# Course Outline Form: Fall 2015

## General Information

**Course Title:** ENVS\*4390 - Soil Variability and Land Evaluation

**Course Description:** This course integrates formal in-field (including a two-day camp & excursions during orientation week) and laboratory training, with classroom discussions of concepts, to guide independent group projects on the gathering and interpreting of soilscape information. The principal focus is on soil, as a spatially- and temporally-variable product and component of ecosystems; special consideration is given to the factors controlling soil processes, from local to global scales. An examination of methods, for describing and quantifying the distribution of soils, includes survey and sensor-based techniques, in conjunction with data trend analysis and modelling. Students are required to notify the instructor in the preceding Winter semester of their intention to participate.

**Credit Weight:** 1.0

**Academic Department (or campus):** School of Environmental Sciences

**Campus:** Guelph

**Semester Offering:** Fall 2015

**Class Schedule and Location:** Lectures ALEX 124 TTH 10:00 – 11:20

Labs (section 01) ALEX 124 F 9:30 - 10:20

Labs (section 02) ALEX 124 F 10:30 - 11:20

## Instructor Information

**Instructor Name:** Dr. Richard J Heck, P.Ag.

**Instructor Email:** rheck@uoguelph.ca

**Office location and office hours:** ALEX 140; appointments arranged by email

## GTA Information

**GTA Name:** n/a

**GTA Email:** n/a

**GTA office location and office hours**: n/a

## Course Content

### Specific Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to…

1) comprehend the techniques for in-field description of soils and their landscape setting.

2) recognize the major types of landforms and soils in SW Ontario, under both natural and managed ecosystems.

3) understand principal controls on the distribution of soils and dynamics of the dominant processes occurring in them.

4) be acquainted with both traditional and evolving approaches gathering, processing and interpreting soilscape information.

5) use the Canadian System of Soil Classification and recognize the main international systems.

6) apply major national systems/frameworks to evaluate and rate land capability or suitability.

7) working within a group context, collect key characteristics of a focus landscape, then integrate/rationalize with existing land resource information and primary literature.

### Approximate Schedule of Lectures:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Lecture) Date | Topic | Evaluation |
| 1) Sep 15 | 1 Soil and the Pedosphere | Midterm Exam |
| 2) Sep 17 | 2.1 Controls on Soil Variability - Site Factors | Midterm Exam |
| 3) Sep 22 | 2.2 Controls on Soil Variability - Flux Factors | Midterm Exam |
| 4) Sep 24 | 2.3 Controls on Soil Variability - Soil Through Time | Midterm Exam |
| 5) Sep 29 | 2.4 Controls on Soil Variability - Human Impact on Soil | Midterm Exam |
| 6) Oct 1 | 3.1 Soil Development - Gains and Losses | Midterm Exam |
| 7) Oct 6 | 3.2 Soil Development - Translocations and Transformations | Midterm Exam |
| 8) Oct 8 | 3.3 Soil Development - Soil Morphogenesis | Midterm Exam |
| 9) Oct 15 | 3.4 Soil Development - Soil Quality | Midterm Exam |
| 10) Oct 20 | 4.1 Soilscape Inventory - Traditional Soil Survey and Mapping (Legacy Surveys, SLC – CANSIS) | Midterm Exam |
| 11) Oct 22 | 4.2 Soilscape Inventory - Application of Geophysical Techniques (Inversion) | Midterm Exam |
| 12) Oct 27 | 4.3 Soilscape Inventory - Application of Remote Sensing (Systems, Segmentation, Indices) | Midterm Exam |
| 14) Nov 3 | 5.1 Quantifying Soilscape Variability - Conventional Statistics and Geostatistics | Final Exam |
| 15) Nov 5 | 5.2 Quantifying Soilscape Variability - Modelling the Soil Continuum | Final Exam |
| 16) Nov 10 | 6.1 Soil Classification - Basic Concepts | Final Exam |
| 17) Nov 12 | 6.2 Soil Classification - Wetland Soils | Final Exam |
| 18) Nov 17 | 6.3 Soil Classification - Woodland Soils | Final Exam |
| 19) Nov 19 | 6.4 Soil Classification - Grassland Soils | Final Exam |
| 20) Nov 24 | 6.5 Soil Classification - Azonal Soils | Final Exam |
| 21) Nov 26 | 7.1 Land Evaluation Systems - Canada Land Inventory (Ontario Implementation) | Final Exam |
| 22) Dec 1 | 7.2 Land Evaluation Systems - Ecological and Agri-Environmental Systems | Final Exam |
| 23) Dec 3 | 7.3 Land Evaluation Systems - Land Suitability Rating Systems | Final Exam |

