

The Pennsylvania State University

Geography 430: Human Use of the Environment

Spring Semester 2009

INSTRUCTOR: Brian J. Gareau, PhD
COURSE LOCATION: Room 109, Walker
Building, Tues. and Thurs. 1:00 - 2:15 PM

OFFICE: Room 215 Walker
OFFICE HOURS: Thurs 2:30-4:30
EMAIL: bjg23@psu.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW

Environmental sociologist Michael Bell once stated that “social and environmental interactions are best understood as a kind of ecological dialogue, an unfinalizable conversation in which one interchange leads to another.” Environmentalists like Bell have tried to devise the best way to think about society/nature inter-linkages for a long time. A chief concern of many human geographers working in this area is the continued survival of both society and nature. Such a task is not easy. Indeed, Bell went on to note that, for most students, courses that deal with human uses of the environment are “depressing,” and that he too often feels “disheartened and discouraged.” The condition of the environment today can often lead to discouragement. However, the topic must not be ignored, and society/nature relations must be improved. The changes that are necessary to make society/nature relations sustainable will not be easy: Indeed, many human geographers link the severity of environmental degradation to the particular way in which modern society is organized today.

GEOG 430 examines the human use of resources and ecosystems, the multiple causes and consequences of environmental degradation, and adaptive institutional and policy arrangements as prerequisites for resilient and sustainable management and development in different parts of the world. The major objective of this course is to help geographers, earth scientists, and other professionals to develop an awareness and appreciation of the perspectives that human geography brings to studies of human use of the environment and of the ways in which resource-management decisions are made in human societies.

GEOG 430 is designed as a collective/social learning experience. This implies that the professor and students share responsibility for the learning process and take advantage of collective skills, insights, experiences, and efforts of each other. As part of this philosophy, learning consists not only of information flow from professor to student, but also from student to student and student to professor.

To make this process work, attendance and active participation are imperative. The course is run more like a seminar than a lecture course and integrates mini-lectures, in-class discussions, presentations, and research. Student performance is evaluated based on *active participation* in all of the above, individual short assignments, group projects, exams, and one major writing assignment.

SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course has several specific objectives: First, to review ‘modernist’ theories of human organization that inform contemporary discussions in human geography of human-environment relationships; second, to review some of the contemporary approaches that human geographers utilize to interrogate contemporary environmental issues. This will include a review of approaches that 1) adopt a ‘liberal’ approach to resolving environmental problems; 2) adopt a managerial approach to resolving environmental problems, and 3) are critical of capitalism as a social formation, and thus adopt a ‘critical’ approach to resolve environmental problems. In order to review these three veins of environmental problem-solving, we must first explain how modern capitalism functions, and describe its human-environmental implications. This second goal will involve reviewing case studies, both local and global. Third, the course will investigate global environmental governance, which has entered a “neoliberal” moment. To understand global environmental governance and its human-environmental impacts, we will look at the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, World Bank eco-development policies, and a case of eco-development success from the global South, in Curitiba, Brazil.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

By taking this course students will acquire a critical understanding of the complex relationship between humans and the natural environment in capitalist societies, and work through ideas about how to make future human uses of the environment more “sustainable.”

REQUIREMENTS

Five Books:

1. Cronon, William (1991) *Nature’s Metropolis*, NY: W.W. Norton.
2. Domhoff, William (2008) *Who Rules America?* 5th Edition. McGraw-Hill.
3. Foster, John Bellamy (1999). *The Vulnerable Planet*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
4. Goldman, Michael. 2005. *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
5. Hawken, Paul, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins. *Natural Capitalism*. Boston: Little Brown, 1999.

Online readings:

Weekly readings beyond the assigned books will be made available on ANGEL, or at the URL posted, or by clicking on the online version of the syllabus (also available on ANGEL).

RESEARCH PAPER:

Students will select a research topic related to human use of the environment from a list constructed by students and the instructor. The students will devise a research project, and submit a 10-15 page (1.5 spacing) research paper due on the last day of class.

Students should be prepared to discuss their research on the last day of class.

RESEARCH PAPERS SHOULD CONSIST OF:

A well thought-out essay of how the readings in this course help you understand a current environmental issue. Take some of the theories and insights discussed in this course and apply it to an issue that is important to you.

