

Ecological Economics

General Information

Term:	Term and Year
Prerequisites:	GEOG 210 or GEOG 290; or ECON 201 and ECON 203
Credits:	3
Class time:	Thursday 5:45 p.m. - 8:15 p.m
Classroom:	H 557 SGW
Course Website:	https://erikchevrier.ca/course/ecological-economics-fall-2022

Instructor Information

Name:	Erik Chevrier
E-mail:	professor@erikchevrier.ca
Office hours:	Thursday 4:00 – 5:30 PM

IMPORTANT DATES

Last day to register:	Monday, September 19, 2022
Last day to withdraw (refund):	Monday, September 19, 2022
Last day to discontinue (no refund):	Thursday, December 8, 2022
Last day of in-class testing:	Wednesday, November 30, 2022
Final exams:	December 9-22, 2022

Travel arrangements should not be made prior to the posting of the final Exam Schedule.



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Course Overview

This course provides an introduction to economic perspectives on environmental issues. It is designed to study the interplay between the economic sphere and the environment by addressing questions of economic life, such as activities of corporations and states, role of markets, energy and resource use, growth and development, population, food, international trade and financial systems. These questions are explored through alternative economic approaches, among which the tradition of ecological economics is the centrepiece.

Learning Outcomes

Through this course, students should be able to:

- Understand how economics can be used to identify the causes and consequences of environmental problems and offer solutions to address these problems.
- Develop a critical understanding of a plurality of economic approaches in relation to environmental problems.
- Communicate the history and philosophies within the field of ecological economics.
- Use the tools and language of ecological economics to explain contemporary environmental issues and concrete real-world cases.
- Apply diverse economic approaches to imagine and create ethical economic conditions.
- Move beyond understandings of weak sustainability towards more transformative approaches.
- Incorporate social justice and decolonial perspectives in understanding ecological economics.
- Perform action research to incorporate ontological approaches in creating new economic possibilities.
- Understand how to re-embed economies into society and the biosphere.
- Identify planetary boundaries and ecological crises.
- Comprehend degrowth economic perspectives.
- Identify multiple forms of value while understanding how to compare conflicting theories of value.

Instructional Method

This course will be given in-person. I will use a variety of pedagogical styles including lectures, discussions, guest speakers (possibly), field trips (maybe), community service learning and/or experiential learning. Students are expected to read the required text before coming to class. Students will engage with each other through interactive activities and discussions in breakout groups.

Required Course Materials

There is no specific textbook for the course. All of the readings are made available at the Concordia library in e-version and (on a few occasions) in the course reserve if no e-version is available.

Course Content

Course Description

Global capitalism promotes practices that are socially and environmentally harmful. To increase profits, companies externalize social and planetary costs. Classical and neo-classical economists have perpetuated the idea that value is achieved through resource extraction, promoting the idea that human activity is separate from nature – the metabolic rift. Furthermore, traditional economists continue to

promote the idea that economic success occurs when production increases. However, increasing production in a world with planetary limitations is destructive to living organisms.

In this course, students will read and discuss a variety of economic perspectives to understand the causes and consequences of current ecological crises. Students will learn about various political and economic philosophies to better understand how to solve these issues. For example, students will learn about markets, reciprocity, and redistribution as ways to distribute goods and services. They will also learn about political, economic and social spheres to understand the complex intersections of human activity, economic activity and political power. Students will take macro and micro approaches to understand global and local economies. They will also critically evaluate the political/economic role of firms and institutions as well as economic practices, like work, leisure, consumption, energy use, sustainable development, resource use, trade, and waste management. Finally, students will critically reflect on their involvement in these economic practices and learn about ways to solve (or improve) current ecological problems collectively.