### Approximate Schedule of Labs:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Lab) Date | Activity | Due Date | Grade |
| 1) Sep 18 | Airphotos and Satellite Imagery for Soilscape Evaluation - Accessing and interpreting stereo airphotos, ortho airphotos and satellite imagery. | same day | 1% |
| 2) Sep 25 | Digital Elevation Models in Soilscape Evaluation - Accessing digital elevation models and landform segmentation | same day | 1% |
| 3) Oct 2 | Geological Inventory Resources for Soilscape Evaluation - Accessing and interpreting geological spatial data and reports. | same day | 1% |
| 4) Oct 9 | Ecological Inventory Resources for Soilscape Evaluation - Accessing and interpreting ecological spatial data and reports. | same day | 1% |
| 5) Oct 16 | Soil Inventory Resources for Soilscape Evaluation - Accessing and interpreting soil spatial data and reports. | same day | 1% |
| 6) Oct 23 | Land Capability Inventories for Soilscape Evaluation - Accessing and interpreting land capability data and reports. | same day | 1% |

### Course Assignments and Tests:

| **Assignment or Test** | **Due Date** | **Contribution to Final Mark (%)** | **Learning Outcomes Assessed** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Field Camp & Excursion Exercises/Notes | same day, Sep 8 to 11’15 | 15 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 |
| Laboratory Exercises (best 5 of 6) | on lab day | 5 | 4, 5, 6 |
| Group Project Plan | Oct 5’15 | 5 | 7 |
| Midterm Examination | Oct 29’15 (in class) | 25 | 2, 3, 4 |
| Project Preliminary Technical Report | Nov 2’15 | 10 | 7 |
| Project Final Technical Report | Nov 16’15 | 10 | 7 |
| Group Project Oral Presentation | tbd, Nov 23 to 27’15 | 10 | 7 |
| Final Examination (scheduled by registrar) | Dec 12’15 (19:00-21:00), local tbd | 20 | 4, 5, 6 |

Additional Notes:

Best five of six laboratory exercises will be counted toward final grade.

### Final examination date and time: Saturday, December 12, 2015; 07:00 - 09:00PM

### Final exam weighting: 20%

## Course Resources

### Required Texts:

The System of Soil Classification for Canada. Publication 1646. Canada Department of Agriculture. 1998-revised. NRC Research Press, Ottawa. Also available online in pdf format.

### Recommended Texts:

1) Fanning, D.S. & Fanning, M.C.B. 1989. Soil: Morphology, Genesis and Classification. Wiley;

2) Schaetzl, R. & Anderson, S. 2005. Soils: Genesis and Geomorphology. Cambridge University Press.;

3) Constantini, E.A.C. 2009. Manual of Methods for Soil and Land Evaluation. Science Publishers.

### Lab Manuals:

Copies of “Field Manual for Describing Soils in Ontario” and “Munsell Soil Color Charts” will be provided for field activities.

### Other Resources:

Any relevant course material, including Field Camp/Excursion outlines, Field Forms, Laboratory Exercises and Lecture Presentations, will be made available to students through CourseLink.

### Approximate Schedule of Field Exercises:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Activity | Due Date | Grade |
| Sep 8 | Field Camp/Excursion – University of Guelph Arboretum | same day | 3% |
| Sep 9 | Field Camp/Excursion – Guelph Turfgrass Institute & Guelph Drumlin Field (UofG Elora Research Station) | same day | 5% |
| Sep 10 | Field Camp/Excursion – Flamborough Plain (Kirkwall area), Haldimand Clay Plain (Cayuga area), Norfolk Sand Plain (UofG Simcoe Research Station) | same day | 3.5% |
| Sep 11 | Field Camp/Excursion – Paris Moraine & Outwash Plain (Starkey CA/Arkell Springs), Blackbridge Road/Speed River & Luther Marsh CA | same day | 3.5% |
| Sep 28 to Oct 2 | Independent Group Project – reconnaissance of study area sub-region (feeds-into Group Project Plan) | Oct 5 | 5% |
| Oct 12 to 30 | Independent Group Project - in-field survey of study area sub-region (feeds-into Preliminary Technical Report) | Nov 2 | 10% |

\*Equipment (including reflective vests and safety supplies) and transportation (rental vans) will be provided for the Field/Camp Excursions. Equipment will be provided for Group Projects, but students are responsible for their own transportation.

### Additional Costs:

### - Students must use appropriate clothing for field work, including protective footware.

## Course Policies

### Grading Policies:

### 10% reduction of grade (evaluated), for item in question, for each week or part thereof. Items not received before the date set for start of final exams, will be assigned a grade of 0 (zero).

### Course Policy on Group Work:

### Technical reports/oral presentations will be completed in groups of 3 or 4.

### Course Policy regarding use of electronic devices and recording of lectures:

### Electronic recording of classes is expressly forbidden without consent of the instructor. When recordings are permitted they are solely for the use of the authorized student and may not be reproduced, or transmitted to others, without the express written consent of the instructor.

## University Policies

### Academic Consideration:

The University of Guelph is committed to supporting students in their learning experiences and responding to their individual needs and is aware that a variety of situations or events beyond the student's control may affect academic performance. Support is provided to accommodate academic needs in the face of personal difficulties or unforeseen events in the form of Academic Consideration.

Information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions, including categories, grounds, timelines and appeals can be found in [Section VIII (Undergraduate Degree Regulations and Procedures) of the Undergraduate Calendar](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml).

### Academic Misconduct:

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community, faculty, staff, and students to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring.

University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Detailed information regarding the Academic Misconduct policy is available in [Section VIII (Undergraduate Degree Regulations and Procedures) of the Undergraduate Calendar](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml).

