

Human-environment interactions: learning from the past

ENVS315

We are facing some serious environmental issues that threaten the long-term survival of society as we know it. Yet we have been in tight spots before in the past and have survived. In this course we see if past experience of interactions between people and their environment can help guide us through present difficulties and into the future. Typical topics that we cover include agriculture, the use of natural resources, fisheries, energy supply, fire and pollutants. Students are divided into groups to develop their own topic and prepare a term paper under the guidance of academic staff. The papers are presented orally at the end of term. During the course, the groups attend clinics with academic staff to discuss and review progress. With this constant feedback on the paper, the final result is usually a polished and useful piece of work. There is no exam, just assessment of the initial plan of the paper, the oral presentation and the final written work. The groups can choose to be assessed as individuals or jointly. This method of working prepares students for many work places where one is assigned to a project group, helps students learn to cope with different personalities and often find that collaboration produces a better outcome than competitive individualism.

