Environmental Geography
POLI 397
1:40-2:55 TR
Maybank 207

Instructor: Dr. Annette Watson
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Office hours: Tuesdays 3-5 and Wednesdays 2-3, or by appointment

Class Syllabus

Course Description

How do humans and ecologies interact to shape global and local environments, and how do these local and global geographies shape ecosystems and social life? How are global political and economic processes connected to local political and environmental struggles, and how does “the local” matter?

This class critically examines the relationship between humans and their environments, focusing on the politically volatile nature of human resource use. How resource distribution occurs (evenly or unevenly), who controls the distribution, and how the distribution impacts economic, social, and ecological systems are often the source of political conflict and environmental problems. We will study how these political problems interrelate across different spatial and temporal scales, from the individual resource user to international regulatory bodies, and from colonial times to the present day. Our aim is to understand the complexity of such multi-scale, multi-cultural dynamics.

We will question conventional, simplistic explanations of environmental problems, such as “overpopulation,” as well as question traditional categories such as “wilderness” and “the commons.” The goals of this class are thus to challenge students' thinking about environmental problems, develop new frameworks for critical analysis, and discuss practical and conceptual alternatives. Differing ways of explaining environmental problems are important because they form the basis for new political solutions.

The class time will be discussion-driven, punctuated with lectures, group discussions, active learning exercises, student presentations, and video. Students will be evaluated based on their ability to critically approach questions, problems, and solutions to environmental conflicts through written assignments, oral participation and presentations, and projects.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge: Describe key issues in environmental geography; [assessment: exams, project]
- Comprehend: Explain environmental politics in the context of broader social and political geographies; [assessment: exams, project]
- Application: Illustrate the multi-scale nature of resource use and the political struggles for control of resources; [assessment: exams, project]
• Analysis: Analyze the multi-scale environmental problems using geographical methods and theories, often called “political ecology” approaches; [assessment: project]
• Synthesis: Develop skills in critical reading, research, and oral presentation to construct, communicate and present complicated ideas to a lay public audience; [assessment: questions, project]

Course Relevance:
Of interest to students pursuing careers in government, political economics, natural resource management, environmental advocacy, geography, planning, journalism.

Readings
You will be expected to read on average about 70 pages per week; sometimes more, sometimes less. Readings are preparatory; that is they must be read by the date they are listed in the syllabus (by Tuesday or Thursday). Exams and Questions for class discussion are directly tied to the readings, so stay on schedule with the readings. Be sure to have either the digital or hard copy of readings with you when you come to class, even if they are posted on OAKS!

Required texts:
Available at the College Bookstore on Calhoun

All other required readings will be available on OAKS

Assignments and Grading
Short breakdown:
Exams: 32% (two at 10%; final at 12%)
Questions: 20% (2% each)
Participation: 5%
Project Proposal: 7%
Project annotated bibliography: 8%
Project final: 20%
Presentation of project: 8%

This class will be highly interactive, which means that your participation in class will be central to the success of the course (and also to how much you learn). I will expect you to ask questions of me, of the readings, and I will expect you to engage with each others’ ideas. Although I understand that sometimes it can be difficult to speak out in class, everyone is expected to participate in class discussion. If you really fear public speaking, participation also includes emailing me questions before class about terms or points of clarifications you’d like us to cover during class discussion, or even posting on the Geography at CofC facebook page. To succeed in this class you will need to critically evaluate ideas, question them, dispute them, or make them your own. Speak out!

Attendance is mandatory; you may request that your absence be excused only if you are required to participate in college-sponsored activities. If so, you must fill out the appropriate forms at 67 George St., or call Constance Nelson (953-3390). Notices I receive from the Absent Memo Office do not constitute excused absences, and you will be penalized for all unexcused absences.
Questions (20%)

Worth 20% of your final grade; you must complete 10 (2pts each), due in class. You are expected to base your question on the day’s readings. What question, if answered, would allow you to understand the main argument of the author(s)? What concepts are the author(s) introducing that would be significant to understand these environmental politics? You are not expected to cover every single aspect of what we read, but shape a question that would allow the class to better understand the material, NOT debate personal opinions. I will ask you to share your questions in class, at the start of the class period.