Some topics we might consider are:

- 1- Global Climate Change
- 2- The Obama Administration's answer to Human-Environmental Issues
- 3- A Case Study on PSU's Role in Thwarting Climate Change
- 4- The Iraq War
- 5- Unemployment and the Environment
- 6- The Housing/Mortgage Crisis and the Environment
- 7- Environmental Protests and State response
- 8- The Media and Ideas about the Environment

*** You should discuss your topic with me by the beginning of Week 8 ***

EXAMINATIONS:

There will be a mid-term take-home exam (essay format) covering Parts 1 and 2 of the course, and a final exam covering Parts 3, 4, and 5 of the course during finals week.

WEEKLY READINGS SUMMARIES:

You must provide a one-page (AT LEAST) summary of the readings **every time** we meet, to be turned on the day the readings are assigned. *You can miss THREE of these summaries.* Late summaries will not be accepted. I will turn these back to you for you to use in exam preparation and for research papers.

Reading Response should provide:

- 1- General purpose of the piece
 - a. Why did the author write this book, chapter, or article?
 - b. What is the argument of the book, chapter, or article?
- 2- Specifics about the piece
 - a. What is the evidence the author uses to back up his claims?
 - b. What theories or perspectives inform the author's claims?
- 3- Questions about the piece
 - a. What is confusing to you?
 - b. What questions does the book, chapter, or article leave unanswered?
 - c. PLEASE MAKE NOTES AND MARK PAGE NUMBERS SO WE CAN FIND THE QUESTIONS IN THE TEXT

- 4- Comments on the piece
- a. What do you like about the book, chapter, or article?
 - b. What do you dislike about the book, chapter, or article?
 - c. How does the book, chapter, or article help us understand environmental issues and their connection to societies today?
 - i. PLEASE TRY TO BE SPECIFIC HERE. DRAW FROM YOUR OWN KNOWLEDGE, CLASSES, EXPERIENCES, AND PREVIOUS READINGS IN THIS COURSE AND OTHER COURSES TO BACK UP YOUR OWN CLAIMS AND CRITICISMS.

STUDENT-LED DISCUSSIONS

Students will divide into two-person teams on the first day of the semester. Each team will be responsible for providing a 15-20 minute (not any longer please!) introduction of the readings assigned for the day. The teams should:

1. Provide an overview of the piece
2. Provide a set of questions for us to answer as a class
3. Provide critical remarks about the piece based on:
 - a. Personal experience
 - b. Readings and theories and case studies discussed in the course

***** Each Student should sign up to lead at least one discussion *****

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Geography 430 is a seminar-format class that consists almost entirely of group discussion. Students' final grade will depend, in part, on the quality of their participation in class discussion. Obviously, adequate participation requires regular attendance. Also, you must be respectful of other's viewpoints, experiences, orientation, etc. when discussing the concepts in this class. Debate is inevitable and useful, but please be respectful. If you are not, you will be asked to withdraw from the course immediately.

Each of you will be expected to keep abreast of the reading every time we meet. We have a good deal of material to cover, so the success of the seminar depends on the **active participation of everyone.**

During the first meeting we shall organize ourselves and generate a schedule of presentations. You must come prepared with a one-page (at least) write-up on the day's reading **every class**. Make notes, comments, questions, and critiques on the readings. **Readings should be studied before the day for which they are assigned.**

ASSESSMENT

All grades in Geography 430 are based on the percentages shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. GRADE SCALE

Letter Grade	% Range
A	93-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-90
B	83-87
B-	80-83
C+	78-80
C	73-78
C-	70-73
D+	67-70
D	63-67
D-	60-63
F	<60

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND ASSOCIATED GRADES.

Students are responsible for the work listed in Table 2.

Table 2. STUDENT WORK & PERCENTAGE OF GRADE EARNED

Exam #1	10%
Final exam	15%
Team-led Discussion	15%
Research Paper	20%
Daily Reading Summaries	20%
In-class Participation	20%

COURSE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

The Instructor will levy penalties for academic dishonesty using College of Earth and Mineral Sciences and Penn State policies. For an overview of these policies, see “Policies and Rules for Students, Section 49-20” at <http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/> and follow the links to “G-9 Academic Integrity Procedure.” For the various violation categories, sanction considerations, and sanction ranges, see <http://www.ems.psu.edu/students/integrity/tables.html>.

The first violation will result in the final course grade dropping by one full grade and the student signing an academic integrity form. When students refuse to sign, the Instructor will follow the “G-9 Academic Integrity Procedure.” Second violations will result in course failure. For documentation of disciplinary action procedures, see <http://www.ems.psu.edu/students/integrity/daprocedure.html>.