In the first part of the course, students will learn about the field of ecological economics. They will learn how to compare/contrast traditional economics with current ecological economic perspectives. Students will learn about the history of economics, the development of ecological economics, and contemporary ecological economic thought. They will address questions like, what is ecological economics? How does it differ from traditional economic approaches? What are current trends in ecological economics? In the second part of the course, students will learn about ecological boundaries, crises and measurement indicators. They will address questions like, what planetary problems are we currently facing? What are the planetary boundaries? How can we measure these boundaries and know whether we are close to a tipping point? In the third part of the course, students will learn about ways to build and strengthen ethical economic practices. Students will ask questions like, how can we re-embed economic systems into social and biological spheres? How can we create ethical economic practices? How can we prioritize values that are positive and not destructive? How can we stop focusing on increasing production to measure economic success?

Throughout the course, students will critically reflect on how they engage with local and global economies. They will also participate in action-research to make ethical interventions to create more ethical economic practices that include social justice, strong sustainability and decolonial perspectives.

Course Schedule

September 8 – Introduction to Course

September 15 – Introduction to Ecological Economics

Required Readings:

Please read two of the following three choices.

Choice 1 – [Brown, P., & Timmerman, P. \(2015\)](#)

[Ecological Economics for the Anthropocene: An Emerging Paradigm](#), Columbia University Press.
[Introduction – The Unfinished Journey of Ecological Economics \(1 – 13\)](#)

Choice 2 – [Brand-Correa, L., Brook, A., Buchs, M., Meier, P., Naik, Y., O’Neill, D. \(2022\)](#)

[Economics for People and Planet – Moving Beyond Neoclassical Paradigm](#), The Lancet Planetary Health, 6, 4, 371 – 379.

Choice 3 – [Røpke, I. \(2020\)](#)

[Econ 101—In Need of a Sustainability Transition](#), 169.

Recommended Readings:

[Kothari, A., Salleh, A., Escobar, A., Demaria, F., Acosta, A. \(2019\)](#)

[Pluriverse A Post Development Dictionary](#), Tulika Books.

[Introduction: Finding Pleuriversal Paths \(xxii – xl\)](#)

[Development and Its Crises: Global Experiences](#)

[- Breaking the Chains of Development \(3 – 5\)](#)

[- Development for the 1% \(6 – 8\)](#)

[- Maldevelopment \(9 – 11\)](#)

[- The Development Project \(12 – 14\)](#)

[- Oceana’s Kastom Ekonomi \(15 – 17\)](#)

[- The Latam American Critique of Development \(18 – 24\)](#)

September 22 – Situating Ecological Economics

Required Readings:

Please read one of the following two choices.

Choice 1 – For students who have little or no knowledge of economic philosophy or history:

[Stanford, J. \(2015\) Economics for Everyone: A Short Guide to the Economics of Capitalism](#), Pluto Press.

The Preliminaries: (15 – 62)

Chapter 1 – The Economy and Economics (15 – 30)

Chapter 2 – Capitalism (31 – 40)

Chapter 3 – Economic History (41 – 51)

Chapter 4 – The Politics of Economics (52 – 62)

Choice 2 – For students who have more advanced knowledge of economic philosophy and history:
Polanyi, K. (1944 & 2001) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Beacon Press (2001 version). (Language bias declaration: this text contains male language biases whereby; people are referred to as Man).

Chapter 4 – Societies and Economic Systems (45 – 58)

Chapter 5 – Evolution of the Market Pattern (59 – 70)

Chapter 6 – The Self-Regulating Market and the Fictitious Commodities: Land, Labour and Money (71 – 80)

September 29 – Current and Future Concerns of Ecological Economics

Required Readings:

[Lundgren, J. \(2022\) *Unity through disunity: Strengths, values, and tensions in the disciplinary discourse of ecological economics*, Ecological Economics, 191.](#)

[Martinez-Alier., Muradian, R. \(2015\) *Handbook of Ecological Economics*, Edward Edgar Publishing Limited.](#)

[Chapter 19 – Looking Forward: Current Concerns and the Future of Ecological Economics.](#)

October 6 –Defining Ecological Economics

Required Readings:

Students will be assigned groups in class 3. Each group will read one of the following chapters.