Rubric for quality questions brought in to class:
2= Question(s) thoughtfully engaged readings by developing a thematic question relevant to all readings (not specific to one reading); identified key terms to understanding the text/argument; likely introduces the question with some summary of the author(s) purpose to contextualize the question(s)
1.5= Question(s) engage readings by developing a thematic question, or identify key terms to understanding a text/argument
1= Student asked a brief question relevant to one of the readings, but without fully forming a context from which to ask that question
.5=Student asked a question that had little direct relevance to understand the readings, or asked a question that brings in issues from outside of the course.

Exams (32%)

The exams will be both in-class and take home, and will be a mixture of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. Worth a total of 32 points.

Project Proposal (7%)

See separate instructions on creating a professional-quality proposal for the project you wish to do. Grade includes mandatory meeting with professor to discuss the proposal.

Project Annotated Bibliography (8%)

Students will develop an annotated bibliography of 20 peer-review sources that is relevant to your case study or the environmental problems your organization aims to solve. See separate instructions and rubric.

Project (28%, including 8% for final presentation of your project)

This project will build/develop your:
  Verbal, written, and visual communication skills
  Data-gathering skills (primary sources) and reviews of secondary literature
  Skills in different analytical techniques used by geographers/political ecologists.
  Knowledge about at least one environmental issue in depth
You MUST choose one project, and read the further instructions for each, as each have different components, requirements, and rubrics.

A. Service Learning project: you may volunteer for a local environmental group, dedicating at least 15 hours over the semester (it cannot be a one-day event, though a “clean up” or other such one-day project might comprise part of your volunteer effort). You will be required to complete your volunteer assignment, complete an annotated bibliography, write a journal of your experiences and thoughts arising from the assignment, and write a 6-page paper based on a specific question I ask of you, tailored to your volunteer assignment. [READ instructions #A for more details]

B. Research a case study and develop a geographical analysis of that issue. Write a cartoon book, similar to Marx for Beginners or Foucault for Beginners; maybe call yours Political Ecology for Beginners. [READ #B]

C. Create a 5-7 minute short film depicting a case study and develop a geographical analysis of that issue [READ #C]

D. Research a case study. Write a series (3-5) of op-ed news pieces highlighting the analytical tools of geographers. Automatic “A” on the project if you can get at least one in print somewhere (within the semester) with a readership of more than 15,000 people. [READ #E]

General guidelines for grades:

A – achievement is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirement

B – achievement is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.

C – achievement meets the course requirements in every respect.

D – achievement is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.

S/P – achievement is satisfactory which is equivalent to a C- or better.

F – achievement is inadequate and no credit will be given for the course.

I (Incomplete) – assigned due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, which prevent the completion of work on time. Requires an agreement between student and instructor.
This course will use +/- grades, allocated as follows:

A  =92% or above  
A-  =91-90%  
B+ =89-88%  
B   =87-82%  
B-  =81-80%  
C+  =79-78%  
C   =77-72%  
C-  =71-70%  
D+  =69-68%  
D   =67-62%  
D-  =61-60%  
F   =below 59%

Other Class Policies:

Computers/IPAD/ETC: use of such devices are HIGHLY encouraged, particularly if it saves you from printing all the readings. HOWEVER, if I find you surfing or chatting or other such unauthorized use of any internet-capable or text-capable device, you will lose privileges to use your devices in class. Class time is not passive learning, but you are expected to be active and engaged and working on the issues at hand. Texting or facebook-ing distracts you and others from the tasks you are expected to complete, and research has shown that such activities detract from your learning/retention of content. I will play bad cop if I have to, to maintain respect for the classroom space.

