

Environment and Society, Geog 3800, SP 2023 (#30074)

Updated schedule on Jan 10, to reflect cancellation of Day 1.

Tuesday and Thursday 11:10AM - 12:30PM, in person in Derby Hall 1080

Professor Becky Mansfield, faculty member in the Department of Geography

See the course Carmen for all information and course materials. If you need assistance with Carmen, please contact OSU Tech Help and Support: <https://ocio.osu.edu/help>, 614-688-HELP (4357)

CONTACT INFORMATION

You can contact me for many reasons including:

- *You have questions* about course material, assignments, or grades or you need an extension
- *You are having difficulties* that prevent you from engaging fully in the course, whether those are related to health (including mental health), work, family, or anything else
- *You want to learn more* about course material or about opportunities beyond the course, e.g., research, internships, careers, other courses

Contact me by:

- Sending a message via Carmen (best), by email (mansfield.32@osu.edu), or by phone (614-247-7264). I will get back to you within 24 hours on weekdays (but I am unlikely to get back to you at all over the weekend).
- Talking to me directly. My office hours are immediately after class (12:30-1:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays) or we can arrange an in person or zoom meeting for another time. My office is 1054 Derby Hall.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is about how people relate to the natural environment, asking a series of questions that help us think about both social and environmental issues. Are humans separate from nature, or are they a part of it? Can humans ultimately control the natural world? Does the natural world determine the course of human history? How are ideas about differences among people—for example, ideas about race and gender—related to ideas about nature, and vice versa? What does social inequality have to do with human-environment interactions—and vice versa, what do human-environment interactions have to do with issues of social inequality, such as racism? Does solving environmental problems require us to change how we think about nature?

This course grounds exploration of these questions in a geographical perspective, which emphasizes the multiple ways that humans and nature are always entangled. The course provides historical perspective and addresses how ideas about humans and nature have changed very recently, in what is now known as the “Anthropocene.” The course focuses especially on the entangled emergence of ideas about *nature* and *race* and the implications for a range of social and environmental issues today.

The course format includes lectures, small group discussions, and large group discussions. There is an assignment associated with almost every class meeting (see below for descriptions). There are no exams.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Students can describe key concepts, recurring themes, and important authors and thinkers in enduring debates about human-nature relations in geography and beyond
2. Students can compare these ideas and approaches in terms of their content and their historical-geographical context
3. Students can identify implications of different ideas and approaches for real-world human-nature relations
4. Students can apply concepts to identify and understand human-nature relations in contemporary life

GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES

For students who started at OSU AU2022 or later, this course meets the Theme requirements of the “new” GE.

Goals and expected learning outcomes (ELOs) for all Themes:

GOAL 1: Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than the foundations.

ELO 1.1 Engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of the theme.

ELO 1.2 Engage in an advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or idea of the theme.

GOAL 2: Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections to out-of-classroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.

ELO 2.1 Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences as they apply to the theme.

ELO 2.2 Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.

Goals and ELOs for the *Lived Environments* Theme:

GOAL 1: Successful students will explore a range of perspectives on the interactions and impacts between humans and one or more types of environment (e.g. agricultural, built, cultural, economic, intellectual, natural) in which humans live.

ELO 1.1 Engage with the complexity and uncertainty of human-environment interactions.

ELO 1.2 Describe examples of human interaction with and impact on environmental change and transformation over time and across space.

GOAL 2: Successful students will analyze a variety of perceptions, representations and/or discourses about environments and humans within them.

ELO 2.1 Analyze how humans’ interactions with their environments shape or have shaped attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors

ELO 2.2 Describe how humans perceive and represent the environments with which they interact.

ELO 2.3 Analyze and critique conventions, theories, and ideologies that influence discourses around environments

For students who started at OSU prior to AU2022: This course meets the requirements of the “legacy” GE for *Social Sciences: Human, Natural, and Economic Resources*, for which there are three 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 comprehend and assess the physical, social, economic, and political sustainability of individual and societal decisions with respect to resource use.

