

Anthropology/Sociology 321 Ecological Anthropology

Classroom: 102 Clough
Class Time: 1-1:50 pm
Office Hours: MW 11-12
or by appointment

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Course Statement

What is ecological anthropology? Well, put simply, it is the study of the relationships between people and their environments. But the goal is not just to study and compare, but to understand how people have adapted to their environments, or shaped their environments, and what the resulting ecosystem looks like, with the goal of maintaining diversity or perhaps finding a better way to do things. It is an interactive system, one that we constantly adjust and adjust to.

Most of this adaptation is NOT via morphological change, but occurs through the medium of culture. It is through different people's cultures that they adapt to similar environments. Culture structures how people perceive their environment. This is actually a really neat thing. Two groups living in a similar environment can "see" the environment in totally different ways depending on how they obtain their living. We'll examine subsistence practices, modern and traditional foodways, identity, indigenous rights, etc. If there is a specific topic you are interested in, please let me know and we can explore this together as a class.

Students will enjoy freedom of speech in this course as long as their statements are relevant, respectful, and polite. This is supposed to be a critical thinking course that offers students the opportunity to openly express their questions, ideas, and comments for discussion.

Goals:

To introduce students to ecological theory and its application to human beings.

To place our own society and contemporary environmental problems within a wider social context and a deeper temporal framework. Will we survive and how?

To understand what it means to live "sustainably". How can this be achieved? What are the social and economic implications of sustainable living for modern societies around the world?

Required Textbooks:

Moran, Emilio F.

2006 *People and Nature: An Introduction to Human Ecological Relations*. Blackwell Publishing, Malden, Massachusetts.

Haenn, Nora and Richard R. Wilk (eds)

2006 *The Environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living*. New York University Press, New York.

Diamond, Jared

2005 *Collapse*. Penguin, New York.

Grading

I will give you two exams, a midterm and a final, each worth 25%. Class participation is mandatory and counts for another 30% of your grade. Finally, each of you will submit a presentation worth 20%. I will discuss the presentations later in class.

Attendance et al.

What you get out of this class really depends on what you put in to it. And my tests and assignments are not drawn straight from the textbook. As such, your grade depends on you being present. There are reasons for an excused absence, but even so, if you aren't in class, you aren't participating (30% of your grade, remember). I also expect you to be on-time and to turn off your cell phones, not do crosswords or Sudoku in class, etc. If you have any special needs, it is your responsibility to let me know about that ahead of time, and not just the day before. Please see the student handbook for further details about special needs considerations.

Schedule

This schedule is merely a framework, a skeleton. I will have additional readings for you which I will normally place online in the fac/staff server. I will assign those as needed. Please be aware that as the class evolves, the syllabus may change as well.

Week 1: 8/26-8/28 Introduction to Ecological Anthropology

Readings: H&W, ch. 1-3; 6

Week 2: 8/31-9/4 Environmental Archaeology & Past Human Environments

Readings: Moran, ch. 1-2

Questions to consider: How might understanding past environmental relations/adaptations help us? In what ways are we projecting our ideas onto the past?

Labor day—No class on 9/7

Week 3: 9/7-9/11 Subsistence & Sustainability—Foraging, Agriculture, Pastoralism

Readings: Moran, ch. 3; H&W, ch. 18 & 23; handout—Solway & Lee, "Foragers..."

Q: Why has agriculture become so widespread and how has it helped and hindered our global environmental problems?

Week 4: 9/14-9/18 Subsistence & Sustainability, cont'd

Readings: Moran, ch. 4-5; handout—Steward, "The Great Basin Shoshonean Indians..."

Week 5: 9/21-9/25 Environmentalism & Indigenous Knowledges--Identity & Environment

Readings: handout—Evans-Pritchard, "Interest in Cattle"; Frake, "Pleasant Places..."

Week 6: 9/28-10/2 Environmentalism & Indigenous Knowledges

Readings: H&W, ch. 28; Tsing, "Becoming a Tribal Elder..."

Q: Is "environmentalism" a "Western" phenomenon? Are there fundamental differences between the environmentalism of the Western world (the industrialized superpowers) and that of the "third world"?

Week 7: 10/5-10/9 Global "Development" & Local Environments

Readings: Moran, ch. 6-8;

Week 8: 10/12-10/16 Global "Development" cont'd.

Fall Break—no class 10/19-10/21

Week 9: 10/19-10/23 Environmental Ethics & Environmental Justice

Readings: H&W, ch. 24; (read Collapse over break)

Q: What is the relationship between poverty and environmentalism?

Week 10: 10/26-10/30 Natural Disasters & Human Adaptation

Readings: Collapse; handout—Firth, "Critical Pressures on Food Supply..."

SEAC 11/4-11/7

Week 11: 11/2-11/6 Eco-Tourism

Readings: H&W 41

Week 12: 11/9-11/13 Global Warming

Readings: handout—Broecker, "The Great Ocean Conveyor"

Q: Why are there still "debates" about global warming?

Week 13: 11/16-11/20 What can we do?

Week 14: 11/23-11/27 Cont.

Thanksgiving Break—no class 11/24-11/27

Week 15: 11/30-12/4 Class presentations

Week 16: 12/7-12/9 Review

Last day of class 12/9