

Jim Igoe
Culture and the Environment
University of Colorado, Denver
Fall 2003
Topics: World, Nature and Culture

Instructor Office Hours.

My office is located at **270G Administration Building**. My office phone # is **(303) 556-2621**. My office hours are as follows:

Mondays & Wednesdays 11:30 am to 1:00 pm

Students are strongly encouraged to come to office hours and to seek extra help whenever necessary. Students who cannot make any of the times listed above may meet with me by appointment.

Course Description.

Issues of ecology and environmental conservation have become an important part of American popular culture. Such issues have also come to the forefront of international politics, as evidenced by the UN sponsored *Rio Summit on Environment and Development* (The Earth Summit) in 1992. Ironically, this growing awareness that global environmental deterioration has become a threat to human survival has not translated into significant changes in practice. Problems such as pollution, erosion, deforestation, and hunger continue on an unprecedented scale. Western science can easily explain the cause of these problems: the energy and resource costs of human activities are greater than the environment can support. What science cannot explain, however, is why humans continue to destroy their environment in spite of this evidence that we are doing so at the expense of our collective future.

The central premise of this course is that this problem cannot be understood without reference to culture and the cultural values that shape the way people perceive and interact with their environment. Within this course, we will explore the ways in which peoples of different cultures understand their environment and their own place within it. We will also examine the ways in which cultural ideas have affected resource use and public policy in a variety of contexts. We will also ask why some cultures have developed relatively successful modes of sustainable resource management, while others have apparently failed.

Traditionally, anthropologists have examined the environmental adaptations of non-western peoples, living in areas that are now collectively known as the 3rd world. Naturally, we will spend a good part of this course looking at the ideas and practices of non-western groups. However, we will begin with those of people here in the west -- including anthropologists. Of particular importance are two conflicting views as they show up in social science: are cultures fundamentally autonomous and in control of their environment or are they instead adapted to and constrained by nature. We

will explore the evolution of these two ideas, as well as their implications for non-western views of the environment.

A second reason for beginning with the ideas and practices of western people is because of their dominant position in the world today. European constructions of “nature” were carried to every part of the world during the colonial period. They continue to be imposed on non-western cultures through international development and western conservation models today. So while we will study environmental adaptations such as hunting & gathering, horticulture, and pastoralism – we will broaden our study of these systems to include the impacts of European colonialism, global capitalism, and western ideas of humans and nature.

The second half of the course will begin with the colonial period and western ideas of the environment. We will examine the impacts of European colonialism on environmental adaptation in North America and Africa. We will then turn to issues of development. We will examine the assumptions of progress and cultural transformation, which have been a central theme in western development models since the end of WWII. Through a series of case studies we will examine the impacts of development and western perceptions of the environment on human ecosystems around the world. We will examine the impacts of the Green Revolution in South Asia, World Bank policies and the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, and community conservation in East Africa. The course concludes with a discussion of ethics, and we will ask what western approaches to conservation might be improved through the knowledge and practices of non-western peoples.

Required Readings.

Reserved readings are available on line. Go to <http://docuserv.auraria.edu>. Enter my name as the instructor. You will then be asked for a password to access the electronic documents. The password is “banjo.”

Cronon	<i>Changes in the Land</i>
Netting	<i>Cultural Ecology</i>
Shiva	<i>The Violence of the Green Revolution</i>
Nugent	<i>Big Mouth: The Amazon Speaks</i>

Note: These books have been ordered through a new text book store called Big Dog, which is located at 1331 15th street (15th and Market). Their phone number is **(303) 893-2443**.

Evaluating Student Performance

Take Home Essays	40%	(2 x 20%)
Mid Term Exam	30%	
Final Exam	30%	

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Late assignments will only be accepted under unusual circumstances (serious illness, death in the family, etc). Please start early and manage your time wisely.
- Incompletes will only be given in very unusual circumstances beyond the student's control (see above).
- All written work should be typed, proofread, easily readable, and professional and scholarly in appearance. Sloppy work will be returned to students to resubmit, and receive a maximum grade of B.
- Keep copies of the assignments you turn in.
- Please turn off your cell phone while you are in class.
- The instructor reserves the right to substitute readings of comparable length for those that are already on the syllabus.
- **STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ABIDE BY THE UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, WHICH EACH OF YOU IS RESPONSIBLE FOR KNOWING.**

Monday August 18th Introduction to the Course

Introduction to the course
How do we think about humans and nature?
Does nature shape culture or does culture shape nature?

Wednesday August 20th Humans, Nature, and Human Nature

The man-nature dichotomy in American culture
The politics, economics, and culture of progress and conservation

Readings: Anderson *Ecologies of the Heart* Chapter: 1 (Reserve)

Monday August 25th Humans and Nature in Western Culture

Readings: Lynne White “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” (Reserve)
Glacken “Man versus Nature” (Reserve)

Wednesday August 27th Progress and technology: the human mastery over nature?

Readings: Leslie White “Energy and the Evolution of Culture” (Reserve)
Julian Simon “*The Ultimate Resource*” Selections (Reserve)

Monday September 1st

NO CLASS – LABOR DAY

Wednesday September 3rd Competing Paradigms of Nature and Human Nature

Readings: Goldsmith “Ecological Succession Rehabilitated” (Reserve)
Kaufman “How Nature Really Works” (Reserve)
Purchase “Kropotkin’s Metaphysics of Nature (Reserve)

Monday September 8th Taming the Anthropogenic

Readings: William Cronon *Changes in the Land* Chapters 1-4

Wednesday

October 8th

No Class – I will be at a Conference

Monday

October 13th

REVIEW FOR MID-TERM EXAM

Wednesday

October 15th

MID-TERM

Monday

October 20th

DISCUSSION

Neo-Malthusian Thought

Video: Paul Erlich and the Population Bomb

Wednesday

October 22nd

Malthusian thought in the colonial project

Readings: Shiva *The Violence of the Green Revolution* Chapter 7

Monday

October 27th

Malthusian thought in the development project

Readings: Walter Rostow *Stages of Growth* (Reserve)
Harding "The Tragedy of the Commons" (Reserve)

Wednesday

October 29th

The violence of the Green Revolution

Readings: Shiva *The Violence of the Green Revolution* Chapters 1-6

Monday

November 3rd

DISCUSSION: *The Green Revolution in Indonesia*

Video: The Goddess and the Computer

Wednesday

November 5th

Debt and natural resources

Readings: Nugent *Bigmouth* Banking on the Hilton
Doctrine of Odious Debt (Reserve)

NOTE: Paper #2 is due in class on this day. **Please do not come late!**

Monday **November 10th** ***The World Bank in the Amazon***

Readings: Nugent *Bigmouth* Amazonia as Ecodomain
Happy Trails

Wednesday **November 12th** ***National Parks Style Conservation***

Readings Igoe *Conservation & Globalization* Chapters 1 & 2

Monday **November 17th** ***The Colonial Origins of National Parks***

Readings: Igoe *Conservation & Globalization* Chapter 3
Lissu Democratizing Africa's Natural Resource Tenure (Reserve)

Wednesday **November 19th** ***Conservation Alternatives***

Igoe *Conservation & Globalization* Chapters 4 & 5

Monday **November 24th** ***Capstone***

Review for Final Exam

THE FINAL EXAM WILL TAKE PLACE IN CLASS ON THE SCHEDULED DATE