How the course meets these objectives:

The course meets this range of objectives by teaching you about key concepts, recurring themes, and important authors and thinkers in enduring debates about how people relate to the natural environment. This course is grounded in a geographical perspective, which emphasizes the multiple ways that humans and nature are always entangled, and it focuses especially on the interrelationship between ideas about and actions toward nature and race. You will learn to describe and compare diverse ideas and approaches to human-nature relations, as well as to identify the implications and trade-offs of different human-nature relationships and representations of them. You will learn to assess environmental decisions through a series of assignments in which you will apply course concepts to real-world human-environment issues.

The course readings contribute to this variety of course goals and encourage advanced, scholarly exploration by providing overview of key concepts (serving as a text) and examples (serving as a reader and requiring critical reading skills). Contemporary readings are primarily by academic authors, whether chapters written for an academic audience or essays written for wider audiences. Readings also include excerpts of primary texts from their historical era, and you will learn scholarly methods for engaging these texts.

The fundamental skill you are learning in this course is to interpret everyday examples of human-nature interactions by putting them in historical and geographical context and understanding implicit as well as explicit aspects of them. The goal is to help you recognize that circumstances in the here-and-now are not isolated but are part of geographically and temporally extensive patterns and processes. Recognizing these patterns and processes is especially important in foundational concepts such as race and nature, which are at the heart of multiple present day big challenges, from climate change to racial justice.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

PLEASE SEE ME IF YOU ARE HAVING PROBLEMS THAT PREVENT YOU FROM MEETING COURSE REQUIREMENTS. WE MAY BE ABLE TO MAKE ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS.

All materials are provided at no cost in Carmen. However, a free subscription to the *New York Times* will help, as multiple readings come from there. For directions for signing up for a free OSU subscription, see: <https://usg.osu.edu/resources/initiatives/new-york-times-subscription>

Read and post (30% of your final grade): About *once per week* (16 over the semester) you will do a set of readings and provide a written response (1-2 paragraphs). The readings include a variety of articles, book chapters, and reports, drawn from multiple sources. Some of these assigned materials provide facts and ideas to know (as a text), while others provide examples to think about and interpret based on course ideas (as a reader). The specific readings are listed in the Course Schedule, with a detailed reading list (including the length of the readings) at the end of the syllabus.

These assignments are for you to learn basic course material, to practice summarizing key concepts, and to reflect on your reactions.

Activities (25% of your final grade): Once or twice *per unit* (5 over the semester) you will do a short, related activity (e.g., watch a film, research a non-governmental organization) and provide a written analysis (1-2 pages). You will view and comment online on other students' work.

These assignments are for you to identify the real-world implications of course concepts, and to practice applying them to interpret contemporary phenomena.

Summary and application (45% of your final grade): At the *end of each unit* (5 total over the semester) you will do a two-part assignment. First (instead of exams), you will respond to prompts about the core material for the unit (1-2 pages). Second, you will do a new activity that builds on the work you already did in that unit's Activities, in which you apply course concepts to new material (3-5 pages). We will dedicate in-class time to discuss these projects.

These assignments ask you to synthesize material to compare key concepts, identify their implications, and apply them. You will also practice writing for different audiences.

Attendance and Participation (0% of your grade: serves as extra credit). Everyone is expected to participate actively by attending class, joining discussions, doing in-class activities, and so forth.

I do not assign a participation grade but use it to bump your grade if you are on the cusp of a higher grade at the end of the semester. For example, if you have 89.7 but were an active participant, you will get an A- in the course instead of B+. The bump can range from a half to one full point.

GRADING POLICIES

Grading: I grade all assignments on a 5-point scale: 5=excellent; 4=good; 3=passable; 0=missing or completely misses the mark. Rarely will I give a grade of 1 or 2. The Read and Post assignments are designed to be low-stakes assignments; the “satisfactory” grade—for doing them completely, correctly, and with evidence of some thought—is a 4.5 (A-); a 5 is for exceptional work.

