



UNSW
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

**Arts and
Social Sciences**

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES

ARTS2243

WASTE AND SOCIETY

Session 2, 2013

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COURSE STAFF

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COURSE DETAILS

Welcome! This document provides the relevant introductory material for **ARTS 2243 Waste and Society**, one of a suite of Level Two courses offered within the Environmental Humanities undergraduate program. This course is worth 6UOC.

This course allows a multi-dimensional study of waste. We will consider the philosophy, history, politics, sociology and cultural and environmental implications of the wastes generated by human society. Dimensions and topics include: urban environments and wastes, life cycles of materials, how we make knowledge about waste, the social implications of waste management technologies, war and waste, 'legacy' issues and the 'colonisation of the future' by wastes.

Our waste stream examples will include household wastes, water and sewage, nuclear materials, dead bodies (human and not), wastes from construction, mining, agriculture and the military, e-waste, and the creation of 'wastelands' and contaminated sites.

As we ground our thinking in philosophical and historical context, we will seek out solutions to the generation of wastes and ways to manage wastes, through studying the precautionary principle, environmental justice, international waste conventions and treaties, and regulatory and community responses to waste.

Course structure

There are three key components to this course:

1. **Lectures:** There are ten core lectures in this course, delivered by a range of staff including Stephen Healy, Thom van Dooren, Paul Brown and Eben Kirksey. These lectures will explore specific waste products and problems, from a range of different disciplinary perspectives (weeks 1-10).
2. **Tutorials:** One hour, weekly tutorials are also a core component of this course. *Students are asked to complete the required reading in advance of the tutorial, so that this time can be spent discussing readings in detail (weeks 2-10).*
3. **Creative visioning exercise:** In the final two weeks of this course, group presentations will replace both the lectures and tutorials. These weeks will offer a showcase for your collective discoveries about waste, and your visions for 'waste futures' (weeks 11-12).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Explain the historical, social and cultural context for the production of wastes.
2. Analyze the relationship between technology and society that allows waste streams to be generated.
3. Apply selected disciplinary approaches to the understanding of waste and society; and make a trans-disciplinary synthesis; a 'way of looking' at wastes.
4. Apply upper level skills of critical analysis, problem solving and interpretation, inflected through imaginative and creative approaches.
5. Conduct independent research, individually and in groups, with demonstrated ability to assemble, synthesise and communicate findings and interpretations.

LEARNING AND TEACHING RATIONALE AND STRATEGIES

This will be a blended and open learning environment with students exposed to a variety of teaching methods and conceptual approaches. Students are encouraged to discuss the many issues raised in a respectful and trusting environment: where everyone is listened to and their opinion acknowledged.

Our approach to the topic of waste

If it is left 'taken for granted', waste seems like a normal part of human society. But if its impacts, both social and environmental, are confronted head on, waste is both mystifying and appalling. This course is designed to confront students with the impacts of waste. This provides a step towards an imaginative search for solutions, and imagination will play a large part in the course assignments, as will some of the methodologies of 'future studies'.

Assessment will take a variety of forms, including both conventional formats like an essay and a report, and a more creative 'visioning exercise' in which students will be asked to work in groups to combine disciplinary perspectives, personal reflections and their own imagination to build a picture of a society much more in control of waste. This final exercise can be approached in a variety of different ways. Through this assessment item we hope to move beyond the here and now of practical waste management, to a re-formulation of human values underpinning a different future.

There is a major challenge for students in this course: you will need to keep thinking through the *themes* that arise in all elements of the course, and keep asking yourselves 'what does all this mean?' In other words, we are challenging you to take a reflective and interpretative approach to this course.