Learning Disabilities and Accommodations

Students with learning disabilities must let the Instructor know as soon as possible so that he can work with the students to develop appropriate accommodations. If students with learning disabilities do not let the Instructor know about their disabilities at least one week before the first midterm exam, then the students will have to take the exam without accommodations.

READING SCHEDULE

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

WEEK 1

Tue Jan 13

Introduction and Course Overview

No assigned reading

Thurs Jan 15

Theme: Society, Nature, Enlightenment, History, Marxism, liberalism, nation-state, civil society, industry, production, capitalism, contradictions

Read: “Economics Explained,” by Heilbroner and Thurow (ANGEL)

Discussants:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

WEEK 2

Tue Jan 20

Theme: The 'Big Picture': Contemporary Debates on the Environment

Read:

1. "[A Convenient Untruth](#)," by Michael Shnayerson, May 2007 *Vanity Fair* (ANGEL)
2. "[Some Like it Hot](#)," by Chris Mooney, *Mother Jones* May/June 2005 (ANGEL)
3. "The Perfect Storm: Catastrophic Collapse in the 21st Century," by Glen Kuecker (ANGEL)

Shnayerson and Mooney articles also available at:

<http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/05/skeptic200705>
http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2005/05/some_like_it_hot.html

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

4. _____

Thurs Jan 22

Theme: Human Geography and the Environment,: What Does Human Geography Contribute?

Read:

1. "Geography and the Global Environment," by Diana Liverman (ANGEL)
2. "Americans and their Weather," by William B. Meyer (ANGEL)
3. "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," by William Cronon (ANGEL)
4. "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race," By Jared Diamond (ANGEL)

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

4. _____

PART 2: HISTORY OF HUMAN USE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

WEEK 3

Tue Jan 27

Theme: Eco-Historical views of Human-Environment Relations

Read:

1. "The Vulnerable Planet," by John Bellamy Foster

- a. Preface
- b. The Ecological Crisis

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

Thurs Jan 29

Theme: Eco-Historical views of Human-Environment Relations (cont.)

Read:

- 1. "The Vulnerable Planet"
 - a. Ecological Conditions before the Industrial Revolution
 - b. The Environment at the Time of the Industrial Revolution
- 2. "An Essay on the Principle of Population," by Thomas Malthus (ANGEL)

Discussants:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

WEEK 4

Tue Feb 3

Theme: Eco-Historical views of Human-Environment Relations (cont.)

Read:

1. "The Vulnerable Planet"
 - a. Expansion and Conservation
 - b. Imperialism and Ecology

Discussants:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Thurs Feb 5

Theme: Bringing it Home: The Roles of the United States in Human-Environment Relations Worldwide

Read:

1. "The Vulnerable Planet"
 - a. The Vulnerable Planet
2. Interrogating the Treadmill of Production: Everything You Wanted to Know about the Treadmill but Were Afraid to Ask," Gould, Pellow and Allen Schnaiberg, *Organization & Environment* 17:296-316 (2004) (ANGEL)

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

PART 3: DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POWER AND ITS LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

WEEK 5

Tue Feb 10

Theme: Power in America

Read:

1. "Who Rules America," by G. William Domhoff
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Class and Power in America

Discussants:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thurs Feb 12

Theme: Power in America (cont.)

Read:

1. "Who Rules America," by G. William Domhoff
 - a. The Corporate Community
 - b. The Corporate Community and the Upper Cass

***** Exam 1 Handed out *****

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

WEEK 6

Tue Feb 17

Theme: Power in America (cont.)

Read:

1. "Who Rules America," by G. William Domhoff
 - a. How the Power Elite Dominate Government
 - b. The Big Picture

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

Thurs Feb 19

Theme: The Role of the Corporate World in Contemporary Society

No Assigned Reading

Film: The Corporation

***** Exam 1 Due Today*****

WEEK 7

Tue Feb 24

Theme: Classic Case Study: Environmental History of 19th Century America: Understanding 'Nature' and 'Society'

Read:

1. "Nature's Metropolis," by William Cronon
 - a. Prologue
 - b. Dreaming the Metropolis
 - c. Rails and Water

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

Thurs Feb 26

Theme: Classic Case Study: Environmental History of 19th Century America (cont.): 'Nature' to Market

Read:

1. "Nature's Metropolis," by William Cronon
 - a. The Wealth of Nature: Lumber
 - b. Annihilating Space: Meat

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

WEEK 8

Tue Mar 3

Theme: Classic Case Study: Environmental History of 19th Century America (cont.)