Final grade cut-offs: A 93%, A- 90, B+ 87, B 83, B- 80, C+ 77, C 73, C- 70, D+ 67, D 55

Late policy: I am not a stickler about late assignments—a few minutes or even hours is not a big deal. If you need more than that, you should communicate with me about new deadlines. The key is that you take responsibility for communicating with me so that we can come up with solutions that work for both of us. And see above: see me if you are having problems and we may be able to work something out.

Talking with other students on assignments: You may talk with other students when doing assignments, but the analysis and writing must be yours. I will question any assignments that are very similar. Failure to follow these guidelines will be considered academic misconduct.

UPDATED SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Readings are listed in-brief here and a full reference list is included at the end of the syllabus

Day	Date	Topic	To do before class
Unit 1: Nature, race, and environmental justice			
Tu	Jan 10	CANCELLED: instructor ill	Read the syllabus and post introduction (due end of day)
Th	Jan 12	Course introduction	No assignment
Tu	Jan 17	NO CLASS	No assignment
Th	Jan 19	Nature and Race	Read and post Pollan 2015 (New York Times Opinion) Miles 2019 (New York Times Opinion)
Tu	Jan 24	Nature and Race, Continued	Activity: Personal narrative and place
Th	Jan 26	Environmental Justice	Read and post Goldman Prize on Margie Richard Choose one from a list of recent articles
Tu	Jan 31	Continued	Summary and Application: Landscape analysis of a place meaningful to you
Unit 2: Colonial views of nature and humans			
Th	Feb 2	Beyond exposure: race and nature	Read and post Purdy 2015 (The New Yorker) Staples 2018 (New York Times Opinion)
Tu	Feb 7	Worldviews: Nature and Humans	Read and post Merchant 1992 (book excerpt) Soper 1995 (book excerpt)
Th	Feb 9	Continued	Activity: Dr. Seuss's <i>The Lorax</i> 1972 (film, 30 min)
Tu	Feb 14	Colonial context: intertwining of race and nature	Read and post Voyles 2015 (book excerpt)
Th	Feb 16	Continued	Activity: Interpretation of Taylor Swift's <i>Wildest Dreams</i> 2015 (video, 4 min)
Tu	Feb 21	Continued	Summary and Application: Popular culture
Unit 3: Environmental awakening (1850-1950s) and its legacies			
Th	Feb 23	19C environmental awakening: Preservation and Conservation	Read and post Benton and Short 2000 (book excerpt) Marsh 1864 (book excerpt)
Tu	Feb 28	Continued, with focus on racism	Read and post: Stern 2005 (book excerpt)
Th	Mar 2	20C Ecology and Culture	Read and post Leopold 1949 (book excerpt) Robbins 2004 (book excerpt)
Tu	Mar 7	Continued	Activity: <i>Ancient Forests: Rage over Trees</i> (documentary, 1989; first 30 minutes)
Th	Mar 9	Traces / legacies	Summary and Application: <i>The Goddess and the Computer</i> (documentary, 1988; first 30 minutes); compare with <i>Ancient Forests</i>
	Mar 14, 16	SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES	

Unit 4: Modern Environmentalism (1960s-2000s)			
Tu	Mar 21	Earth Days: Industrialization and Population	Read and Post Dowie 1996 (book excerpt) Carson 1962 (book excerpt) Ehrlich 1969 (book excerpt)
Th	Mar 23	Continued	Activity: Interpretation of Environmental Org. 1
Tu	Mar 28	1980s: Political Ecology, Sustainable Development, Deep Ecology	Read and post Mansfield 2009 (excerpt) The Ecologist 1993 (book excerpt) Devall and Sessions 1986 (book excerpt)
Th	Mar 30	Continued	Summary and Application: Interpretation of Environmental Org. 2; compare with Org. 1
Unit 5: 21 st Century Anthropocene environmentalisms			
Tu	Apr 4	What is the Anthropocene?	Read and post Hersher 2021 (NPR) Davis and Todd 2017 (academic article excerpt) Cronon 1994 (chapter excerpt)
Th	Apr 6	Continued	Activity
Tu	Apr 11	Sparing vs. Sharing?	Read and post Pearce 2018 (Yale Environment 360) Wilson 2016 (Aeon) Buscher and Fletcher 2016 (Aeon)
Th	Apr 13	White nationalist environmentalism	Read and post Stern 2019 (The Conversation) Millman 2022 (The Guardian)
Tu	Apr 18	Inclusive Black environmentalisms	Read and post Sengupta 2020 (New York Times) Greenlee 2021 (New York Times)—featuring Columbus TikTok star Alexis Nelson! Stone and Mills 2021 (Photo essay, New York Times) Moynihan 2022 (New York Times)
Th	Apr 20	Summing up	Summary & Application: an inspirational human-nature relation

