity networks.
- Curitiba (Brazil) — Pioneering eco-urban planning and transit systems.
- Seoul's Sharing City (South Korea) — Municipal program fostering collaborative economies.
- Cascina Cuccagna (Milan, Italy) — Urban farm and cultural hub.

Local/bioregional economies, agro-ecologies, postcapitalist visions

- **Transition Towns Network** (global; origin: Totnes, UK) — Grassroots initiative begun in 2006 to build local resilience in the face of climate change and peak oil. Now a global network of communities experimenting with energy, food, and cooperative economies.
- Cascadia Bioregion (Pacific Northwest, USA/Canada) — movement for ecological & cultural bioregionalism.
- Appalachian Transition Initiative (USA) — community-based post-coal futures.
- Sarvodaya Shramadana (Sri Lanka) — Buddhist-inspired village-scale development rooted in ecological context.
- Cooperation Jackson (Mississippi, USA) — Black-led cooperative, land trust, and eco-social justice.
- Recuperated Factories (Argentina) — worker self-management post-2001.
- Via Campesina (Global) — international peasant movement advancing food sovereignty.
- Navdanya (India) — Vandana Shiva's agroecology and seed sovereignty initiative.
- Cuba's Organopónicos (Havana, Cuba) — urban organic farming since the 1990s "Special Period."
- MST (Landless Workers' Movement, Brazil) — agroecology + land reform.
- Roșia Montană (Romania) — Community resisting gold mining, building alternatives.
- Forest Gardening Projects (UK & US) — e.g. Martin Crawford's Agroforestry Research Trust (UK).
- Sekem (Egypt) — biodynamic agriculture + education + community.
- Eco-Kibbutzim (Israel) — Communal life adapted toward sustainability.
- New School of Social Economy (Thessaloniki, Greece) — Training for cooperative alternatives.

Intentional Communities & Ecovillages

- **Auroville** (India) — Founded in 1968 as an international township for "human unity," Auroville experiments with cooperative living, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and yoga-based spirituality. Offers lessons in both utopian aspirations and practical tensions.
- **Findhorn Ecovillage** (Scotland, UK) — Pioneering ecovillage, started in 1962, integrating spirituality and sustainability and known for its gardens and ecological education. Has faced governance and financial crises, but its legacy endures as a model of intentional community.
- Damanhur (Italy) — Large intentional community founded on spiritual & artistic principles that has evolved into a multi-village eco-community.
- The Farm (Tennessee, USA) — Influential countercultural commune whose membership peaked at around 1500 in the late 1970s, known for anti-nuclear and anti-hunger activism, women's health and midwifery.
- Tamera Peace Research & Education Centre (Portugal) — "Healing biotope" with ecological and social experiments.
- ZEGG (Germany) — Intentional community focused on ecology, relationships, and culture.
- EcoVillage at Ithaca (New York, USA) — Cohousing and sustainability project.
- Ethiopian Green Monasteries — Ancient monastic forests as biodiversity sanctuaries.
- Buddhist Eco-Temples (Thailand, Sri Lanka) — Religious centers practicing forest conservation.

Digital Commons & Peer-to-Peer Networks

- Wikipedia (global) — A commons-based knowledge platform.
- Mastodon / Fediverse (global) — Decentralized social networks.
- Platform Cooperatives (global) — Digital platforms owned and run by users/workers.

APPENDIX 2 - COURSE POLICIES

1. GRADING

Grades in this course will follow this standard model:

A+ = 95-100	A = 90-94.9	A- = 85-89.9
B+ = 80-84.9	B = 75-79.9	B- = 70-74.9
C+ = 65-69.9	C = 60-64.9	C- = 55-59.9
	D = 50-54.9	F = below 50

That said, with the goal of providing you with an easily understandable assessment of your performance in the class, my overall grading policy is straightforward:

If you do all the things you're asked* to do in the course, you will normally get a 'B'. If you do them especially well—with rigor, insight, and effective expression—you will get an 'A'.**

Exceptions to this rule will be noted.

***Regarding what you're "asked to do"**: The expectations are outlined either in the syllabus or in assignment instructions. If you mess up on a few little things (e.g., miss a class, hand in a couple of assignments late, do poorly on a quiz or written assignment) and this appears to be inordinately affecting your grade, let me know and I will adjust it. (You can also let me know these things in a final self-evaluation, which you are welcome to provide within one week after the final class in the semester.) But if these appear to be a pattern, then your grade will be affected negatively.