HOW LEARNING OUTCOMES WILL BE ACHIEVED

Learning outcome	Achieved through....
Able to explain the historical, social and cultural context for the production of wastes	Theoretical discussions in the lectures and tutorials. Practice achieved through assignments: essay, tutorial presentation, and the final visioning exercise.
Able to analyze the relationship between technology and society that allows waste streams to be generated.	Theoretical discussions in the lectures and tutorials Practice achieved through assignments: essay, tutorial presentation, and the final visioning exercise.
Able to apply selected disciplinary approaches to the understanding of waste and society; and make a trans-disciplinary synthesis, a 'way of looking' at wastes.	Guidance for this provided in lectures and tutorials; supported through the practice which resides in the assignments, especially the essay and the final visioning exercise.
Able to apply upper level skills of critical analysis, problem solving and interpretation, inflected through imaginative creative and visioning approaches.	Self-directed research and all assignments: essay, presentations and visioning exercise. Particularly achieved through the final visioning exercise.
Able to conduct independent research, individually and in groups, with demonstrated ability to assemble, synthesise and communicate findings and interpretations.	Self-directed research and all assignments.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1	Lecturer: Thom van Dooren
Lecture: <i>What is waste?</i> <i>Introduction and course overview</i>	
Required tutorial readings: No tutorial	
Week 2	Lecturer: Thom van Dooren
Lecture: <i>Household waste: The constitution of self and environment</i>	
Required tutorial readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gregson, N., et. al. "Identity, mobility, and the throwaway society" <i>Environment and Planning D: Society and Space</i> 2007, vol. 25, pages 682-7002. Moore, S.A. "The Excess of Modernity: Garbage Politics in Oaxaca, Mexico" <i>The Professional Geographer</i>, 2009, vol. 61.4, pages 426-437	
Week 3	Lecturer: Stephen Healy
Lecture: <i>Urban Water</i>	
Required tutorial readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Hawkins, G. "Shit in Public" <i>Australian Humanities Review</i>, 2004, vol. 31-322. Schmidt, C.W. (2008) "The Yuck Factor. When Disgust Meets Discovery" <i>Environ Health Perspect</i>, 116(12): A524–A527 (available online at: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2599783/).3. Geels, F. (2005) "Co-evolution of Technology and Society: The Transition in Water Supply and Personal Hygiene in the Netherlands (1850-1930) – a Case Study in Multi-Level Perspective", <i>Technology in Society</i>, 27: 363-397.	

Lecture:

Chemical Waste: Hexachlorobenzene and International Conventions

Required tutorial readings:

1. Brown, P.F., "Toxic Waste in our Midst; towards and interdisciplinary analysis" in *Toxic Risk and Governance, special issue Journal of Environmental Management*, 2009, vol. 90, pages 1559-1566
2. Rae, I. and Brown, P.F., "Managing the Intractable: communicative structures for management of HCB and other scheduled wastes" in *Toxic Risk and Governance, special issue Journal of Environmental Management*, 2009, vol. 90, pages 1583-1592
3. James, P, "Taking us for village idiots: Two stories of ethnicity, class and toxic waste from Sydney, Australia", in Washington, S., Goodall, H. and Roser, P. (eds) *Echoes from the Poisoned Well: global memoirs of environmental injustice*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2006, pages 271-284

Recommended biology/environmental management reading:

- Excerpt from the *Stockholm Convention 10th Anniversary – Major Achievements in 10 years, 2011* UNEP: up to p.8 and pp. 32-33)
- Chapple, R. (2012) "Hexachlorobenzene (HCB) "Waste at the Botany Industrial Park, Sydney: A Concise History of Management and Disposal Efforts" (Community Participation and Review Committee: Sydney)
www.oricabotanytransformation.com

Lecture:

E-waste: The lifespans of circulating toxics

Required tutorial readings:

1. Iles, A. "Mapping Environmental Justice in Technology Flows: Computer Waste Impacts in Asia" *Global Environmental Politics*, vol. 4:4, 2004
2. Gabrys, J. "Media in the Dump" in *Digital Rubbish: A Natural History of Electronics*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2011, pages 128-147
Available online at: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.9380304.0001.001>

Week 6**Lecturer: Eben Kirksey****Lecture:***Trash Art***Required tutorial readings:**

