

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (GEOG 314)
Tentative Syllabus

Fall 2013: Tu/Th 8:00 am to 9:30 am, Sage 4412

Instructor: Elizabeth Barron; Sage 4451; 424-7115; barrone@uwosh.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays from 10am-12pm; Thursdays from 10am-12pm and by appointment

Text: (1) Matthews, A. 2002. *Where the Buffalo Roam: Restoring America's Great Plains*. 2nd edition. Chicago: U of Chicago Press. (2) All other readings will be posted on D2L

Course description: Conservation is a significant form of environmental management that has emerged in a specific way over the last several decades. In this class we will consider environmental conservation through the lens of the geographical sub-field of political ecology. Broadly speaking, political ecology is about the politics of environmental degradation and the environmental management approaches that emerge to address the resulting environmental “problems.” Whether one is talking about protecting the Amazonian rainforest, endangered species in the United States, or climate change, the environmental changes that underlie these issues and the efforts to address the resulting degradation are often discussed in scientific and managerial terms. Yet our understanding of changing environments and the efforts to control their use are intimately tied to social and cultural processes that are often highly *political*. Moreover, humans have been managing their environments for centuries; yet our current crises in environmental conservation seem to be particular modern problems that are worse in certain parts of the world than in others. Through the course of the semester, we will investigate the multitude of practices, institutions, and different knowledges, ecologically *and* politically, that constitute these environmental crises and the politics and power relationships which support them. We will seek to clarify explanations of environmental change and their implications for finding better types of management, policies, and solutions.

This course is neither a traditional class in environmental studies nor a traditional class in ecology. Rather, political ecology provides a critical *geographic* and *anthropological* perspective on environmental change and the evolving concepts of management and policy intended to deal with this change. Whereas environmental politics is most often interested with the workings of governments, political parties, and interest groups, political ecology is interested in the ways that peoples interact with places, including struggles over access to resources, the meanings that people give to nature/the environment and the ways in which these meanings determine legitimate uses of the environment, and the role *power* plays in shaping these interactions.

Likewise, whereas ecology often pursues environmental change in ways that separates humans from nature, political ecology recognizes humans as an inherent part of nature and as an element about which humans accrue knowledge through different modes of interaction. To explore these areas, we will examine the historical and political-economic contexts within which particular ideas about the environment *and* its management have arisen and the responses to prevailing management regimes by those who live in particular places and who often seek to challenge them. In the process, we will

explore a variety of different social and political institutions at a variety of different geographic scales (e.g., household, local community, nation-state, global) and their relationship to the development and management of a broadly defined environment.

Course Goals: This course is designed to broaden your understanding of environmental conservation by:

1. *Developing* a critical perspective on explanations of environmental change and *management*, including the relationship of macro- and micro-political economic drivers.
2. *Developing* your capacity to understand the *processes* that produce environmental problems and particular management solutions.
3. *Practicing* and *further refining* your oral communication skills through regular class discussions.
4. *Further developing* your critical thinking skills through regular course participation and written assignments.
5. *Practicing* and *further refining* your written analytical skills through structured writing assignments.

Course Outcomes: By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. *Synthesize and apply principles from political ecology* to current events and independent research topics.
2. *Critically discuss* a range of environmental issues in both Minority and Majority World settings, highlighting the political economic and ecological complexity of these issues and the ways these issues are problematized.
3. *Critically evaluate* social drivers of environmental change and conflict, assessing who benefits and who does not from these changes.
4. *Explain political economic processes* that influence environmental conflicts and competing management approaches.

Course Orientation: Although class sessions will involve some short presentations by the instructor, this *IS NOT* a lecture course. It *IS* a *reading- and discussion-intensive* course. The majority of class time will involve critical discussions of the assigned readings by you and your fellow students. Importantly, I see my role primarily as a facilitator, guiding these discussions with some key questions, and where necessary, providing clarification about the readings. In most cases I will provide some introductory material and a few questions for consideration, but you are expected to arrive in class prepared. *Being prepared means that you: 1) carefully read the assigned material, 2) come to class with a copy of the reading containing your notes, and 3) bring a set of questions for discussion. If I think that the majority of the class is not properly prepared, I reserve the right to give pop quizzes on the assigned readings, which will be rolled into your attendance/participation grade.*

Course Requirements and Grades: Your grade will be calculated based on your performance on the following assignments according to these percentage breakdowns:

- Attendance/Participation: 25%*
- Reading discussion questions: 10%*
- Critical reading responses (4): 20%**
- Take-home Exam: 20%*
- Final Case Study Analysis Paper: 25%*

Attendance/Participation - In keeping with a strong liberal arts tradition that encourages active learning and complete participation in the education process, I expect you to attend class regularly. Although I will not take attendance actively, I do so passively. I will issue warning slips to students who fail to attend class on a regular basis. I consider more than two absences as excessive. In extreme cases, I may request that you be dropped from the course with a grade of F. When thinking about your participation, please remember: quantity does not always mean quality. In other words, the quality of your preparation and your participation is not merely a function of the quantity of time you devote to the class. *If you are putting in a lot of time and still struggling, you need to let me know by coming to see me in my office.*

**Attendance at the Fall 2013 Geoquest lecture series will count towards your attendance grade.*

Readings - Except for the book we will read at the end of the semester (please order from online retailer); required readings will be posted to the D2L course website for each class session. Please let me know if any readings are missing or hard to access.

Reading Discussion Questions – You are expected to post 2-3 discussion questions for every day’s reading to the D2L course website (in the correct discussion topic thread) no later than 7 pm the day BEFORE class. Be advised that the thread will lock at 8 pm that evening. These should be a mix of questions that either is intended to provide clarification on arguments made by the author or that discuss broad themes or ideas in the reading. On days when there is a reading response, you do not need to bring reading discussion questions to class.

Critical reading responses* – You are required to turn in reading responses for 4 of the 5 readings followed by “Reading Response” in the reading schedule below. The presentations response is required. In other words, there is one time during the semester when you can choose not to turn in a reading response, and you will not be penalized. **Each response, however, is worth 5% of your grade**, so missing two (i.e. only turning in two) would mean that you could earn no higher than 90% in the course. Your reading responses should summarize: 1) the main argument(s) of the author(s), 2) the significance of the reading to the course and ongoing discussions in the class, 3) the relationship of this reading to other readings, and/or 4) provide a substantive critique (why you agree or disagree with the author). Please DO NOT tell me why you *like* or *dislike* an article, but rather *focus* on what you think are the *strengths or weaknesses* of the article or *how this article makes you think* about a particular topic *differently*. Your summary should be no longer than two, double-spaced pages (12 pt Times New Roman) and must be uploaded to D2L prior to the beginning of the class on the day indicated in the syllabus. **PLEASE NOTE: 1) Late reading summaries will not be accepted under any circumstances. 2) You can choose to do all five responses. If you do so, your lowest grade will be dropped.**

Mid-term exam - There is only one exam for this course, which will be a take home exam posted on D2L on October 10, and due to the D2L dropbox on October 22. The exam is worth 20% of your final grade. Your exam will be a combination of short answer and essay questions based on assigned readings, in-class discussions and video presentations.

Final paper project - You are expected to turn in paper (no more than 4,000 words, not including bibliography, title, name etc.), exploring an environmental issue or problem of interest to you (e.g. the politics of food systems in majority vs. minority countries, a case study about cultural influences on conservation practices, or the role of local communities in environmental decision making endangered species and management, environmental impacts and development, hunting and gender, etc.). In this paper, you will need to summarize the major issues, including a discussion of the types of environmental change involved, the management regimes designed to address this change, and the political and ecological aspects of both. In other words, this will require you to explore relevant academic research related to the issue at hand. At the same time, you are expected to develop a political ecological framework, using relevant concepts and ideas from our course readings and discussions, and apply this framework to your issue. Your paper should be informed by the class readings and inspired through your own research. I encourage you to come talk to me about possible paper topics and ideas. This project will be developed in three phases, to help you with time management. Given the demands at the end of the semester, to hand in a final draft of your paper AND prepare a presentation for the class, I highly encourage you to work steadily throughout the entire semester for the best grade possible.

First, each student will prepare a 1-2 page project proposal statement due on October 1. This is worth **5%** of the course grade. The statement should include: 1) a clear statement of the problem/topic to be analyzed (in the form of a research question); 2) an explanation of this topic that connects it with the course readings; and 3) a summary of the sources that you will draw on in your analysis. You must have a minimum of **5 sources** referenced in your final paper; all of which must be journal articles or books. At least three of these should be annotated in your project proposal. You are free to have additional *reputable* electronic sources.

Check the course website for links to library tools and services to help with research techniques.