****Regarding "rigor, insight, and effective expression"**: I will assess these using models I have developed over 30+ years of grading student work as well as reading, writing, editing, and reviewing scholarly and professional writing. (Please see writing policy, below.) I will provide feedback where possible, though this may depend on the size of the class and other time constraints. If you need clarity on anything in particular, please talk to me about it. Note that these qualitative criteria do not extend to quantitatively assessed work such as quizzes, correct-answer exams, number of reading responses submitted (where these are required), etc., but I will attempt to follow them in designing such work.

With that in mind, if your goal is to get a different grade — for instance, a 'C 'or a passing 'D' — I recommend that you calculate which assignments or course expectations you can 'let go' (if any) to achieve your target grade. If you are uncertain about grading or wish you propose some deviation from the norm, you are also welcome to propose an individual '**work contract** 'for your performance in the course. This should be submitted to me **within the first 2 or 3 weeks of classes**, so that I can provide feedback and we can arrive at an agreement well before most of the assignments and expectations are due.

2. ABSENCES

Classroom learning and discussion is important to this class, so classes should not be missed except for illness, emergencies, or religious holidays. Please see "Attendance and Participation," above. If you have to miss a class, please ask another student for assistance in catching up on the material.

3. RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

SFU respects students 'right to have their religious practices accommodated (with some exceptions). Students wishing to be excused from class participation, exams, or assignment deadlines during their religious holidays should submit a documented list of such holidays **by the end of the second full week of classes**. In cases where any class, exam, or assignment is missed for this reason, it is up to the student to request a make-up date, additional assignment time, or other accommodation as appropriate. I will do my best to honour your requests.

4. WRITING SUBMISSIONS

If you are submitting work in paper format or as Word documents or PDFs, I would like to request that it be typed in a common font style (such as Times New Roman or Arial), 11- or 12-point in size, with at least 1-1/2 line spacing, and 1" margins for comments; that pages be numbered and stapled together; and that your name be included on the first page. Please spell-check and proofread your work, and please use inclusive language where appropriate (i.e. be conscious of your use of gendered pronouns and referents, using "people" or "humanity" instead of "man", "he or she" or "they" instead of simply "he," and so on). Late work is subject to penalties, with grades dropping half a letter grade each day your work is late unless you have a valid medical excuse or receive an extension from me beforehand. I will do my best to read all the assignments soon after they are turned in and try to return them to you within two weeks.

5. ACADEMIC HONESTY: COLLABORATION, PLAGIARISM, & 'AI'

Collaboration: You are encouraged to work with others in the class on your assignments, sharing resources and ideas and helping each other with direction, focus, clarity, and personal support. Collaborative networking is an important skill for most professions and I welcome it in this class. At the same time, SFU's commitment to academic honesty will be followed. This means that unless otherwise stated, all written assignments should be your own.

Academic honesty: Academic honesty is a foundational pillar of all scholarship. In order to be useful, academic work requires honesty and openness about its own making, providing maximal credit for sources so that it can be properly verified, evaluated, and added to. When it hides its sources, it is deceptive; this makes it unreliable and a kind of "pollution" for scholarship. Academic dishonesty and plagiarism – i.e., passing off other people's ideas or work as your own – has not only ruined the individual careers of those who cheat or plagiarize; it can also ruin entire collaborative research efforts, which are the core of scientific and scholarly progress.

Plagiarism: Unless otherwise stated, all written and creative assignments submitted for a grade in this class should be your own. If you work with other students to prepare for an exam, your written answers should be individually constructed, not copied from each other or shared notes. Work that appears to be plagiarized will be given no credit and students will be asked to meet with me to explain the situation. Plagiarism can also be of one's own work if that work is presented as original for more than one course at a time; therefore any work that duplicates or overlaps with work that you are producing for another course should be clearly defined in terms of its originality and contribution for this course. Plagiarism is grounds for academic suspension; please don't do it. Further information on plagiarism can be found at SFU's "Avoiding plagiarism" page: https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/academic-integrity/plagiarism.

Citations: Any scholarly writing in this course (i.e., apart from in-class reflective writing, short reading responses, poetry, et al.) requires proper citation of sources for any ideas or content that are not your own or that don't fall into the category of "common knowledge." This includes books, journals, online articles, e-mails, live presentations, relevant conversations with other people, or any digitally generated (AI) sources.

