

Geographical Perspectives on **Environment and Society**

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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? Must we change how we think about nature in order to solve environmental problems? 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 (or “environment” and “society”), 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 overarching goals of the course are (1) to introduce you to key concepts, recurring themes, and important authors and thinkers in these enduring debates, and (2) to help you identify and understand the importance of human-nature relations in contemporary life.

GENERAL EDUCATION

This course meets the requirements of GE for *Social Sciences: Human, Natural, and Economic Resources*. The goal of the Social Science GE is that students understand 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 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 society, behavior, and the natural world. 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.

READINGS

- There is no single text for this course. The readings include a variety of articles, book chapters, and reports, 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.*
- We will watch a variety of videos in class. The majority of these are available on 4-hour reserve at the Thompson (Main) Library if you want to watch them on your own.

COURSE WEBSITE

On the Carmen website for this course you will find electronic readings, course handouts, announcements, a drop box, and your grades. Please check your grades regularly and inform me as soon as possible if you notice any irregularities or you have questions about how you are being graded.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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| Attendance and participation | 15% |
| Quiz 1 | 12% |
| Quiz 2 | 12% |
| Quiz 3 | 12% |
| Quiz 4 | 12% |
| Take-home midterm exam | 15% |
| Take-home final exam | 22% |

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 key ideas to their definitions and authors. Each of the **take-home exams** requires you to write an essay in which you use course concepts to 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. I will provide detailed assignments for the exams.

GRADING POLICIES

- You cannot participate if you do not attend class. 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. You will need to document the emergency.
- Late exams will lose 10% (i.e. a full letter grade) for every day they are late. You can avoid losing points by making alternative arrangements with me AHEAD OF TIME.
- When working on take-home exams you may talk with other students, but the analysis and writing must be yours. You must do your writing individually and you must not share your written essays with each other. I will question any essays that are very similar (i.e. they need not be identical for me to raise questions). *Failure to follow these guidelines will be considered academic misconduct.*
- To pass the course:
 - You must receive a total grade of at least 60%.
 - You must complete all the exams. Regardless of how well you do on other parts of the course, you will not pass the course if you fail to turn in an exam.
- 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
- PLEASE SEE ME if you are having problems that prevent you from meeting any of the above requirements. We may be able to make alternative arrangements.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

OSU COUNSELING AND CONSULTATION SERVICES

A recent American College Health Survey found stress, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, interpersonal concerns, death of a significant other and alcohol use among the top ten health impediments to academic performance. Students experiencing personal problems or situational crises are encouraged to contact the OSU Counseling and Consultation Services (292-5766; <http://www.ccs.ohio-state.edu>) for assistance, support, and advocacy. This service is free to students and is confidential.

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 and academic 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 words to using someone else's ideas without being clear the ideas are not yours. Please use citations to differentiate between your ideas and those you got from other sources (such as books, articles, and webpages).

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS, IN-CLASS VIDEOS, AND ASSIGNMENTS
(Subject to change)

I: ARE HUMANS SEPARATE FROM NATURE?

- Th Aug 28 Introduction: placing humans and nature
- Tu Sep 2 Strange natures
Read: Castree (2005; pp. 1-9 “Strange Natures”)
In-class video: *The Lorax* (1972 version)
- Th Sep 4 Domination of/by nature
Read: Marsh (1965 [1864]), Glacken (1967), Wisner (2005)
- Tu Sept 9 Organic vs. mechanistic worldviews
Read: Merchant (1992)
- Th Sept 11 Dualism between Humans and Nature
Read: re-read Merchant (1992)
- Tu Sept 16 What counts as human? What counts as nature?
Read: Soper (1995); Benton and Short (2000, pp. 21-23, “Invented Indian”);
Gregory (2001)
- Th Sept 18 Preservation
Read: Benton and Short (2000, pp. 60-77, “No holier temple”); Muir (1901);
Runte (1979)
- Tu Sept 23 Conservation and the Land Ethic
Read: Roosevelt (1901); Pinchot (1910); Leopold (1949)
- Th Sept 25 Case study: *Ancient Forests, Rage over Trees* (in-class video and discussion)
- Tu Sept 30 **QUIZ 1 IN CLASS, ON MATERIAL AUG 28-SEPT 25**
TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DISCUSSED AND PRACTICED IN CLASS
- Th Oct 2 Cultural ecology
Read: Robbins (2004, “Cultural ecology”)
- Tu Oct 7 Case study: *The Goddess and the Computer* (in-class video and discussion)
TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE

- Th Oct 9 Modern environmentalism: “Silent Spring”
 Read: Dowie (1996, read 18-28 but only skim 9-19, which recaps ideas we have covered), Carson (1962)
 In-class video: Excerpts of *Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring*
- Tu Oct 14 Modern environmentalism: “The Population Bomb”
 Read: Ehrlich (1969), Castree (2005, pp. 112-117, “Ideologies of nature”)
- Th Oct 16 Sustainable Development and Deep Ecology: 1980s environmentalism
 Read: WCED (1987), Devall and Sessions (1985)

II. SOCIAL NATURES

- Tu Oct 21 Political ecology (PE)
 Read: Robbins (2012, “Political Ecology,” pp. 11-20 and 87-94)
QUIZ 2 IN CLASS, ON MATERIAL OCT 2-OCT 16
- Th Oct 23 PE explanations of degradation
 Read: Robbins (2012, “Political Ecology,” pp. 159-167)
- Tu Oct 28 PE and social construction of nature
 Read: Robbins (2012, “Political Ecology,” pp. 122-127 and 130-131 (skip “hard and soft constructivism”)), Cronon (1995, pp. 1-15)
- Th Oct 30 PE case study: Second nature in West Africa
 Read: Fairhead and Leach (1995)
 In-class video: *Second Nature*
- Tu Nov 4 PE of race and Environmental Justice (EJ)
 Read: Bullard (2002)
- Th Nov 6 EJ case study: *Fenceline: A Company Town Divided* (in-class video and discussion)
- Tu Nov 11 NO CLASS: Veteran’s Day
- Th Nov 13 Environmentalism comes home
 Read: Cronon (1995, pp. 16-20); Wilkinson (2013)
QUIZ 3 IN CLASS, ON MATERIAL OCT 21-NOV 6
- Tu Nov 18 Food movements
 Read: Pollan (2010); Smith (2014):
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/10/opinion/sunday/dont-let-your-children-grow-up-to-be-farmers.html>

- Th Nov 20 Green consumerism
Read: Szasz (2007)
- Tu Nov 25 *NO CLASS MEETING: Work on your Final Exam*
- Th Nov 27 NO CLASS: Thanksgiving
- Tu Dec 2 Novel ecosystems: post-wild landscapes
Read: Marris (2011, pp. 1-15), Mansfield et al. (2015)
- Th Dec 4 Novel ecosystems: the human body and “epigenetics”
Read: Guthman and Mansfield (2013; skim background info, as in section II)
- Tu Dec 9 **QUIZ 4 IN CLASS, ON MATERIAL NOV 13-DEC 4**
- Fr Dec 12 **TAKE-HOME FINAL 3 DUE BY 8PM (time is based on examination schedule)**