### Accessibility:

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact the Student Accessibility Services (SAS), formerly Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD), as soon as possible.

For more information, contact SAS at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email sas@uoguelph.ca or visit the [Student Accessibility Services website (http://www.uoguelph.ca/csd/)](http://www.uoguelph.ca/csd/).

### Course Evaluation Information:

End of semester course and instructor evaluations provide students the opportunity to have their comments and opinions used as an important component in the Faculty Tenure and Promotion process, and as valuable feedback to help instructors enhance the quality of their teaching effectiveness and course delivery.

While many course evaluations are conducted in class others are now conducted online. Please refer to the [Course and Instructor Evaluation Website](https://courseeval.uoguelph.ca/) **for more information.**

For this course, the course evaluation will be conducted in-class, near the end of the semester; the specific time to be scheduled by the Director of the School of Environmental Sciences.

### Drop period:

The drop period for single semester courses starts at the beginning of the add period and extends to the Fortieth (40th) class day of the current semester (the last date to drop a single semester courses without academic penalty) which is listed in [Section III (Schedule of Dates) of the Undergraduate Calendar](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/).

The drop period for two semester courses starts at the beginning of the add period in the first semester and extends to the last day of the add period in the second semester.

Information about Dropping Courses can be found in [Section VIII (Undergraduate Degree Regulations and Procedures) of the Undergraduate Calendar](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/).

## Additional Course Information

#### Independent Group Project Technical Reports & Presentation

**(Instructions and Guidelines)**

***Overview - this group exercise constitutes 35% of the final course grade:***

Each group of 4 will research relevant literature, acquire available biophysical resource inventories (including, but not restricted to, soils, geology, physiography and ecology) for an assigned sub-region of a study area to be determined (within or near Guelph), as well as conduct in-field surveys (including, but not limited to, soil and vegetation). This information is to be collated, synthesized and interpreted. Special guidance, with respect to aspects to be considered, will be provided once study area has been selected.

**\* *Group Project Plan* (5% final grade) – *due* Oct 5’15*, feedback* same week:**

*Structure:* cover page; table of contents; goals & objectives; identification of study area sub-region; existing biophysical resource inventories and type of literature to be reviewed; in-field survey activities to be conducted, with methods and resources/equipment *to be used*; timeline for project development (considering reports and presentation); distribution of tasks among group members; references cited.

*Formatting:* 2 to 3 pages; font size 12 Times New Roman (for graphics use sans serif); 1.5 line spacing; 1” margins; section headings/subheadings, tables and graphics, and pages to be numbered. ***Use referencing style of ‘Canadian Journal of Soil Science - CJSS’***.

*Evaluation (by instructor) Criteria:* presentation, organization, content, synthesis, writing style. ***Rubric to be provided at start of class.***

**\* *Project Preliminary Technical Report* (10% final grade) – *due* Nov 2’15*, feedback* same week:**

*Structure:* cover page; table of contents; list of tables; list of figures; introduction, with goals & objectives; relevant excerpts of existing biophysical resource inventories; type of literature encountered; description of in-field survey activities, with methods and resources/resources *used*; presentation (summary tables or graphics) of results of in-field survey; strategy for interpretation of material; references cited.

*Formatting:* 10 to 15 pages (not including references and appendices); font size 12 Times New Roman (for graphics use sans serif); 1.5 line spacing; 1” margins; section headings/subheadings, tables and graphics, and pages to be numbered. Summary tables and graphs to be inserted in report body; other materials (including previous feedback from instructor) go in appendix. ***Use referencing style of CJSS.***

*Evaluation (by instructor) Criteria:* presentation, organization, content, synthesis and writing style. ***Rubric to be provided at start of class.***

***\* Project Final Technical Report (10% final grade) – due Nov 16’15, feedback* same week*:***

*Structure:* cover page; table of contents; list of tables; list of figures; introduction, with goals & objectives; review of literature; characterization of study area sub-region, using relevant excerpts of existing biophysical resource inventories; description of in-field survey activities, with methods and resources/resources *used*; results of in-field survey & discussion; summary and conclusions; references cited.

*Formatting:* 15 to 20 pages (not including tables and figures, references and appendices); font size 12 Times New Roman (for graphics use sans serif); 1.5 line spacing; 1” margins; section headings/subheadings, tables and graphics, and pages to be numbered. Summary tables and graphs to be inserted in report body; other materials (including previous feedback from instructor) go in appendix. ***Use referencing style of CJSS.***

*Evaluation (by instructor) Criteria:* presentation, organization, content, synthesis and writing style. ***Rubric to be provided at start of class.***

***\* Group Oral Presentation (10% of final grade) – Nov 23 to 27’15 (location and time TBD):***

*Time Slot:* 20 minutes per group.

*Format:* computer (with PowerPoint) and projector will be available.

*Evaluation (by instructors and students – all students must attend other presentations) Criteria:* suitability/quality of AV aids, organization, presentation style, content and audience engagement. S*tudents who do not submit the evaluation forms, will lose 1 point off their final grade.* ***Rubric to be provided at start of class.***