[Martinez-Alier., Muradian, R. \(2015\) *Handbook of Ecological Economics*, Edward Edgar Publishing Limited.](#)

[Chapter 1 – Taking Stock: The Keystones of Ecological Economics \(1 – 25\)](#)

[Chapter 2 – The Content, Direction and Philosophy of Ecological Economics \(26 – 47\)](#)

[Chapter 3 – Analytical Philosophy and Ecological Economics \(48 – 73\)](#)

[Chapter 4 – Value Deliberation in Ecological Economics \(74 – 99\)](#)

October 13 – Planetary Boundaries and Indicators

Required Readings:

[Angus, I. \(2016\) *Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System*, 2016\)](#)

Chapter 1 – A Second Copernican Revolution (27 – 37)

Chapter 2 – The Great Acceleration (38 – 47)

Chapter 3 – When did the Anthropocene Begin? (48 – 58)

Recommended Readings:

[Steffen, W., Richardson, K., Rockström, J., Cornell, S. E., Fetzer, I., Bennett, E. M., Biggs, R., Carpenter, S. R., de Vries, W., de Wit, C. A., Folke, C., Gerten, D., Heinke, J., Mace, G. M., Persson, L. M., Ramanathan, V., Reyers, B., Sörlin, S. \(2015\) *Planetary Boundaries: Guiding Human Development on a Changing Planet*, 347, 6223.](#)

October 20 – Planetary Boundaries and Indicators (Part 2)

Required Readings:

[Angus, I. \(2016\) Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System, 2016\)](#)

Part 1 – A No-Analog State

Chapter 4 – Tipping Points, Climate Chaos and Planetary Boundaries (59 – 77)

Chapter 5 – First Near-Catastrophe (78 – 88)

Chapter 6 – A New (and Deadly) Climate Regime (89 – 106)

Recommended Readings:

[Brown, P., & Timmerman, P. \(2015\) Ecological Economics for the Anthropocene: An Emerging Paradigm, Columbia University Press.](#)

Chapter 4 – Measurement of Essential Indicators in Ecological Economics (125 – 147)

Chapter 5 – Boundaries and Indicators: Capturing and Measuring Progress Towards an Economy of Right Relationship Constrained by Global Ecological Limits (148 – 189)

October 27 – Re-Embedding Economies

Required Readings:

[Brown, P., & Timmerman, P. \(2015\) Ecological Economics for the Anthropocene: An Emerging Paradigm, Columbia University Press.](#)

Chapter 1 – The Ethics of Re-Embedding Economies in the Real: Case Studies (21 – 65)

Recommended Readings:

Polanyi, K. (1944 – 2001) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Time*, Beacon Press.

November 3 – Bio-Physical Foundations of Social-Economic Systems

Required Readings:

[Melgar-Melgara, R. E., Hall, C. A. S. \(2020\) Why ecological economics needs to return to its roots: The biophysical foundation of socio-economic systems, Ecological Economics, 169.](#)

[Wironen, Michael. B., & Erikson, J. D. \(2020\) A critically modern ecological economics for the Anthropocene, 7, 1.](#)

November 10 – Value and Ecological Economics

Required Readings:

[Pirgmaier, E. \(2021\) The Value of Value Theory for Ecological Economics, Ecological Economics, 179.](#)

Recommended Readings:

Roland, E., Landua, G. (2013) *Regenerative Enterprise: Optimizing for Multi-Capital Abundance.*

Magdoff, F., Foster, J. B. (2011) *What every Environmentalist Needs to Know about Capitalism: a Citizen's Guide to Capitalism and the Environment*, Monthly Review Press.

November 17 – Creating Ethical Economies

Required Readings:

[Gibson-Graham, J.K., & Dombroski. \(2020\) *Handbook of Diverse Economies*, Edward Edgar Publishing Limited.](#)

[Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Handbook of Diverse Economies: Inventories as Ethical Interventions \(1 – 25\)](#)

Recommended Readings:

[Roelvink, G., St. Martin, K., & Gibson-Graham, J., K \(2015\) *Making Other Worlds Possible: Performing Diverse Economies*, University of Minnesota Press.](#)

[Davis, J., Moulton, A., Van Sant, L., Williams, B. \(2019\) *Anthropocene, Capitalocene, ... Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises*, Geography Compass, John Wiley and Sons Ltd.](#)

November 24 – Degrowth

Required Readings:

Fitzpatrick, N., Parrique, T., Cosme, I. (2022) *Exploring Degrowth Policy Proposals: A Systematic Mapping with Thematic Synthesis*, Journal of Cleaner Production, 365.