DISABILITY SERVICES

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

OSU COUNSELING AND CONSULTATION SERVICES

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of these conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life’s Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling [614-292-5766](tel:614-292-5766). CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at [614-292-5766](tel:614-292-5766) and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

DIVERSITY

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity

of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

HARASSMENT

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu.

READING LIST

Listed in order from the Course Schedule

Lengths are in words for web-based materials and pages for readings from books

Pollan, M. 2015. Why 'Natural' Doesn't Mean Anything Anymore. *The New York Times*. 1600 words

Miles, T. 2019. Black Bodies, Green Spaces. *The New York Times*. 1900 words

Goldman Prize on Margie Richard. <https://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/margie-richard/> 1300 words plus 6-minute embedded video

On Environmental Justice: Choose one from a list of recent articles, each about 1500 words

Purdy, J. 2015. Environmentalism's Racist History. *The New Yorker*. 1300 words

Staples, B. 2018. The Racist Trope That Won't Die. *The New York Times*. 850 words

Merchant, C. 1992. Science and Worldviews, chapter 2 of *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World*. 19 pages

Soper, K. 1995. Excerpt from *What is Nature? Culture, Politics, and the Non-Human*. 8 pages

Voyles, T. 2015. Preface and parts of chapter 1 of *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*. 29 pages

Benton, L. and J. Short. 2000. Excerpt of chapter 4 of *Environmental Discourse and Practice*. 14 pages

Marsh, G.P. 1864. Excerpt of *Man and Nature*. 6 pages

Stern, A. 2005. California's Eugenic Landscapes, chapter 4 in *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*. 26 pages

Leopold, A. 1949. The land ethic (excerpt). 6 pages

Robbins, P. 2004. Excerpt of Cultural Ecology, chapter in *Companion to Cultural Geography*. 6 pages

Dowie, M. 1996. Excerpt of *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century*. 6 pages

Carson, R. 1962. Excerpt of *Silent Spring*. 6 pages

Ehrlich, P. 1969. Excerpt of *The Population Bomb*. 5 pages

- Mansfield, B. 2009. Excerpt of Sustainability, chapter in *Companion to Environmental Geography*. 4 pages
- The Ecologist. 1993. Excerpt of *Whose Common Future? Reclaiming the Commons*. 5 pages
- Devall, B. and G. Sessions. 1986. Excerpt of *Deep Ecology*. 11 pages
- Pearce, F. 2018. Sparing vs Sharing: The Great Debate Over How to Protect Nature. *Yale Environment* 360. 2000 words
- Wilson, E.O. 2016. Half of the Earth must be preserved for nature conservation. *Aeon*. 3200 words
- Buscher, B. and R. Fletcher. 2016. Why E O Wilson is wrong about how to save the Earth. *Aeon*. 1500 words
- Stern, A. 2019. White nationalists' extreme solution to the coming environmental apocalypse. *The Conversation*. 900 words
- Milman, O. 2022. Buffalo suspect may be latest mass shooter motivated by 'eco-fascism'. *The Guardian*. 500 words.
- Sengupta, S. 2020. Black Environmentalists Talk About Climate and Anti-Racism. *The New York Times*. 1000 words
- Greenlee, C. 2021. How Black Foragers Find Freedom in the Natural World. *The New York Times*. 2100 words
- Stone, C. and J. Mills 2021. Bringing Black History to Life in the Great Outdoors. *The New York Times* (Photo essay)
- Moynihan, C. 2022. A Birder Is Back in the Public Eye, Now on His Own Terms, *The New York Times*. 900 words