

America and the Global Environment

GEO 103

Mon., Wed. 10:35-11:30
Hall of Languages 107

Instructor: Dr. Tom Perreault
Office: 529 Eggers Hall
Phone: 443-9467
email: taperrea@maxwell.syr.edu
Office Hrs: Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:00-1:00pm, or by appointment

Teaching Assistants:	Kristin Cutler 049 Eggers Hall 443-9041 kacutler@syr.edu	Ben Marley 142 Eggers Hall 443-9136 bjmarley@syr.edu
Office hours:	Wednesdays, 12-2pm	Thursdays, 11:45am-1:45pm

Course Overview

There is no relationship more important to society than the one we have with our natural environment. From the extraction of resources necessary for everyday life to what we do with our trash; from how our food is produced to where we go on vacation, our dependence on and perceptions of nature are fundamental to every aspect of our lives. Resource use and environmental management, in addition to being scientific and technological problems, are also inseparable from our political, economic, and cultural systems. Resource use practices and efforts to control nature are closely tied to power at every spatial scale: local, national, and global. This course focuses on the social aspects of natural resource use, and connects local-scale phenomena with regional-, national-, and global-scale processes. We begin by reading about and discussing some conceptual issues that are central to our understanding of nature-society relations. These include resource extraction, pollution, environmental governance, sustainability and environmental justice. We then examine the interaction of these processes and problems through in-depth study of three fundamental resource sectors that we engage with every day of our lives: energy, water and food.

Discussion Sections

Discussion sections meet once a week to review concepts from lectures and readings, and to introduce new material related to the course. Discussion section will also involve group activities and role-playing exercises to related to topics covered in readings and lecture. You will have three major writing assignments and one map assignment due in discussion section during the semester. Overall, discussion section accounts for 40% of your grade. If you want to do well in this class, you *have* to do well in discussion section.

NOTE: Attendance and active participation in discussion section is expected, and will count toward your final grade. Just showing up to class is not enough. In order to receive full credit for participation, you need to keep up with the required readings, and come to section ready to discuss them critically.

Required Reading

There are no textbooks for this class. Instead, all required readings are available via Blackboard (<http://blackboard.syr.edu>). These are listed according to the author's last name, just as they are in the course schedule, below. These readings are a mix of academic articles, book chapters and articles from newspapers and magazines. It is essential that you keep up with the readings, since they will be covered on exams and discussion section assignments.

Grading

A total of 200 points will be available from discussion sections grades. Additionally, there will be two mid-term exams and a final, each worth 100 points. Grading for the class is as follows:

Discussion Section:

Reading response paper #1	40 points
Reading response paper #2	40 points
Reading response paper #3	40 points
Food map assignment	40 points
Participation	40 points
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Total	200 points
Mid-Term Exam I	100 points
Mid-Term Exam II	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
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CLASS TOTAL	500 points

Grading policy (please read this carefully):

- All assignments must be submitted on or before the date indicated on the syllabus. We do not accept late work without prior permission. Anything turned in late without permission will receive a score of zero. There will be no exceptions.
- Submit hard copies of your assignments to your TAs in discussion section. We will not accept electronic versions of assignments.
- All assignments should be proofread and free of spelling and grammatical errors. Sloppy work will be penalized at the discretion of your TA.
- Be sure to number and staple your pages. Unstapled papers, or with papers with un-numbered pages will be marked down one half letter grade. All work should be written on a computer and printed with a printer. Handwritten work will not be accepted.
- Save electronic versions of all your assignments, as well as the graded hard copies you get back from your TA. These may be necessary in case of any assignments get lost, or if there are disputes or questions regarding your grade.

Classroom Etiquette

Please use common sense and common courtesy in your behavior in lecture and discussion section. Arrive to class on time. If you *have* to arrive late, please enter the room quietly and don't let the door slam behind you. Please don't talk or read during class. Persons behaving in a discourteous manner will be asked to leave the classroom. Classroom behavior will be considered in factoring final grades.

Personal Electronics

The use of personal electronics is not permitted in this class. Please be sure that your cell phone is silenced *before* coming to class. Texting, emailing, or surfing the web during class will not be tolerated. Persons caught texting during lecture or discussion section will be penalized 5 points each time, and may *or may not* be notified. You will need to take notes the old school way: with pen and paper. Anyone using electronic devices during lecture will be asked to leave.

Learning Outcome

This course is intended to improve your critical thinking skills and writing ability, as well as your environmental literacy. After completing this course, you should be able to: (1) Better understand contemporary environmental issues, particularly resource use patterns and their spatial aspects; (2) Identify and critically analyze key political, economic and social dimensions of environmental management; (3) Write effectively and analytically about contemporary nature-society relations.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

Plagiarism on course assignments is a serious offense, and is not acceptable. The University defines plagiarism as:

"The submission of any work by a student is taken as a guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are the student's own except when properly credited to another. Violations of this principle include giving or receiving aid in an exam or where otherwise prohibited, fraud, plagiarism, the falsification or forgery of any record, or any other deceptive act in connection with academic work. Plagiarism is the representation of another's words, ideas, programs, formulae, opinions, or other products of work as one's own, either overtly or by failing to attribute them to their true source" (Section 1.0, Syracuse University *Academic Rules and Regulations*).

Put simply, plagiarism is using someone else's work and passing it off as your own. It is essential that you understand what plagiarism is, and how to avoid it. ***Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will result in a grade of 'F' for the course.*** Students are responsible for knowing University definitions and rules regarding academic honesty.

