

# ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY, GEOG 3800, SP 2025 (#28442)

## BASIC INFORMATION

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

**Instructor:** 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

### Reasons you might want to contact me:

- 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.

### Ways to contact me:

Talk to me directly. I am available 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.

Or send a message via Carmen (best) or by email ([mansfield.32@osu.edu](mailto:mansfield.32@osu.edu)). 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).

## SYLLABUS CONTENTS

Course Description and Objectives	2
General Education Objectives	2
Course Requirements	4
Grading Policies	5
Schedule	6
Disability Services	8
Academic Misconduct	8
Religious Accommodations	9
Grievances and Problem Solving	9
Counseling and Consultation	10
Diversity	10
Harassment	10

## **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 outside assignment associated most class meetings. There are no exams.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. Students can *recognize and 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 and contrast* these ideas and approaches in terms of their content, historical-geographical context, and implications for real-world human-nature relations
3. Students can *synthesize* across ideas to understand their interconnections and *apply* them to identify and understand human-nature relations in contemporary life

## **GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES**

### **GE Lived Environments Theme: Goals and learning objectives**

1. Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than the foundations.
  - a. Engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of the theme.
  - b. Engage in an advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or idea of the theme.
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.
  - a. Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences as they apply to the theme.
  - b. 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.
3. 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.
  - a. Engage with the complexity and uncertainty of human-environment interactions.

- b. Describe examples of human interaction with and impact on environmental change and transformation over time and across space.
- 4. Successful students will analyze a variety of perceptions, representations and/or discourses about environments and humans within them.
  - a. Analyze how humans' interactions with their environments shape or have shaped attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors
  - b. Describe how humans perceive and represent the environments with which they interact.
  - c. Analyze and critique conventions, theories, and ideologies that influence discourses around environments

**“Legacy” GE Social Sciences: Human, Natural, and Economic Resources: 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

### Required course material

All materials are provided at no cost in Carmen, either directly or through a link. Your free subscription to the *New York Times* will be helpful; follow directions on the [USG site](#) for access.

### Assignment overview

Category	Item percent	Category percent
Read-and-post	<1%	10
In-class activities	2-3%	30
Guide-posts	5%	20
Assignments	10%	40
General Participation	Extra credit	

### Read and post (10% of your final grade)

Approximately once per week you will do a set of readings and provide a written response. Detailed assignments will be provided in Carmen. You will be graded on evidence of engagement with the reading and how it relates to the course. Your lowest score will be dropped.

*Readings and responses are for you to learn basic course material, practice summarizing and synthesizing key concepts, and reflect on your reactions.*

### In-class activities (30% of your final grade)

Throughout the semester you will do in-class written activities, some of which will be done individually and some in small groups. The written activities will be graded; they are unannounced and your lowest score will be dropped.

*In-class activities deepen your knowledge of basic course material and give you practice applying what you are learning. These skills are necessary for the Assignments.*

### Guide-posts (20% of your final grade)

These take the place quizzes and exams. Instead, four times in the semester you will work collaboratively with your classmates to summarize key ideas from the previous few weeks of the semester. Each student will contribute key ideas (concepts, historical figures, examples, etc.) to a Carmen discussion; posting means providing the idea and its definition or relevance to the course. (You will not see the posts of everyone, but will be divided into smaller, more manageable groups.) Details will be provided in Carmen.

*Guide-posts are to help you remember, summarize, and synthesize the material we are covering. The collective knowledge in these posts can also serve as a “study guide” to help you with your Assignments.*

### **Assignments (40% of your final grade)**

Four times in the semester you will do a short, related activity (e.g., watch a film, research a non-governmental organization) and use course concepts to provide a written analysis (~1000 words). You will view and comment 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.*

### **General Participation (Required; can bump your final grade)**

Attendance and participation are required, and I do take attendance every day! You are expected to attend class, pay attention in class, and participate in small and large group discussions. I do not assign a separate grade but use your performance 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 89.2 but attended regularly and were an active participant, you will get an A- instead of B+.

## **GRADING POLICIES**

### **If you are having problems, see me!**

Please see me if you are having problems that prevent you from meeting course requirements. I may be able to make alternative arrangements.

### **Grading**

Assignments are graded on a 10-point scale. **Remember that even though all assignments are graded on the same scale, they contribute different amounts to your final grade, based on how they are weighted.** The specific things on which you will be graded will be indicated in each Carmen assignment.

10 (A+) = outstanding

9.5 (A) = excellent

8.5 (B) = very good

7.5 (C) = good

6.5 (D) = passable

### **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, especially if you turn in an assignment later the same day. If you need more than that, you should communicate about new deadlines. The key is that you take responsibility for communicating so that we can come up with workable solutions. And see above: see me if you are having larger problems and I 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.