1. 'Urbanist': Innovative Artists Who Create Art from Trash: Projected, Recycled and Other Amazing Art: <http://weburbanist.com/2008/06/04/recycled-art-from-trash/>
2. Second reading TBD

Week 7**Lecturer: Aaron Magner/Stephen Healy****Lecture:***University waste: UNSW and beyond***Required tutorial readings:**

1. N. Zhang, I.D. Williams, S. Kemp, N.F. Smith (2011) "Greening Academia: Developing Sustainable Waste Management at Higher Education Institutions," *Waste Management*, 31(7): 1606–1616.
2. UNSW Recycling facilities and processes: see <http://sustainability.unsw.edu.au/recycling/>
3. UNSW Waste Management guidelines: see http://www.ohs.unsw.edu.au/ohs_waste/index.html
4. Student survey materials (also provided via Moodle.)

Week 8**Lecturer: Thom van Dooren****Lecture:***Flesh: Consuming and disposing of bodies***Required tutorial readings:**

1. Plumwood, V. 2008. "Tasteless: Towards a Food-based Approach to Death" *Environmental Values* 17: 323–330
2. Rose, D. 2006. "What if the Angel of History Were a Dog?" *Cultural Studies Review* no. 12 (1).
3. Harris, M. "Preface" in *Grave Matters: A Journey Through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial*, 2007, Scribner, New York, pages 1-6

Week 9**Lecturer: Paul Brown****Lecture:***Nuclear waste and the 'deep future'***Required tutorial readings:**

1. Masco, J., "Radioactive Nation-building in northern New Mexico: a nuclear Maquiladora?", in *The Nuclear Borderlands: the Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006, Chapter 4, pages 160-214
2. Falk, J., Green, J, and Mudd, G, "Australia, Uranium and Nuclear Power", *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, 2006, vol. 63, No. 6, pages 845-858

Recommended biology reading:

- Rabbitt Roff, S. "Residual Radiation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki" *The Lancet*, 1996, Letter, vol. 348 (issue 9027)

Week 10**Lecturer: Stephen Healy****Lecture:***Waste Futures: From Domestication to Vulnerability?***Required tutorial readings:**

1. Murray, R. *Zero Waste*, Greenpeace Environmental Trust, London, 2002, pages 18-30
2. Hird, M.J. (2013) "Waste, Landfills, and an Environmental Ethic of Vulnerability," *Ethics & the Environment*, 18(1): 105-124.

Week 11-12:**Waste Futures 'Laboratory' (Stephen Healy and Thom van Dooren)**

- In the final two weeks of the course we will explore the future of waste across both short and long timescales.
- Working in groups, students will make a presentation for discussion and reflection by the class. This assignment is the finale for the course, and you should approach it as a chance to draw together ideas, themes, your research findings, and your own sense of inquiry. More details will be given in week 6.

COURSE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Student evaluative feedback on this course is welcome and is gathered periodically, using among other means UNSW's Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) process.

Student feedback is taken seriously, and continual improvements are made to the course based in part on such feedback. Significant changes to the course will be communicated to subsequent cohorts of students taking the course.

WEBSITES

These days there are literally thousands of websites which could potentially be useful in your study of waste. How to narrow that down?

As a start, we recommend:

- a) searching the United Nations Environment Program sites on three conventions relevant to wastes: the Basel Convention, the Stockholm Convention and the Rotterdam Convention
- b) visiting the Australian Government's site for the 2010 National Waste Report <http://www.environment.gov.au/wastepolicy/publications/national-waste-report.html>

You should also check BlackBoard for more suggested readings/sources.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment Task	Length	Weight	Due Date
1.) Essay	2,000 words	35%	Week 6 (Wednesday 4 Sept)
2.) Group Project and Presentation	20 minutes	25%	In class, weeks 11 and 12 (15 and 22 October)
3.) Final Report or Essay	2,000 words	40%	Week 13 (Friday 1 November)

Please see the moodle site for this course for more information on assessment.