Generative AI: The use of so-called artificial intelligence – which can range from Google's "AI Overview" search results to content generators like ChatGPT, Rytr, Simplified, Gemini, Sora, Anthropic's Claude, Midjourney, and others – may be allowed for specific purposes in this course, but it also falls under the same rules of academic honesty. AI content today can be both immensely helpful and notoriously unreliable. AI can create perfectly coherent sentences, paragraphs, and essays, which can help you structure your own thinking and writing. It can provide useful feedback as you develop ideas and work on your writing. Being dependent on its "training data" means that it typically conveys biases and misinformation, and frequently invents data (names, sources, et al.) to suit the prompts it is given.

If you use AI for any assignments in this class, you will be required to provide details about how your data was generated: what web site, app, or content generator you used; what search terms or queries you provided; what you cross-checked this data against; and so on. AI generated materials should be considered in the same way as other authors 'materials, with reliability being assessed through scholarly methods, by asking: Do they cite their sources and are those sources, in turn, reliably traceable to expert-reviewed scholarship? Are the sources appropriate to the question at hand?

Aside from the usefulness of AI-generated content, however, your writing skills will only develop if you draft, edit, and improve your own writing. The skill of communicating clearly and coherently across multiple contexts is a skill that cannot be outsourced to other people or content providers. In the end, your ability to excel as a writer, communicator, and scholar will depend on you developing these skills for yourself.

Further information on academic writing, correct citation, paraphrasing and summarizing, etc., can be found at SFU's Academic Integrity and Plagiarism pages; see https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/academic-integrity/plagiarism.

For help with academic writing (and learning and studying), you are encouraged to refer to the Student Learning Commons: https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc. On the essay writing process, see https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writing and https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writing/academic-writing.

6. CLASS USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Unless they are being used for a class activity, cell phones should be **turned off** and put away during class. Laptops may be allowed for class activities, including note-taking, but should not be used for outside activities. I will post lecture slides online, so you need not write down what you see on them. Either way, I recommend paper note taking. If you use a laptop for note-taking, please sit toward the back (or sides) of the class so that your screen does not become a distraction to other students.

7. RESPECTFUL CLASS CONDUCT

In its mission statement, Simon Fraser University professes to be "an open, inclusive university whose foundation is intellectual and academic freedom," and whose scholarship "celebrate[s] discovery, diversity and dialogue." The statement continues by calling SFU "a university where risks can be taken and bold initiatives embraced," and by committing us to "engage all our communities in building a robust and ethical society." (See https://www.sfu.ca/senate-testing/site.offline/2011/0704/S.11-103.pdf.)

Two potentially competing prerogatives stand out in the statement: "inclusiveness" and "diversity" suggest an absolute respect for difference, while "intellectual and academic freedom" might suggest the freedom to think and say whatever one would like. The key to resolving any potential contradiction between these is another term mentioned: "dialogue." It is through dialogue among competing positions that an "ethical society" can be built.

These principles will guide us in the classroom. The issues we will examine in this course may elicit deeply held personal feelings and competing perspectives, and it is important that students feel welcome and safe to express their views on the subjects of our study. Respectful treatment of others and their views is key to this. I will do my best to uphold it in my own behavior, and will expect a similar effort from each student. My goal is for the classroom to be a space where differences of perspective and of identity, including those of ethnic, racial, cultural, economic, religious, gender, and other identifiers, are respected and appreciated. I recognize that this is not always easy. I myself hold strong moral and ethical convictions and commitments that inform my teaching and scholarship, and I try to acknowledge these commitments even as I work to respect others' freedom to arrive at their own. I believe in and uphold the value of the university as a space to support critical and creative thinking, not to impose any particular forms of it.

At the same time, intellectual and academic freedom sometimes elicits statements that may appear contradictory to the respect for differences. The classroom, however, is not a forum for the airing of any views whatsoever. It is a forum for learning about specific topics, and this is best done within a respectful and open-minded setting in which divergent views can be discussed, critically considered, clarified, and evaluated. In seeking a balance between freedom of expression and respect for difference, I have found the following guidelines to be most helpful, and I suggest that we adopt them in our class:
(1) Seek to **understand** other points of view, even if you disagree with them;
(2) Where disagreement or criticism seem warranted, seek to **engage constructively** and to criticize ideas or behaviors (at most) but not the people who hold them;
(3) When in doubt, practice **kindness and civility**.

