

Geography 430
Autumn 2009

M-W 12:30-2:18
1080 Derby Hall

Geographical Perspectives on **Environment and Society**

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Course website: I will use the Carmen website for this course. On the site you will find electronic readings, course handouts, announcements, and your grades.

Course description:

Are humans separate from nature, or are they a part of it? Can humans ultimately control the natural world, or does the natural world determine the course of human history? Are some groups of people “closer to nature” than others? Is the earth made for humans to use? Is nature socially constructed? Does solving environmental problems require that we change how we think about nature? How do ideas about nature reflect and influence our ideas about other people, including ideas about race and gender? These are longstanding questions not only in Geography and Environmental Studies but in a variety of other fields, from Philosophy to Ecology. This course will focus on how geographers have understood the relationship between humans and nature, and we will also examine how others—policy makers, historians, environmentalists—have thought about this relationship. We will look at how people have thought about nature in different times and circumstances (mainly in the US and Europe over the past 150 years), and how that influences people’s actions toward the environment and other people. The goal of the course is to introduce students to key concepts and recurring themes in these enduring debates, while helping them identify and understand the importance of human-nature relations in contemporary life.

GEC: This course meets the requirements of the GEC for Social Sciences: Human, Natural, and Economic Resources. The goal of the Social Science GEC is to develop students’ understanding of the systematic study of human behavior and cognition; the structure of human societies, cultures, and institutions; and the processes by which individuals, groups, and societies interact with communicate, and use human, natural, and economic resources. There are three central learning objectives:

1. Students understand the theories and methods of scientific inquiry as they are applied to the study of the use and distribution of human, natural, and economic resources and decisions and policies concerning such resources.
2. Students understand the political, economic, and social trade-offs reflected in individual decisions and societal policymaking and enforcement and their similarities and differences across contexts.
3. Students develop abilities to comprehend and assess the physical, social, economic, and political sustainability of individual and societal decisions with respect to resource use.

This course meets these goals and objectives by examining the relationship between human behavior and society, on the one hand, and the natural world, on the other. In so doing, we will explicitly examine human societies, culture, and institutions. We will stress the importance of different contexts for altering the environment-society relationship and how we perceive it, and we will be examining how perceptions of environment and society impact social and environmental problem solving. We will also be learning about different methodological approaches for understanding environment-society relations.

Disability Services

If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Academic integrity (academic misconduct):

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's *Code of Student Conduct*, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's *Code of Student Conduct* and this syllabus may constitute "Academic Misconduct."

The Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism (see more below), collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an "excuse" for

academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University's *Code of Student Conduct* (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

- The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages (<http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html>)
- *Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity* (<http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/ten-suggestions.html>)
- *Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity* (<http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.html>)

Plagiarism: Plagiarism encompasses all activities in which you use another person's ideas without acknowledging that you are doing so. Plagiarism ranges from direct copying of someone else's work to presenting someone else's ideas as though they are yours. Please use citations to differentiate between your ideas and those you got from other sources (such as books and articles).

Readings:

- There is no single text for this course. The readings include a variety of articles and book chapters, drawn from multiple sources. *Readings are all available through Carmen. You are expected to do all readings before the class for which they are assigned.*
- You will need to buy or borrow from a library a book to review (for Project two). A list of choices is provided on the assignment.

Course requirements:

Attendance and participation	15%
Quizzes: 2@ 10% each	20%
Project one:	10%
Project two:	25%
Take-home final:	30%

Attendance and participation are required and will be graded. Talking with me outside of class about course material counts as participation. **Quizzes** test your knowledge of key concepts by asking you to link individual authors to their central ideas. Each of the **projects** requires you to write a short essay in which you identify and explain ideas about environment and society. These assignments help you learn to interpret and evaluate ideas about environment and society that are present in everyday life. **Project one** asks you to choose an advertisement and interpret the messages about nature present in the ad. **Project two** is a book review (I provide a list of books from which to choose), in which you will identify varieties of environmentalism expressed in the book you choose. For the **take-home final** you will compare and contrast the perspectives of two environmental organizations. Detailed assignments for the projects and take-home final will be provided on the days noted on the syllabus.