Disability-Related Accommodations

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 304 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to Dr. Perreault and review those accommodations with him. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>

Student Athletes

If you are a student athlete, we will make every effort to accommodate your travel and competition schedule. Please provide Dr. Perreault with necessary forms, and make arrangements with your TA.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I: Key Concepts

Week 1

January 14

Course Introduction

January 16

Geographies of the Anthropocene: Environmental Change

*Week 1 reading: Economist (2011)
Raloff
Gillis*

Week 1 Sections: Introductions and review of concepts

Week 2

January 21

No class today – Martin Luther King, Jr. day

January 23

Population, Scarcity, Economy

Week 2 Readings: Robbins et al., chapters 2, 3

*Week 2 Sections: Group projects: Environmental issues in New York
(bring laptops and tablets)*

Week 3

January 28

Resource Consumption and Sustainability

January 30

Resource Extraction and Resource Frontiers

*Week 3 readings: Emel and Bridge
Newson
Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy*

*Also, spend time at the Ecological Footprints website: www.footprintnetwork.org
(read through the pages under the link "Footprint Basics")*

*Week 3 Sections: Film and discussion: Trashed, Manufactured Landscapes
Reading response paper #1 due*

Week 4

February 4

Spatial Flows of Resources

February 6

Environmental Ethics and Environmental Justice

*Week 4 Readings: Robbins et al., chapter 5
Basel Action Network ("Exporting Harm")*

Week 4 Sections: Class discussion and review for exam 1

Week 5

February 11 Part I wrap-up and review for exam 1
February 13 **Exam 1**

Week 5 readings: No new readings

Week 5 sections: No sections this week

Part II: The Global Geographies of Energy

Week 6

February 18 Energy and Society
February 20 Energy and Society

*Week 6 readings: Reece
 Kolbert 2007*

Week 6 Sections: Group project: Energy use, pollution and policy (bring laptops or tablets)

Week 7

February 25 Fossil Fools: Addicted to Carbon
February 27 Gasland: Hydrofracking and its Discontents

*Week 7 readings: Bridge
 'Should fracking stop?' (point-counterpoint)
 Lavelle*

*Week 7 Sections: Hydrofracking role-play
 Reading response paper #2 due*

Week 8

March 4 Energy, Sustainability and Justice
March 6 Energy Alternatives and Alternative Energies

*Week 8 reading: Kolbert 2008
 Owen
 Rosenthal 2013
 Economist 2007*

Week 8 Section: Discussion and review of concepts

☺ Spring Break: March 11-15 ☺

Part III: The Political Ecology of Water

Week 9

March 18
March 20

Water and Society: Dilemmas of Access, Quantity, and Quality
Water and Society: Dilemmas of Access, Quantity, and Quality

Week 9 readings: *Robbins et al., chapter 13*
 Specter

Week 9 Section: *Group project: Water footprint (bring laptops and tablets)*

Week 10

March 25
March 27

Water Access: Global Geographies of Water Governance
Water Quantity: Climate Change and Water Justice in the Andes

Week 10 readings: *Finnegan*
 Painter
 Rosenthal 2009

Week 10 Section: *Water governance role-play*
 Reading response paper #3 due

Week 11

April 1
April 3

Water Quality: Hydrosphere as Source and Sink
The Most Polluted Lake in America

Week 11 readings: *Onondaga Lake Superfund Guide (pp. 1-14, 20-21)*
 Carty

Also look over the website for Upstate Freshwater Institute's Onandaga Lake page: www.upstatefreshwater.org/html/onondaga_lake.html

Week 11 Section: *Class discussion and review for exam*

Week 12

April 8

Exam 2

Week 12

Part IV: Agri/culture and the Political Ecology of Food Production

April 10 Geographies of Modern Agriculture

Week 12 readings: Cook
 Pollan

Week 12 sections: Film and discussion
 Begin Food Map assignment

Week 13

April 15 The Hidden Costs of Cheap Food

April 17 Hunger and the Politics of Global Agro-Food Systems

Week 13 readings: Walsh
 Robbins et al., chapter 14
 Altieri (2001a)

Week 13 Section: Farm Bill role-play
 Food Map assignment due

Week 14

April 22 Meet your Meat: Geographies of Food and Risk

April 24 Global Sea Food and Environmental Justice

Week 14 readings: Robbins et al., chapter 12
 Schlosser

Week 14 sections: Discussion and review key concepts for final exam

Week 15

April 29 What is to be Done? Toward Sustainable Food Systems

Week 15 readings: Altieri (2001b)
 Read through website: www.justfood.org

No sections this week

**Final Exam: Thursday, May 2, 3:00-5:00pm,
107 Hall of Languages (our normal classroom)**

Bibliography

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~Environmental Security as a National Security Issue~ from Current History 1995. ~The Military, the Nation State and the Environment~ from The Ecologist 1991. ~The Greening of Global Reach~ from Global Ecology: A New Arena of Political Conflict 1993. ~Mrs Brundtland's Disenchanted Cosmos~ from Alternatives 1991. All concepts have histories and geographies and the term "geopolitics" is no exception. Coined originally in 1899 by a Swedish political scientist named Rudolf Kjellen, the word "geopolitics" has had a long and varied history in the twentieth century, moving well beyond its original meaning in Kjellen's work to signify a general concern with geography and politics (geo-politics).