Disrespect of individuals or groups, such as would create an atmosphere of hostility or fear, should not be tolerated in the classroom. If disrespect arises, students should feel free to "flag" it without fear of retribution. In the end, however, it is in engaging with differences in perspective and expression that we develop our capacity for building the "robust and ethical society" SFU aims to build. Through practicing kindness with each other, we learn how to engage in civil conversation with our peers and to model such conversation in our country and in the world.

8. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY: PROHIBITION ON SHARING ACADEMIC MATERIALS

Students are prohibited from publicly sharing or selling academic materials that they did not author (e.g., course syllabus, outlines or class presentations authored by the professor, practice questions, text from the textbook or other copyrighted class materials). Students are prohibited from sharing assessments (e.g., homework or a take-home examination). These are University policies.

9. CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR

The best way to get in touch with me is by e-mail (aivakhiv@sfu.ca), with a clear and obvious subject line. If you don't hear back by the end of the next day, it may mean that your message has sunk to the bottom of a deep e-mail barrel, so please send a follow-up email with a clear indication ("following up," "2nd attempt," etc.) in the subject line. I get hundreds of emails a day pertaining to multiple classes, research projects, committees, journals, listservs, et al., and on some days I cannot sort through them adequately. If something is urgent, please include "URGENT" in the subject line. Please include all relevant information in the e-mail message, such as anything from past e-mails that you want me to be aware of when I respond.

I will hold regularly scheduled office hours, which will be announced in class. You can schedule a visit during those office hours, or can simply drop in (though if I am meeting with another student, you may have to wait). Additional drop-in hours will also be announced at specific times of the semester.

APPENDIX 3 - HUMANITIES & WRITING

What are the humanities, and why study them?

"The humanities" are commonly taken to be one of two great branches of knowledge, the other being "the sciences." But sometimes they are defined as "the *human* sciences." The division and confusion may come from the German words *Naturwissenschaften*, literally "the natural sciences" or "studies of nature," and *Geisteswissenschaften*, "the human sciences" or "studies of the human spirit." As this suggests, not all languages distinguish between "science" and "study."

So are the humanities *sciences*? It depends on how we define science (and there may be as many ways of doing that as there are sciences) – and on whether they include the *social* sciences (like economics, political science, psychology, and sociology). The latter are sometimes considered to be hybrids of the humanities and the natural sciences. The two main scholarly granting agencies in Canada are the Social Sciences *and* Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). So in Canada at least, we are used to thinking of the humanities as separate from the social sciences. In some other countries, they are all considered "human sciences."

The humanities disciplines certainly involve the *study and understanding* of things *human*: "the human experience," "the products of human culture," "expressions of the human mind," or something like that. These "expressions" include languages, literature, poetry, music, the visual and performing arts, religion, architecture, law, and much more. And the disciplines that study them include history, philosophy, philology (or linguistics), literary studies, media and cultural studies, religious studies, and various combinations and branches of these such as classical studies, art history, or political philosophy. (Whether psychology, the study of the human mind, should be included, or if it is instead a behavioural and therefore "natural" science, is a debate best left to psychologists. Something similar can be said of cultural anthropology, human geography, archaeology, and a range of other fields that make use of humanistic *and* scientific methods.)

What do the humanities offer? As one assessment describes it, "The humanities provide an education that enables an ability to understand and interpret, to judge and appreciate, to argue and agree and to speak and write well. Through engaging with them, students learn to inhabit multiple worlds and viewpoints, to analyse with precision, to communicate with grace and eloquence. The humanities encourage ways of thinking that are not defined by hard and fast rules; they encourage development of innovative solutions; they encourage intuition and creativity and they place a deep value on both imagination and empathy. What the humanities offer is a way of thinking about the world. The humanities and art are about human conditions and experiences beyond numbers and policies" (Davis, "Humanities: The unexpected success story of the twenty-first century," *London Review of Education,* 10.2 (2012), 310).

