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## ANSO 271-01, Ecological Anthropology, Fall 2011

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# **ANSO 271: Ecological Anthropology**

**Fall 2011**

**MWF 12:00-12:50 pm, Clough Hall 102**

**Instructor: Kimberly Kasper**

**Office: Clough 101**

**Office Hours: M, W 10-11 pm, Th. 1-2 and by appt.**

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## **Course Description:**

This course emphasizes the interconnectedness between people and nature. We will be concerned with people's perceptions of and interactions with their physical and biological surroundings, and the various linkages between biological and cultural worlds. Topics to be explored include the processes of domestication, human alteration of the environment, the ecology of indigenous foodways, traditional ecological knowledge of plants, natural resource sustainability, environmental racism, and conservation policies through time and space. My goal in teaching this class is to provide you with a broader understanding of the role of culture in sustaining the diversity of plant and animal life on earth, and the role of nature and AGENCY in perpetuating cultural knowledge for future generations.

Some of the questions we will explore are:

- How do we define "nature" and "environment" and how do understandings of the human relationship with the natural world vary cross-culturally?
- How have humans shaped the environment over time and how has the environment shaped human societies?
- What is environmental degradation and what roles do humans seem to play in it?
- What happens when groups clash over the control of natural resources, definitions of the value of nature, and ways of preserving or conserving the environment?
- How do social categories like race, ethnicity, gender, and class shape the way that humans interact with the environment and experience the effects of environmental degradation?
- Under what conditions do humans act to conserve resources?
- What is "environmentalism" and who participates in environmental movements?

This course will examine the ways that anthropologists approach these questions and will highlight perspectives to answer the above questions from the subfields of cultural ecology, eco-feminism, historical ecology, ethnoecology, spiritual ecology, political ecology, and environmental justice.

## **Sections of Course:**

This course can be divided into three sections. The sections will not be equal lengths of time.

### **Section One**

In this section, you will be exposed to multiple dimensions and definitions of nature and culture. I will briefly expose you to some of the fieldwork conducted and methods utilized in environmental anthropology. Then, I will move into an in depth discussion of the theoretical framework which serves as the foundation of ecological anthropology today. In this section, you

will be expected to complete a short method based exercise. You will also be expected to complete Project #1 which will be a 4-5-page paper. The project will center on deconstructing a well-known book, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and how we as a public view such works that evaluate cultural evolution in relation to the environment.

### **Section Two**

In this section, we will explore the current theoretical constructs that constitute ecological anthropology in today's world. We will discuss each paradigm (eco-tourism, ethnoecology, political ecology etc.) at length through our readings and case studies. In this section, you will be expected to be complete a film exercise and project #2 in which you and a partner will compare two cultural groups and their perceptions and interactions with their environments. (Your individual papers should be 4-5 pages and the group presentations will be 10 minutes). Also you will start working on your final papers were you choose an aspect of environmental anthropology which cultivates interest and/or is related to your declared major.

### **Section Three**

Within this last section, we will discuss sustainability and development in our ever-changing world. We will highlight how ecological anthropology is important to our modern world and how you "fit" into that grand scheme. You also will be expected to finish your final research project (7-10 pages) and be expected to briefly discuss your topic to the class (5-7 minutes).

### **Course Objectives:**

- 1) introduce principal approaches in current *ecological anthropology* and the key concepts within each;
- 2) practical environmental *problems and issues* as well as environmental discourses viewed from the perspective of these approaches;
- 3) the pivotal role of *culture AND agency* in human ecology, adaptations, maladaptations, environmental change, and environmental concerns;
- 4) how people *culturally* conceptualize, manipulate, transform, and humanize their natural environments over time; and
- 5) ecological and anthropological *thinking* about the above and the larger context of the development of ecology and environmentalism.

### **Required Texts:**

Merchant, Carolyn, 2005, *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Sustainable World* (Second Edition), New York, NY: Routledge. [Be sure to use the Second Edition which is substantially different from the first one].

Townsend, Patricia K., 2009, *Environmental Anthropology: From Pigs to Policies*, Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc. (Second Edition) [Be sure to use the Second Edition which is substantially different from the first one].