Second, on November 7, we will spend class in small groups peer reviewing each other's rough drafts. This part of the paper project will be graded under your attendance and participation grade. It is highly recommended that you take full advantage of this opportunity for valuable feedback from your classmates by having as complete a rough draft as possible by this date. If you have a complete rough draft by this date and would like additional feedback from me, I will also read your paper and offer comments. If you do not, I will not be able to offer comments.

Third, final papers (**15%**) are due on December 3 at the beginning of class. Proper use of citations and footnotes is required. In addition to the structure of your argument and paper, you will also be graded on grammar, spelling, and proper word usage. Part of your final project includes a brief (10 min) presentation to the class (**10%**). You will be graded on the clarity and content of your presentation, and how well are able to translate complex ideas clearly for your classmates.

Course Expectations: This is a 300-level course and I expect that you will handle yourself accordingly (e.g., come to class on-time; make a serious effort to engage readings, discussions, and assignments; and treat your fellow students with respect and tolerance). This is a demanding class

and I have high expectations for your participation. You should plan to spend 2 – 3 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. Finally, I expect that you will uphold the institutional norms of the college, including academic honesty and integrity.

Academic Honesty – Plagiarism, cheating, stealing, or lying will not be tolerated in this class. I take these subjects very seriously and will take all available measures to address suspected incidents of any of these. If you do not know what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, stealing, or lying, please see the college’s website (www.uwosh.edu/dean/conduct.htm) or ask me. Committing any of these acts in this class will result in you failing the class and referral to the Dean’s office for further disciplinary action, which is defined in UWS 14.03, Wisconsin Administrative Code. Students on the UW Oshkosh campus have been suspended from the University for academic misconduct.

Late Work – With the exception of reading summaries, assignments may be turned in late only if there is a legitimate reason. Reading summaries may not be turned in late, for any reason. Should something happen to preclude you from turning in an assignment, you should contact me immediately (by phone or in an email). Other than reading responses, all late assignments will be penalized five percentage points off the total grade for every day it is late (i.e. a paper handed in two days late that would have earned a student an 80% will earn that student 70%).

Courtesy and Tolerance – This class is about ideas and their application to the broad topic of environmental change and management. As the course progresses, you are likely to discover that you disagree with—whether the ideas presented by or opinions of—the authors you are reading, me, and/or your fellow students. I strongly believe that disagreements are the potential sources of new insights and new knowledge, but only when the discussions about these disagreements focus on the ideas involved and the evidence that is presented to support them. I expect discussions in this class to speak to these ideas and the strength of evidence, not target specific people. Discussions should be based on information and analysis, not emotion or volume.

Special Circumstances – UWO is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should contact Disability Services (424-3100 (voice) or 424-1319 (TTY)) or visit their web site at <http://www.uwosh.edu/dean/disabilities.htm> for the University’s accommodation request form and documentation requirements as soon as possible to discuss academic accommodations and/or services.

If you have any kind of special circumstances that I should know about, including any kind of diagnosed or undiagnosed disability or you are an athlete competing on a college team, please tell me right away. Sharing this information with me will allow me to create a suitable learning environment for you and further facilitate your academic success. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