Is there something that unifies and underpins *all* of the humanities disciplines? As the above suggests, two recurrent features are (1) a focus on *understanding and interpretation* – that is, a concern with how to interpret human cultural expressions, the intentions behind them, and the meanings people ascribe to them, and (2) *critical and multi-perspectival* thinking, which recognizes that humans do not always agree on everything, but that many perspectives on the world have arisen over time, and that these are best understood by considering the specifics of time, place, belief, and circumstance. In other words, humanities scholars study things *contextually* – within their cultural and historical contexts – and *critically*, using the tools of "critical thinking." To do so does not mean that one is "critical" or "dismissive" toward that which one is studying. Quite the opposite: it means that one is aware of its contexts, its historical conditions, and the features that make it comparable to but also different from other phenomena. If this provides a certain *distance* from the object of study (say, a work of art or a style of architecture), it also requires an *intimacy* with that object.

The study of interpretation is sometimes called *hermeneutics* – a reference to the Greek god Hermes, who was said to deliver messages whose meanings were never obvious; they had to be made sense of and interpreted. Interpreting them may require both becoming "close to" the object *and* getting some" distance" from it, and perhaps a roundabout movement between the two. Interpretation is therefore both an art and a science; it takes skill that can be developed through practice. And practice in the humanities builds insight into the human condition.

So, to get back to our question, *why study the humanities?,* one reason is that it makes us better communicators and better interpreters of human behaviour and communication in a diverse world. (This diversity is a reason why the humanities department at SFU is called the Department of *Global* Humanities.) Another reason is that it helps us understand what other people value, what motivates them, and how we might cooperate with them more productively. A third is that it helps us reflect on the questions, concerns, and values that humans have always reflected on and been motivated by. An education in the humanities, broadly speaking, helps us understand what people are capable of – both the "best" and the worst" of human behaviour, culture, and experience – so it equips us better to decide for ourselves how we should live."

Guidelines for scholarly writing

One of the goals of a university education is to equip students to successfully navigate the informational and communicational terrain of contemporary society. Successful communication today, while media-driven, remains grounded in verbal and writing skills. Reading and writing have for centuries constituted the core of education in the humanities, and so it remains central to success in Humanities courses.

In today's world, multiple kinds of writing skill are valued and may be essential for a range of professions. These can include reflective writing, analytical writing, the crafting of persuasive arguments, descriptive reportage, literary narrative, technical report writing, observational journaling, and other forms. They can also range from the generic – as with writing in a "neutral" or "objective" voice following the expectations of a specific medium or profession (e.g., in journalism, law, or medical reports) – to the reflective and deeply personal. The latter may require developing your unique "writer's voice," one that articulates your personal identity, life experience, values and commitments, and so on.

This course will offer opportunities to write in different styles, from the reflective and creative to the scholarly, analytical, and argument-based. Specific assignments may carry different expectations; please note what is expected of any assignment. The requirements for scholarly writing, more specifically, can be boiled down to two: clarity of expression, and detailed documentation of any sources consulted. (For guidance on reflective writing, see this handout: https://www.lib.sfu.ca/system/files/28863/strategies_for_reflective_writing.pdf.)

1) Clarity of expression

There are several questions you should ask yourself when writing a scholarly essay or paper:

- What is your **argument** or **thesis statement**? Every work of scholarship contributes something – an argument, a developed hypothesis or theory, a summary of research observations or of reviewed literature, etc. – to a field or set of fields within which its contribution is relevant. While writing an essay for an undergraduate course is not the same as writing for an academic journal, it requires the same considerations of contribution and relevance. You should be able to boil your contribution into a **thesis statement of one or two sentences**. This is normally presented at the very beginning (e.g., the first paragraph) of an essay or paper.
- How are you **supporting** your argument? What is the data on which you are basing your argument or thesis? How did you arrive at your conclusion? How does this compare with other data, rival arguments or theories, or other perspectives on your topic? Your argument is stronger and more convincing if it accurately and fairly presents any potential counter-arguments or weaknesses. An argument is typically "developed," with the structure of your essay or paper reflecting a certain trajectory of its development (e.g., step 1, step 2, etc., with the steps being organized according to some set of parameters, such as chronology, movement from general questions to specific details, etc.).
- Why or to whom is this **relevant**? Typically, a scholarly argument or thesis contributes to a debate or conversation that is already ongoing. Even if you do not discuss it directly, it is important to frame your argument within that debate or conversation (or the field in which it is taking place) so that your own contribution to it is clear. This is where reference to other literature, or documentation, is especially important.