Recommended Readings:

Schmelzea, M., Vetter, A., Vansintjan, A. (2022) *The Future is Degrowth: A Guide to a World Beyond Capitalism*, Verso.

December 1 – Course wrap up

Evaluation

Participation: The participation grade is based on attendance, involvement in discussions, participation in classroom activities and supplemental tasks.

Blog Posts: Students will write two blogs of about 600 – 1000 words about ecological economics. The first blog post will focus on defining, situating, and/or identifying historical or contemporary trends in ecological economics. The second blog will focus on ecological crises, planetary boundaries, indicators and/or solutions to these problems. Although this is a blog, the information conveyed must come from research, not conjecture. In addition, the blog must contain at least eight reliable, valid, credible sources and reference the course readings. Students with production skills can produce a video or a podcast instead of a blog; however, this must also be approved by me (Erik Chevrier).

Community Service-Learning Project: The objective of this assignment is to give students hands on experience learning about ecological economics by participating with community members trying to create ethical economies and/or fight for social justice. Students will perform an action-based research

project by creating a project and/or participating with an already existing initiative at Concordia University or in the community at large. Students will participate in a group project and submit the report as a group. Students will be evaluated based on the depth of their involvement with the project, clearly reporting the project, and an oral presentation of the project.

Students must form a group; however, they may choose to work on something in a group that already exists and/or create something with like-minded people outside the classroom. Students will form clusters and contribute to the project based on their area of expertise. For example, someone with great research skills could get involved with the research portion of the project, someone with media skills can build media infrastructure, someone with great interpersonal communication skills can be the mobilizer, among other tasks. Students will be evaluated based on the depth of their involvement with the project, their deliverables, clearly reporting their contribution to the project, an oral presentation summarizing their role in the project, and linking the project to the course material.

Action Research Project Proposal: Students will write a proposal for the action research project they want to partake in. Students may participate in a group project and submit the proposal as a group. Students must (1) identify a group to participate with or a project to create, (2) outline a specific timeline for the project, (3) summarize their role in the project, (4) describe how they intend to write their final report, (5) link the topic to class readings and other ecological economic issues.

Name of Assignment	Due Date	% of final grade
Blog 1 – Defining, Situating, Identifying Trends	October 13th	30%
Blog 2 – Ecological Crises and Solutions	November 24th	30%
Action-Research Proposal	October 20th	10%
Action-Research Project	December 1st	25%
Participation	Ongoing	5%

More information on university regulations concerning evaluation can be found [here](#). The grading system is described in [section 16.1.11](#) of the Undergraduate Calendar.

Please note that for 200-level courses, instructors in the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment reserve the right to adjust the final reported grades so that under normal circumstances no more than 25% of students registered in a course receive an outstanding grade (A-, A, A+).

Grading system:

A+	95 - 100	B+	80 – 84.9	C+	67 – 69.9	D+	57 – 59.9	F	0 - 49
A	90 – 94.9	B	75 – 79.9	C	63 – 66.9	D	53 – 56.9	NR	No report
A-	85 – 89.9	B-	70 – 74.9	C-	60 – 62.9	D-	50 – 52.9		

Extraordinary Circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances and pursuant to the Academic Regulations, the University may modify the delivery, content, structure, forum, location and/or evaluation scheme. In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, students will be informed of the changes.

University Regulations

Students should be aware of the following university regulations (see [Undergraduate Calendar](#) for complete details).