Tentative Schedule

| Date | Topic/Reading | Assignment |
|---------|---|---|
| Sept. 5 | Introduction to the course | |
| WEEK 2 | Troubling Our Idea of a Fixed Nature | |
| Sept 10 | REQ: W. Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in Cronon, ed., <i>Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature</i> (New York: Norton, 1996), 69-90. OPT: Cronon, "Introduction" p. 23-56. | |
| Sept 12 | Introduction and chapter 1 in P. Robbins <i>Political Ecology</i> (Malden: Blackwell, 2004) | Reading Response |
| WEEK 3 | Conservation and Control: Reinterpreting conservation | |
| Sept 17 | Ch. 9 "Conservation and Control" in P. Robbins, <i>Political Ecology</i> | |
| Sept 19 | W. Cronon. "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," <i>Journal of American History</i> March (1992):1347-76. OPT: TBD In Class movie and discussion: G. Maughan, <i>Second Nature</i> (video). With: J. Fairhead, M. Leach, D. Millimouno. | |
| WEEK 4 | Conservation and Control: Stakeholders and decision-makers | |
| Sept 24 | Brosius, J.P., Russell, D., 2003. Conservation from Above: Anthropological Perspective on Transboundary Protected Areas and Ecoregional Planning. <i>Journal of Sustainable Forestry</i> 17, 35-60. **GEO-QUEST LECTURE: 3 - 4 pm, Sage 1210: Sustainability | |
| Sept 26 | REQ: Barron, E.S., 2011. The emergence and coalescence of fungal conservation social networks in Europe and the U.S.A. <i>Fungal Ecology</i> 4, 124-133. REQ: Pringle, A. et al. 2011. Fungi and the Anthropocene: Biodiversity Discovery in an Epoch of Loss. <i>Fungal Ecology</i> 4, 121-123. | Reading Response |
| WEEK 5 | Environmental Knowledge(s) | |
| Oct 1 | Takacs, 2003. How Does Your Positionality Bias Your Epistemology? <i>The NEA Higher Ed. Journal</i> . 27-38 | Paper Proposals Due |
| Oct 3 | REQ: Castree, N. Socializing Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics; OPT: Demeritt, D. Being Constructive about Nature, in: Castree and Braun (eds) <i>Social Nature</i> , pp. 1-40 | |
| WEEK 6 | Environmental Knowledge(s) | |
| Oct 8 | Berkes, F. 2008. Sacred Ecology: ch 1: Context of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (1-20) AND ch. 8: Climate Change and Indigenous Ways of Knowing (161-180) | |
| Oct 10 | Emery, M., 2001. Who knows? Local non-timber forest product knowledge and stewardship practices in northern Michigan, in: Emery, M., McLain, R. (Eds.), <i>Non-timber Forest Products: Medicinal Herbs, Fungi, Edible Fruits and Nuts, and Other Natural Products from the Forest</i> . Haworth Press, Inc., Binghamton, NY, pp. 123 - 139. | Reading Response Hand Out Take Home |

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| WEEK 7 | Environmental Knowledge(s) | |
| Oct 15 | Take home exam week: In-class movie | Working on exams |
| Oct 17 | Take home exam week: In-class movie | Working on exams |
| WEEK 8 | Environmental Justice: People, plants, places | |
| Oct 22 | *Reading: TBD **GEO-QUEST LECTURE: 3 - 4 pm, Sage 1210: Intercultural knowledge | Take Home Due |
| Oct 24 | Zerner, C., 2000. Toward a broader vision of justice and nature conservation, in: Zerner, C. (Ed.), <i>People, plants, and justice: The politics of nature conservation</i> . New York : Columbia University Press. | |
| WEEK 9 | Environmental Justice in the Anthropocene | |
| Oct 29 | Proctor, J. 2013. Saving Nature in the Anthropocene. <i>J. Envir. Stud. Sci.</i> DOI 10.1007/s13412-013-0108-1. | |
| Oct 31 | Gibson-Graham, J.K., Roelvink, G., 2009. An Economic Ethics for the Anthropocene. <i>Antipode</i> 41 (S1): 320-346. | |
| WEEK 10 | More-than-Humans in Political Ecology | |
| Nov 5 | Hinchliffe, S., 2008. Reconstituting Nature Conservation: Towards a Careful Political Ecology. <i>Geoforum</i> 29: 88-97. | |
| Nov 7 | In-class peer review day | Rough Drafts Due |
| WEEK 11 | Biocultural Diversity | |
| Nov 12 | Harmon et al. 2013. Measuring Status and Trends in Biological and Cultural Diversity. in Pilgrim and Pretty (eds) <i>Nature and Culture</i> . **GEO-QUEST LECTURE: 3 - 4 pm, Sage 1210: Civic Learning | |
| Nov 14 | Internet research Buffalo Commons project as a political ecology and biocultural diversity idea | |
| WEEK 12 | Case Study Reading: The Buffalo Commons | |
| Nov 19 | Chapters 1 & 2 | |
| Nov 21 | Chapters 3 & 4 | Reading Response |
| WEEK 13 | Academic work - a way forward? | |
| Nov 26 | Cameron and Hicks, 2013. Performative Research for a Climate Politics of Hope: Rethinking Geographic Scale, "Impact" Scale, and Markets. <i>Antipode</i> doi: 10.1111/anti.12035 | |
| Nov 28 | THANKSGIVING | No class |
| WEEK 14 | Student Papers | |
| Dec 3 | Paper presentations | Final Papers Due |
| Dec 5 | Paper presentations | |
| WEEK 15 | Student Papers | |
| Dec 10 | Paper presentations | |
| Dec 12 | Paper presentations /Course summary | Presentations response* |