**Additional Readings (These articles and selected chapters from these books will be provided on Moodle – the bolded books will also be available at bookstore for purchase):**

**Anderson, M. Kat**

**2005 *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*. University of California Press, Berkeley. (selected chapters)**

Bal  e, William

1998 Introduction. In *Advances in Historical Ecology*, edited by William Bal  e, pp. 1-10. Columbia University Press, New York.

Bal  e, William and Erikson, Clark (editors)

2006 *Time and Complexity in Historical Ecology: Case Studies in the Neotropical Lowlands*. Columbia University Press, New York. (selected chapters)

Butzer, Karl

1983 *Archaeology as Human Ecology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. (selected chapters)

Carniero, R. L.

1970 A Theory of the Origin of the State. *Science* 169(3947):733-738.

Crumley, Carol

1994 Historical Ecology: A Multidimensional Ecological Orientation. In *Historical Ecology: Cultural Knowledge and Changing Landscapes*, edited by Carol Crumley. School of American Research Press, Santa Fe.

Dincauze, Dena

2003 *Environmental Archaeology: Principles and Practice*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. (selected chapters)

Errington, Fredrick and Deborah Gewertz

2002 *Yali's Questions: Sugar, Culture, and History*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. (selected chapters)

Escobar, Arturo

1998 Does Biodiversity Exist? *Journal of Political Ecology* 5:54-56.

**Diamond, Jared**

**1996 *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. W.W. Norton and Company, New York. (selected chapters)**

Kottak, Conrad

1999. The New Ecological Anthropology. *American Anthropologist* 101(1):23-25.

Nazarea, Virginia

1999 A View from a Point: Ethnoecology as Situated Knowledge. In *Ethnoecology: Situated Knowledge, Situated Lives*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

**Norberg-Hodge, Helena**

**2009 *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco.**

Rappaport, R. A.

1978 Maladaptation in Social Systems. In, *The Evolution of Social Systems*, edited by J. Friedman and M. J. Rowlands. Duckworth, London.

Richerson, P. J.

1977. Ecology and Human Ecology: A Comparison of Theories in the Biological and Social Sciences. *American Ethnologist* 4(1):1-26.

Smith, E. A. 1984. Anthropology, Evolutionary Ecology, and the Explanatory Limitations of the Ecosystem Concept. In *The Ecosystem Concept in Anthropology*, edited by E. F. Moran. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Steward, J. H.

1955 *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. (selected chapters)

Stonich, Susan and Billie DeWalt

1996 The Political Ecology of Deforestation in Honduras. In *Tropical Deforestation: The Human Dimension*, edited by Leslie E. Sponsel, Thomas N. Headland, and Robert C. Bailey. Columbia University Press, New York.

**Taylor, Sarah**

**2007 *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. (selected chapters)**

White, L.

1949 Energy and the Evolution of Culture. In *The Science of Culture*. Farrar, Straus and Co., New York.

**Course Grading:**

Class Participation	15%
Methods Exercise	10%
Film Exercise	10%
News Exercise	10%
Project #1	15%
Project #2	15%
Final Research Project	25%
Total	100 %

**Grading Scale:**

Final grades will be determined using the following percentages

93 - 100 %	A	73 - 76 %	C
90 - 92 %	A-	70 - 72 %	C-
87 - 89 %	B+	67 - 69 %	D+
83 - 86 %	B	60 - 66 %	D
80 - 82 %	B-	59 % and below	F
77 - 79 %	C+		

**Course Requirements:**

This course requires that students engage in critical thinking and critical reading, and thus students are expected to come to class regularly, take thorough notes on lectures, and complete all reading assignments for the dates indicated. While some class meetings will include more lecture than others, student participation is an essential component of the course. All students must be prepared to respond to questions regarding reading assignments, lectures, and films on a weekly basis, and to participate in class discussion sessions and group exercises. One of the best ways to be consistently prepared for all components of this course is to take good notes on lectures *as well as* assigned readings. Use your course notebook to record any and all responses and questions you have regarding readings, lectures, and films. All work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with the Rhodes College Honor Code. I will be diligent about reporting all violations to the Honor Council. If you have questions about plagiarism you should talk to me directly.

**Readings:** All readings from the textbooks and additional readings are required. Assigned weekly readings should be completed before Monday morning of the current week.