2) Documentation

Your scholarship will never be entirely original; it always builds on knowledge established through the prior scholarship of many others. **Scholarly writing requires full documentation of the sources of any ideas or content that is not originally yours** (or that is not "common knowledge"). This is because academic work can only be useful if it is clear, honest, and open about its own making, providing maximal credit for sources so that they can be properly verified, evaluated, and added to. When it hides its sources, it is deceptive; this makes it unreliable and a kind of "pollution" for the scholarly endeavor. Passing off other people's ideas or work as your own is called "academic dishonesty" and more specifically "plagiarism." Academic dishonesty and plagiarism have ruined the careers of those who cheat or plagiarize; it can also ruin entire collaborative research efforts, which are the core of scientific and scholarly progress.

To avoid academic dishonesty, scholarly writing should include **proper citation** of sources for all ideas or content that are not yours or that aren't common knowledge. This includes books, journals, online articles, e-mails, classroom materials, live presentations, relevant conversations with other people, or any digitally generated (AI) sources. See SFU's citation and style guide for how to do this: https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/cite-write/citation-style-guides.

On "artificial intelligence"

The use of so-called artificial intelligence – which can range from Google's "AI Overview" search results to content generators like ChatGPT, Rytr, Simplified, and others – may be allowed for specific purposes in this course, but it also falls under the same rules of academic honesty.

AI content today can be both immensely helpful and notoriously unreliable. AI can create perfectly coherent sentences, paragraphs, and essays, which can help you structure your own thinking and writing. Its factual capacities, however, are dependent on the training data found in online sources that are far from reliable.

If you use AI for any assignments in this class, you will be required to provide details about **how your data was generated**: what web site, app, or content generator you used; what **search terms or queries** you provided; how you **cross-checked** this data (against what web sites or other sources); and so on.

AI generated materials should be considered in the same way as other authors 'materials, with reliability being assessed through scholarly methods, by asking:

- Do they cite their sources and can those sources, in turn, be reliably traced to expert-reviewed scholarship? (Have you checked them?)
- If so, are the forms of expertise from which this knowledge is derived appropriate to the question at hand? If not, why should any claims from these sources be considered credible or useful?

Aside from the usefulness of AI-generated content, however, your writing skills will only develop if you draft, edit, and improve your own writing. The skill of communicating clearly and coherently across multiple contexts is a skill that cannot be outsourced to other people or to content providers. In the end, your ability to excel as a writer, communicator, and scholar will depend on you developing these skills for yourself.

On plagiarism

Unless otherwise stated, all written and creative assignments submitted for a grade in this class **should be your own**. If you work with other students to prepare for an exam, your written answers should be individually constructed, not copied from each other or shared notes. Work that appears to be plagiarized will be given **no credit** and students will be asked to meet with me to explain the situation. Plagiarism can also be of **one's own work** if that work is presented as original for more than one course at a time; therefore any work that duplicates or overlaps with work that you are producing for another course should be clearly defined in terms of its originality and contribution for this course. **Plagiarism is grounds for academic suspension**; please don't do it. Further information on plagiarism can be found at SFU's "Avoiding plagiarism" page: https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/academic-integrity/plagiarism.

Further information on academic writing, correct citation, paraphrasing and summarizing, etc., can be found at SFU's Academic Integrity and Plagiarism pages; see https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/academic-integrity/plagiarism.

For help with academic writing (and learning and studying), you are encouraged to refer to the Student Learning Commons: https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc, https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writing , and https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writing/academic-writing

The essay writing process

Writing an essay is not a matter of simply sitting down and writing. It can include multiple stages (some of which overlap) including these:

- **Brainstorming**, i.e., freely generating or collecting ideas without judging them, jotting down whatever comes to you;
- **Discovery/investigation**: looking into your topics, researching them by searching in multiple kinds of sources (see my "Guide to reliable sources" for this course);
- **Prewriting/Free writing**, i.e., developing an idea by writing freely, allowing your thoughts to take you where they will (with your "pen" following);
- **Creating a structure** for your paper;
- **Drafting**, following your structure and filling in details as you go;
- **Collecting citations** – which should occur throughout the process as you find relevant sources;
- **Reviewing, revising, editing**… and then some more: reviewing, revising, editing…
- **Formatting**, completing citations/bibliographies, etc.

At some point it is always useful to have someone else read your work, since you can be so "close to it" that you will not notice basic errors, leaps of logic, et al. We will aim to provide opportunities for peer review on any extended writing assignments in this class.