

MEE4A: Methods in Ecological Economics (for the Anthropocene)

This course explores ways in which ecological economics can inform humanity's future within the Anthropocene. Students are introduced to methods that can help to understand and affect human-economy-environment relationships, with a consideration of economic efficiency, distribution, and sustainability. By the end of the course, students will be skilled at appraising methods and proposing their own research using appropriate methods.

Prerequisites: Enrolment in Economics for the Anthropocene, or permission from the Course Director.

Technology requirements: You will require an internet-connected computer with an integrated or peripheral webcam and headset (or separate microphone and headphones).

Time and Location: Tuesdays from 3PM – 5PM using Zoom at: [\[to be provided to registered students\]](#)

Outside of this time, before class, you will watch a recorded lecture introducing each week's topic.

Website: [\[to be provided to registered students\]](#)

This website contains electronic links to all required readings, lectures, important course announcements and changes, a list of all registered students, and guidelines used to grade all the assignments. This website allows you to post written comments, and to reply to other comments. You will be expected to access the website at least once per week throughout the term.

Course Director: Eric Miller

Contact me at ewmiller@yorku.ca with **mee4a** somewhere in the subject line of all e-mails.

I hold online office hours using Zoom. Please make appointments with me through the reservation system on the course website. The reservation system will provide you with the videoconference link.

Organization of the Course

Each week's agenda will be detailed on the course website. Most weeks will follow this organization:

- **Appraise** the week's required readings, in a roundtable participation format
- **Discuss one or more methods** relevant to the week's topic, or discuss a **Research Proposal**

Before each class, and before enjoying the readings, you will be required to watch a recorded lecture.

Schedule of topics, with learning objectives and required readings

The course covers these 12 topics. For each topic, the course website contains the detailed agenda, learning objectives and assigned readings that are linked for free access through McGill's library proxy.

1. Introduction to methods within ecological economics
2. Biophysical limits and linkages
3. Money and banking
4. Finance and the financial system
5. Modelling
6. Demographics
7. Distribution
8. Valuation
9. Space and place
10. Growth and investment
11. Models of enterprise
12. Governance of the commons

Evaluation

Assignment	Due	Weight (%)
Discuss required readings	Every class starting in 3 rd class	30
Method appraisal	Date you choose by signing up	20
Research proposal is comprised of these components:		
Discuss research question & method(s) with Eric	At least 7 days before draft is due	–
Write first draft and e-mail to Eric	Date you choose by signing up	10
Present first draft of research proposal	Week after your draft is due	–
Review a peer research proposal	Date you choose by signing up	10
Write final proposal	E-mailed to Eric by April 18	30

Detailed instructions and a grading template for each assignment are provided the course website.

Discuss required readings. You will contribute to a discussion that Eric will moderate about the required readings. You will contribute insights and questions, and reply to the insights and questions offered by your peers.

Methods appraisal. You will present an organized appraisal of a method of your choice from a list of suggested methods (or another if discussed and approved by Eric). Within a 30-minute limit, you will profile how the method can help to inform humanity's future within the Anthropocene: whether and why it should be considered appropriate for ecological economics, a relevant example of how it has been used, and appropriate cautions about its use or the interpretation and communication of its results. In the remaining time (of up to 20 minutes) you will engage your peers and Eric in a purposeful discussion. The discussion might help to clarify questions or comments from your peers about the method, confirm or challenge the perspectives that you presented, and suggest future research or application opportunities.

Research proposal: You will write a research proposal that identifies a question and how you would propose answering it, drawing upon insights from ecological economics and relevant methods / tools / data. Through this assignment, you will investigate one or more methods / tools / data relevant to the question that interests you, plus additional methods / tools / data when you review a peer's proposal. There are five steps to this assignment:

1. **Choose a research question.** Discuss your idea with Eric, to be sure that your question and the approach are appropriate. Ideally, have this discussion more than a week before writing the draft.
2. **Write a draft proposal.** This draft will identify the research question, its relevance, and the proposed methods / tools / data, references cited, and an annotated bibliography. You will e-mail this draft to Eric, who will e-mail it to one of your peers who will review it the following class, when you will present it.
3. **Present your draft** to the class within a 5 minute time limit. Use this opportunity to get additional perspectives, such as leads on data / tools, etc.
4. **Review a peer's draft.** Your review might focus on the proposed research design, you might suggest key scholarly articles or methods or data that were not mentioned but could be helpful, and you might elaborate on the relevance of the research. Don't focus on small grammar and spelling issues.
5. **Write a final version.** By this point, you will have received feedback from your peer reviewer, plus insights from the rest of the class, and feedback from Eric. The final version should not exceed 2000 words excluding references. This final document will be e-mailed to Eric.

Final Grade

At the end of the year, I will transmit a summary of the percentage grades you earned on all assignments, with qualitative comments, to Peter Brown. He will assign your final grade based upon the McGill grading system's equivalencies between percentages and letters.

Academic Honesty

You will be subject to your home university's policies regarding academic honesty.

Research Ethics

You will be subject to your home university's policies regarding the conduct of research using human participants, which usually requires approval prior to the conduct of the research.

Academic Accommodation

If you feel that there are extenuating circumstances which may interfere with the successful completion of the course requirements, you should discuss the matter with Eric as soon as possible. If you have a physical, learning or psychiatric disability that requires reasonable accommodations in teaching style or evaluation methods, you should discuss appropriate arrangements with Eric early in the term.