The Geography of Capital

Read:

1. "Nature's Metropolis," by William Cronon
 - a. The Busy Hive
 - b. White City Pilgrimage
 - c. Epilogue

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

PART 4: AMERICAN POWER AND ITS GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Thurs Mar 5

Theme: Globalization: Global Governance, Economic Policies, and the Battle of Ideas

No assigned reading

Film: Commanding Heights: The Battle for the World Economy

WEEK 9

Tue Mar 10

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS

Thurs Mar 12

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS

WEEK 10

Tue Mar 17

Theme: Global Governance and Neoliberalism: NAFTA

Read:

McCarthy, J. 2004. Privatizing Conditions of Production: Trade Agreements and Environmental Governance. *Geoforum* 35 (3):269-393. (ANGEL)

Discussants:

1. _____

2. _____

Thurs Mar 19

Global Governance and Neoliberalism: Montreal Protocol

Read:

Gareau, B. J. 2008. Dangerous Holes in Global Environmental Governance: The Roles of Neoliberal Discourse, Science, and California Agriculture in the Montreal Protocol. *Antipode* 40 (1):102-130. (ANGEL)

Gareau, B.J. and E. M. DuPuis. 2009. From Public to Private Global Environmental Governance: Lessons from the Montreal Protocol's Methyl Bromide Phase-out. *Environment and Planning A*. (ANGEL)

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

WEEK 11

Tue Mar 24

Theme: Global Governance and Green Neoliberalism: World Bank

Read:

1. "Imperial Nature," by Michael Goldman
 - a. Preface
 - b. Chapter 1: Introduction

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

Thurs Mar 26

Theme: Global Governance and Green Neoliberalism: World Bank (cont.)

Read:

1. "Imperial Nature," by Michael Goldman
 - a. Chapter 2: The Rise of the Bank
 - b. Chapter 3: Producing Green Science inside Headquarter

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

WEEK 12

Tue Mar 31

Theme: Global Governance and Green Neoliberalism: World Bank (cont.)

Read:

1. "Imperial Nature," by Michael Goldman
 - a. Chapter 4: The Birth of a Discipline
 - b. Chapter 5: Eco-Governmentality and the Making of an Environmental State

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

Thurs Apr 2

Theme: Global Governance and Green Neoliberalism: World Bank (cont.)

Read:

1. "Imperial Nature," by Michael Goldman
 - a. Chapter 6: Privatizing Water, Neoliberalizing Civil Society

Discussants:

1. _____

2. _____

PART 4: MARKET-BASED APPROACHES TO HUMAN-ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

Week 13

Tue Apr 7

Theme: Natural Capitalism

Read:

1. "Natural Capitalism," by Paul Hawken et al.
 - a. Preface
 - b. Chapter 1: The Next Industrial Revolution
 - c. Chapter 2: Reinventing the Wheels

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

Thurs Apr 9

Theme: Natural Capitalism

Read:

1. "Natural Capitalism," by Paul Hawken et al.
 - a. Chapter 3: Waste Not
 - b. Chapter 4: Making the World

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

WEEK 14

Tue Apr 14

Theme: Natural Capitalism

Read:

1. "Natural Capitalism," by Paul Hawken et al.
 - a. Chapter 8: Capital Gains
 - b. Chapter 9: Nature's Filaments

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

Thurs Apr 16

Theme: Sustainable Industrialization: An Innovative Approach

Read:

1. From "Sustainable Industrialization," by David Wallace
 - a. Chapter 1
 - b. Chapter 3

Discussants:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

Part 5 SOLUTIONS

WEEK 15

Tue Apr 21

Theme: Solutions to Human-Environment Problems

No Assigned Reading:

Film: Urban Solution: Curitiba

Thurs Apr 23

Theme: Solutions to Human-Environment Problems (cont.)

Read:

1. From "The Vulnerable Planet"
 - a. The Socialization of Nature
 - b. Afterword
2. From "Natural Capitalism"
 - a. Chapter 15: Once Upon a Planet
3. From "Imperial Nature"
 - a. Chapter 7: Conclusion

Discussants:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |

Week 16

Tue Apr 28

Theme: Solutions (cont.)

1. From "Sustainable Industrialization," by David Wallace
 - a. Conclusion (ANGEL)
 - b. Team Discussants:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
|----------|----------|

Thurs Apr 30

Theme: Course Reflections

No Assigned Reading

***** Research Papers Due *****