- Late Completion of courses with “INC” notations – Procedures and Regulations ([Undergraduate Calendar 16.3.5](#))
- Academic Re-evaluation ([Undergraduate Calendar 16.3.9](#))
- Degree Requirements for BA, BSc, BEd – 24 credit rule and general education requirements for students in degree programs offered by Faculty of Arts & Science ([Undergraduate Calendar 31.003](#))

Class Cancellation

Classes are officially considered cancelled if an instructor is 15 minutes late for a 50-minute class, 20 minutes late for a 75-minute class, or 30 minutes late for longer classes.

Intellectual Property

Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the [Academic Code of Conduct](#) and/or the [Code of Rights and Responsibilities](#). As specified in the [Policy on Intellectual Property](#), the University does not claim any ownership of or interest in any student IP. All university members retain copyright over their work.

Behaviour

All individuals participating in courses are expected to be professional and constructive throughout the course, including in their communications.

Concordia students are subject to the [Code of Rights and Responsibilities](#) which applies both when students are physically and virtually engaged in any University activity, including classes, seminars, meetings, etc. Students engaged in University activities must respect this Code when engaging with any members of the Concordia community, including faculty, staff, and students, whether such interactions are verbal or in writing, face to face or online/virtual. Failing to comply with the Code may result in charges and sanctions, as outlined in the Code.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity means that every student must be honest and accurate in their work. The Academic Code of Conduct includes rules and regulations students must follow. Unacceptable practices include the following

- Copy from ANYWHERE without saying from where it came.
- Omit quotation marks for direct quotations.
- Let another student copy your work and then submit it as his/her own.
- Hand in the same assignment in more than one class without permission.
- Have unauthorized material in an exam, such as cheat sheets, or crib notes. **YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE CAUGHT USING THEM - JUST HAVING THEM WILL GET YOU INTO TROUBLE!**
- Copy from someone else's exam.
- Communicate with another student during an exam by talking or using some form of signals.
- Add or remove pages from an examination booklet or take the booklet out of an exam room.
- Get hold of or steal an exam or assignment answers or questions.
- Write a test or exam for someone else or have someone write it for you.
- Hand in false documents such as medical notes, transcript or record.
- Falsify data or research results.

PLAGIARISM: The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct (see link below) is plagiarism, which the Code defines as "**the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement.**"

This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, such as an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, or a paper or assignment completed by another student. It could be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone. It can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. Plagiarism is not limited to written work. It also applies to oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. In simple words: **DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU OBTAINED IT!**

Take care to inform yourself of the rules, regulations and expectations for academic integrity.

List of Student Services	
Academic Code of Conduct	http://www.concordia.ca/academics/undergraduate/calendar/current/17-10.html
Academic Integrity	http://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity
Access Centre for Students with Disabilities (ACSD)	https://www.concordia.ca/offices/acsd
Advocacy and Support Services	http://www.concordia.ca/offices/advocacy
Campus Services	http://www.concordia.ca/students/campus-services
Conduct on Campus	http://www.concordia.ca/students/campus-services/conduct
Counselling and Psychological Services	http://www.concordia.ca/offices/counselling-psychological-services
Dean of Students' Office	http://www.concordia.ca/offices/dean-students
Financial Aid & Awards Office	http://www.concordia.ca/offices/faao
HOJO (Off Campus Housing and Job Bank)	https://www.concordia.ca/students/housing/off-campus.html
International Students' Office	http://www.concordia.ca/offices/iso
Library Services	http://library.concordia.ca/
Library Citation and Style Guides	http://library.concordia.ca/help/citing/
Ombuds Office	https://www.concordia.ca/offices/ombuds.html
Otsenhákta Student Centre	https://www.concordia.ca/students/otsenhakta.html
Safety and Security	http://www.concordia.ca/students/campus-services/safety-emergency
Sexual Assault Resource Centre	http://www.concordia.ca/students/sexual-assault
Student Academic Services	https://www.concordia.ca/artsci/students/sas.html
Student Health Services	http://www.concordia.ca/students/health
Student Hub	http://concordia.ca/students
Student Success Center	http://www.concordia.ca/students/success