**In-Class Participation:** Students are expected to attend **all** classes, complete **all** readings, and actively participate in **all** discussions. Fifteen-percent of your class grade will be on participation. This is a significant percentage of your grade. The grade is based on the student's attendance, his/her willingness to verbally participate in discussion, commitment to learning, and demonstrated preparation for discussion. The only excused absences are illness with documentation and athletic obligations that are documented before hand.

**Exercises:** Each student will be expected to complete three exercises. The first exercise will be a method exercise. The second exercise will related to watching films on Moddle. Last, the news exercise will be due one time for each student throughout the semester. On the first day of class you will be assigned a week in which you will have to bring a current event related to human environmental interactions anywhere in the world. You will be asked to give a brief summary of the article to class and discuss why it sparked your interest etc.

**Projects:** There are 3 required projects for this class. Each of the projects will have a detailed outline as the semester follows. Project #1 focuses on the Diamond (1996), Errington and Gewertz (2004) and additional outside references. Project #2 consists of comparing and contrasting two cultural groups and their perceptions and interactions with their environments. Last, your Final Research project will consist of a topic that is self-chosen and should be related to your major and/or an area of interest.

**Course Schedule:** This is subject to revisions as the semester proceeds. Readings are to be completed on or before the assigned days. Also, remember that the **News Exercise** will be due for each student depending on your week to present a “hot topic”.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
Week 1: Aug. 25-28	Course Introduction	Kottak 1999 (Fri)
Week 2: Aug 29 – Sept. 2	The Complexity in Defining Nature Why Ecological Anthropology? Why Diversity?	Townsend 2000 Chapter 1; Merchant 2005 Chapter 1-3 <b>Film: Planet in Peril</b>
Week 3: Sept. 5-Sept 9	<b>No class Labor Day – Sept. 5</b> Methods of Reconstruction in Ecological Analysis	Dincauze 2000
Week 4: Sept. 12-26	<b>Methods Exercise Due (Mon)</b> Cultural Ecology	Townsend 2000 Chapter 2; Steward 1955; Butzer 1982
Weeks 5: Sept. 19-23	Neoevolutionism and Ecology	White 1949; Carniero 1970; TBA
Week 6: Sept. 26-30	Human Ecology and Evolutionary Ecology	Rappaport 1978; Richerson 1977; Smith 1984
Weeks 7: Oct. 3-7	Human Ecology and Evolutionary Ecology cont.	Diamond 1996; Errington and Gewertz 2004 <b>Film: Guns, Germs and Steel</b>
Weeks 8: Oct. 10-14	<b>Project #1 Due (Wed)</b> Eco-Feminism- Women and Nature	Merchant 2005 Chapter 8; Norberg-Hodge 2009
Week 9: Oct. 17-21	<b>No Class Fall Recess (Mon. Oct. 17)</b> <b>Research Project Topic Due (Wed)</b> Historical Ecology	Crumley 1994; Bal �e 1998; TBA
Week 10: Oct. 24-28	Historical Ecology cont.	Bal �e and Erikson 2006 <b>Film: Ahuapua`a Fishponds and Lo`i (Hawai`i)</b>
Weeks 11: Oct. 31-Nov.4	Ethnoecology	Nazarea 1999; Townsend 2000 Chapter 3-8
Weeks 12: Nov.7-11	Ethnoecology cont. <b>Project #2 Due (Wed) and Class Presentations (Wed and Fri)</b>	Anderson 2005
Week 13: Nov. 14-18	Spiritual Ecology	Merchant 2005 Chapter 5; Taylor 2005 <b>Film: Dirt the Movie</b>
Weeks 14: Nov.21-25	<b>Film Exercise Due (Mon)</b> Political Ecology <b>No Class: Thanksgiving Recess Nov. 23 and 25</b>	Stonich and DeWalt 1996; Escobar 1998
Week 15: Nov.28-Dec. 2	Sustainability, Development and Environmental Justice	Merchant 2005 Chapters 7, 9-10; TBA <b>Film: Radically Simple</b>

Week 16: Dec. 5-7	Wrap Up <b>Final Research Project Due (Wed) and Class Presentations (Wed and Fri)</b>	
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