Grading policies:

- Participation is based on attendance. If you are regularly absent, your participation grade will reflect your absences, even if you participate well on the days you do attend.
- Quizzes can only be made up if you have an emergency such as a medical problem or death in the family.
- Late projects/take-home finals will lose one percentage point (of your final grade) for every day they are late. To avoid losing points, you must make arrangements AHEAD OF TIME.
- I will try to accommodate religious obligations, so please talk to me if these interfere with completing assignments or exams as scheduled.
- To pass the course:
 - You must receive a total grade of at least 55%.
 - You must complete all the assignments. Regardless of how well you do on other parts of the course, you will not pass the course if you fail to turn in a project or the take-home final. PLEASE SEE ME if you are having problems that prevent you from meeting this requirement; we may be able to make alternative arrangements.
- Standard OSU grading scheme (minimum percent): A 93%, A- 90%, B+ 87, B 83, B- 80, C+ 77, C 73, C- 70, D+ 67, D 60, E 0

Schedule of topics, in-class videos, readings, and assignments

Sept 23: Introduction: Worldviews, Placing Humans and Nature

Sept 28: History of Human-Nature Relations, Domination of Nature

Read: Glacken (1967); Marsh (1864)

In-class video: The Lorax

Sept 30: Dualism between Humans and Nature; *Discuss Project One*

Read: Merchant (1992)

Oct 5: Dualism: Primitive and Civilized People

Read: Soper (1995); Gregory (2001); Benton and Short ("Invented Indian") (2000)

Oct 7: Environmental Determinism vs. the Cultural Landscape

PROJECT ONE DUE

Read: Semple (1911); Sauer (1925)

Oct 12: Cultural Ecology

Read: Robbins ("Cultural ecology") (2004); Rappaport (1967)

Oct 14: Preservation

Read: Benton and Short ("No Holier Temple") (2000); Runte (1979); Muir (1901)

Oct 19: Conservation

Read: Roosevelt (1901); Pinchot (1910)

In-class video: Ancient Forests: Rage Over Trees

Oct 21: Rise of Modern Environmentalism

Read: Leopold (1949); Carson (1962); Dowie (Ch 1; skim 9-18, read 18-28) (1996)

In-class video: Excerpts of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*

QUIZ ONE

Oct 26: Response to Industrialization: Clean Air and Water

Read: Dowie (Excerpts of Ch 2) (1996)

In-class video: Return of the Cuyahoga

Oct 28: Population and Consumption Debates; *Discuss Project Two*

Read: Ehrlich (1969); Castree ("Ideologies of nature") (2005); Gardner, Assadourian, and Sarin (2004)

Nov 2: Sustainable Development and Free-Market Environmentalism

Read: WCED (1987); Anderson and Leal (2001); and two websites: 1) Kyoto Protocol Homepage http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php Look at the main page,

and the three links under “The Kyoto Mechanisms”: Emissions Trading, Clean Development Mechanism, Joint Implementation); 2) For more on the Clean Development Mechanism, go to the Registered Project Activities of the Clean Development Mechanism <http://cdm.unfccc.int/Projects/registered.html> This will give you a list of the most recent projects registered by the CDM (there are close to 2000 total). Scan through the projects on this first page—what are the projects for, how do they work, what do you think of them?

Nov 4: Deep Ecology and Wilderness Protection

Read: Devall and Sessions (1985); Seager (1993); The Wildlands Network website <http://www.twp.org/cms/index.cfm> Look at (1) the homepage, (2) “who we are,” and (3) “what we do.”

Nov 9: Environmentalism Comes Home

Read: Cronon (1995); Kingsolver (2007)

Nov 11: NO CLASSES—VETERAN’S DAY

Nov 16: Social Construction of Nature

Read: Demeritt (2001)

Nov 18: Political Ecology: Introduction

Read: Robbins (“Political Ecology” pp.3-16) (2004)

In-class video: Between Midnight and the Rooster’s Crow

PROJECT TWO DUE

Nov 23: Political Ecology as political economy of environment

Read: Castree (“Remaking Nature”) (2005); Robbins (“Political Ecology” pp.71-83) (2004)

Nov 25: Political Ecology: Bringing together political economy and social construction

Read: Mansfield (2001); Fairhead and Leach (1995)

Nov 30: Natural Hazards, Vulnerability, and Environmental Justice; *Discuss Take-home final*

Read: Wisner (2005); Gibbs (1993); Bullard (2002)

Dec 2: Hazards/Vulnerability/Justice case study

In-class video: Fenceline: A Company Town Divided

QUIZ TWO

Finals week: **TAKE HOME FINAL DUE WEDNESDAY DEC 9 AT 11:30 AM.** Please print your exam essay and leave it in my box in Derby 1035 (feel free to turn it in early!)