It is assumed that all students will act with academic integrity and will not engage in behavior such as plagiarism, academic dishonesty, misrepresentation, or cheating. Please refer to the college’s policy on academic honesty. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will result in an XF in the class. The entire purpose of this class is to acquire useful skills; to cheat is to lose the opportunity to improve these skills. Please refer to the campus honor code for questions about academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism refers to the presentation of someone else's ideas, work, or words as your own, without attribution. If you use someone else's exact words, then you must use quotation marks in addition to a citation; simply naming the source is not enough. If you completely paraphrase someone else's ideas in your own words, then you still have to cite the source, but you do not have to use quotations. When in doubt, cite the source. If you have questions about whether you have provided adequate citation, consult with me before the assignment is due.

Support Services:

Please take advantage of the College’s Center for Student Learning; they have walk-in labs for writing and speaking—two skills you will need to improve (and be graded on!) during this semester. The Center for Student Learning is located in the Addlestone Library (953-5635).

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP located on the first floor of the
Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me one week before accommodation is needed.

**Class Outline**
Readings must be completed by the first class they are listed to be discussed. Even though some of the readings are online, you are responsible for having a digital or hard copy DURING CLASS.

**Week 1: Situating Environmental Geography**

**Tuesday, August 23rd**
Introductions and explanation of syllabus
Foucault said that “space is fundamental to the exercise of power” (1980, 149)
Intro to geographical thinking—Space, place, scale, Nature-society relationships/human-environment studies
I will introduce the project ideas for you to choose from; **write a project proposal DUE no later than September 20th** by 11:59 pm (see instructions on how to write a proposal; worth 7% of your course grade; be sure to schedule individual meeting with me once you submit your proposal via OAKS).


**Thursday, August 25th**


**Week 2: Fundamental Concepts of Environmental Geography**

**Tuesday, August 30th**

Thursday, September 1st


Week 3: “Nature” as a Socio-cultural phenomenon

Tuesday, September 6th


Thursday, September 8th


Week 4:

Tuesday, September 13th

Exam 1 : multiple choice, short answer, short essay (worth 10%)

Thursday, September 15th

No class: Work on your project proposals (Due Sept 20th)

Week 5: Land Tenure, Land Use, Ethics

Tuesday, September 20th


Project proposals DUE by 11:59 pm; you MUST email watsonam@cofc.edu to schedule in-person meeting to receive a grade for this proposal.
Thursday, September 22nd


Week 6: “Local” Communities, Knowledges, and Subsistence Economies

Tuesday September 27th


Thursday September 29th


Week 7: Economic Geography and Uneven Development

Tuesday October 4th

Selections from Marx for Beginners


Thursday October 6th


Week 8: Development and Environmental Justice

Tuesday October 11th


Thursday October 13th


Week 9: Geographies of Power

Tuesday, October 18th

Selections from Foucault for Beginners.


Thursday October 20th


Week 10: The Commons and Formal/Informal Environmental Institutions

Tuesday October 25th

Robbins, “Chapter 4: Institutions and ‘The Commons,’” 46-62

Annotated bibliographies DUE 11:59 pm in the Dropbox
Thursday October 27th


**Week 11: Political Ecologies and Apolitical Ecologies**

Tuesday November 1st


Thursday November 3rd


**Week 12:**

Tuesday, November 8th

NO Class: Fall Break, voting

Thursday, November 10th:

Exam #2: multiple choice, short answer, essay

**Week 13: Lawn People, part 1**

Tuesday November 15th

Chapters 1-4, *Lawn People* by Paul Robbins

Thursday, November 17th

Student Presentation Day #1
Week 14:

Tuesday, November 22\textsuperscript{nd}

Student Presentation Day #2

Thursday, November 24\textsuperscript{th}

NO Class, Thanksgiving

Week 15: Lawn People, part 2

Tuesday, November 29\textsuperscript{th}

Chapters 5-8, Lawn People, plus appendices

Thursday, December 1\textsuperscript{st}

Student Presentation Day #3

Final Exam #3: Take Home Essays
Due December 10\textsuperscript{th} in the OAKS dropbox by 11:59 pm.

Have a Great Winter Break!