## Generative AI Policy

The assignments in this course exist not just for you to demonstrate that you have done something (e.g., a reading) but are part of the learning process: you will deepen your understanding of course material and your ability to apply this material through doing these assignments. AI cannot replace your own engagement with the material and the assignments.

Given this, I prefer that you not use generative AI. I am more interested in your unique ideas and engagement, even if imperfect, than in what ChatGPT or Copilot (for example) have to say. Some of you may choose to use AI anyway, as part of producing your own unique ideas and engagement. For the purposes of this course, I will consider generative AI to be like any other internet source: **you may not simply cut and paste from what AI generates without proper care and attribution. Doing so will be considered academic misconduct. If you use AI for an assignment, you must:**

1. Say you have done so
2. Include the prompts you used
3. Indicate with quotation marks what parts of the written product you turn in were generated by AI rather than directly by you.

## SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Listed assignments are due before class: see Carmen for full instructions for each.

### Week 1: Environment and Society: Introduction

1/7 *no assignment*

1/9 Read and Post: Syllabus

### Week 2: Nature and Race

1/14 Read and Post: Pollan (2015) and Miles (2019)

1/16 *no assignment*

### Week 3: Environmental Justice

1/21 Read and Post: Choice of provided articles

1/23 Assignment 1

### Week 4: Race and origins of Human-Nature dualism

1/28 Read and Post: Purdy (2015) and Staples (2018)

1/30 Read and Post: Merchant (1992)

Guide-posts 1 (weeks 1-3)

**Week 5: Colonial views: Environmental determinism**

2/4 Read and post: Miriti et al. (2022)

2/6 *no assignment*

**Week 6: Colonial views: Wastelanding**

2/11 Read and post: Voyles (2015)

2/13 *no assignment*

**Week 7: Early environmentalism: romantic and managerial human-nature relationships**

2/18 Guide-posts 2 (weeks 4-6)

2/20 Assignment 2

**Week 8: Echoes of early ideas in modern environmentalism; Race in early environmentalism**

2/25 *no assignment*

2/27 Read and post: Stern (2005)

**Week 9: Modern environmentalism: the managerial impulse**

3/4 Read and post: Dowie (1996) and Castree (2004)

3/6 *no assignment*

**Week 10: SPRING BREAK**

**Week 11: Modern environmentalism: the romantic impulse**

3/18 Read and post: TBD

3/20 TBD

**Week 12: Beyond dualism: Cultural Ecology and Indigenous knowledge**

3/25 Read and post: Robbins (2004), Kimmerer (2013)

3/27 Guide-posts 3 (weeks 7-11)

**Week 13: Critique of industrialization and the Rise of Political Ecology**

4/1 Read and post: TBD

4/3 Assignment 3

**Week 14: Race in environmentalism today**

4/8 Read and post: Milman (2022) and Greenlea (2021)

4/10 TBD

## **Week 15: Conclusions**

4/15 Guide-posts 4 (weeks 12-14)

4/17 Assignment 4

## **DISABILITY SERVICES**

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. 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. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If you are ill and need to miss class, including if you are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of a viral infection or fever, please let me know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; or [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu).

## **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, 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 the instructor for this course.

## **RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS**

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the [Office of Institutional Equity](#). Policy: [Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances](#)

## **GRIEVANCES AND SOLVING PROBLEMS**

According to University Policies, if you have a problem with this class, you should seek to resolve the grievance concerning a grade or academic practice by speaking first with the instructor or professor. Then, if necessary, take your case to the department chairperson, college dean or associate dean, and to the provost, in that order. Specific procedures are outlined in Faculty Rule 3335-8-23. Grievances against graduate, research, and teaching assistants should be submitted first to the supervising instructor, then to the chairperson of the assistant's department.

## **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](https://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](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

## **DIVERSITY**

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity of people and ideas. We believe in creating equitable research opportunities for all students and to providing programs and curricula that allow our students to understand critical societal challenges from diverse perspectives and aspire to use research to promote sustainable solutions for all. We are committed to maintaining an inclusive community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among all members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach their own potential. The Ohio State University does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment.

To learn more about diversity, equity, and inclusion and for opportunities to get involved, please visit:

<https://odi.osu.edu/>

<https://cbssc.osu.edu>

## **HARASSMENT**

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false

pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Office of Institutional Equity:

Online reporting form at [equity.osu.edu](https://equity.osu.edu),

Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,

Or Email [equity@osu.edu](mailto:equity@osu.edu)

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Office of Institutional Equity to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.
- The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.