Fall 2011

Race and the Environment

Environmental Processes, Institutions, and Behavior 440 (11:374:440)
Crosslisted as Anthropology 293 (01:070:293)

Professor David McDermott Hughes

Office: 201 Bioscience Building (Douglass Campus)
Office hours: Tuesdays 9:30-1:00 and Thursdays 11:00-12:30
In Biosciences Building, room 201 (Douglass Campus).
Students whose class schedules conflict with these office hours may make an appointment.

Lectures run Mondays and Wednesdays 3:55-5:15 in Blake Hall, room 131 (Cook Campus).

Course summary

The course examines the ways in which racial categories, racism, environmental care, and environmental destruction have all shaped and informed each other. The course is divided into sections corresponding to the major global encounters between Europeans and other peoples: conquest, genocide, and slavery. Readings from social science, fiction, and poetry will address the particularly potent transactions between blacks and whites in North America, the Caribbean, and Southern Africa. Having recognized this past and present, the course will suggest a more forward-looking environmental ethic - one that speaks more to a common future than to the nostalgia of separate ethnicities.

Learning goals

1. To understand the social construction of race;
2. To dissect various forms of racism;
3. To analyze relationships between race and space;
4. To improve the quality of one’s writing;
5. To gain confidence and ability in making oral presentations.

Requirements

Students are expected to do all the weekly reading by the class meeting. Students are also responsible for the material in films listed on the syllabus. These will be shown in class and will be available for re-viewing at the Douglass Media Library (in the basement). At each class meeting, two students will present the reading, summarizing it, interrogating it, and offering
questions for further discussion (see below). Finally, attending the class and contributing to
discussions therein contribute to the final grade.

I will calculate final grades as follows:

25% for in-class participation
25% for the in-class presentation
25% for the midterm exam
25% for final exam or final paper

Students who wish to carry out a major research project, in lieu of the final exam, must discuss
this option with the professor by the end of week 4. Such a project may also comprise creative
writing, memoir, and other literary forms.

**Exams and papers:** Further instructions will follow closer to the time of the midterm. For now,
you should know that this class will emphasize writing of high quality. All written work should
conform to the following guidelines.

1. Each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence.
2. Each paragraph should end with a summarizing sentence.
3. Each sentence should contain no more than two dependent clauses – ideally no more than
   one.
4. Most importantly, avoid the passive voice.

For further illustration, please consult any page of *Whiteness in Zimbabwe*, one of the assigned
books.

**Group presentations:** At the first meeting of the class, we will assign a group of students to
present on each week’s reading. Those pairs will share the assignment in a fair manner. Each
one will present separately and receive a separate grade. A superior presentation will accomplish
the following objectives: 1) summarize the important points of the reading assigned; 2) relate
that reading to previous reading, lectures, and/or discussions in the course; 3) relate that reading
to some aspect of our everyday lives and/or to current events; 4) discuss a gap, flaw, or limit to
the argument of the author of the reading; 5) pose three questions to the class regarding the
reading.

**Reading**

For greater ease of comprehension, please read each week’s selections in the order they appear
on the syllabus. All reading materials are on reserve in the IRIS system. (If you do not know
how to use this system, you may seek a tutorial at any campus library.) Articles and some book
chapters are on electronic reserve. Where I have assigned more than one third of a book,
however, copyright laws prohibit loading it onto electronic reserve. Therefore, the books listed
immediately below are available on reserve as hard copies – rather than electronic files – at the
Chang Library, Cook Campus. If you wish, you may also purchase them at the Barnes and
Noble Store on the Cook/Douglass Campus.


### Syllabus

#### I. Introduction

**Week 1 (7,8 September): Introduction**

**Week 2 (12 September): Race as socially constructed**


**Week 3 (19 September-): Racism, personal and structural**


#### II. Conquest environments

**Week 4 (26 September-): Eden**


Introduction, Chapters 1,3-5, Epilogue.

Film: “Dances with wolves,” segments shown in class

**Week 5 (3 October-): Industry and worse**
II. Environments of slavery and emancipation

Week 8 (24 October-): Trans-plantation

Spring Break

Week 9 (31 October-): Freedom and Fear

Week 10 (7 November-): Environmental injustice
Week 11 (14 November-) : Eco-Tourism

III. Environmentalism as Humanism

Week 12 (22, 28 November): After Belonging

Note, Thursday classes meet on Monday, and Monday classes meet on Tuesday this week. There are no classes on Wednesday.

Week 13 (30 November, 5 December) : Becoming a species
Film: “Children of Men” (110 minutes), shown in class on 30 November.

Week 14 (7, 12 December): Review and exam
There will be a review session on Wednesday 7 December. The exam is a take-home, open-book test. Students may collect the test from my office (201 Biosciences Building, Douglass) on Thursday 8 December from 10am onwards. I will advise students on complete draft essays during the class on Monday 12 December. Only students who have completed draft essays should come to this meeting. Exams must be turned in as hard copies by 3pm on Tuesday 13 December at the Anthropology Department office (301 Ruth Adams Building, Douglass). Be aware that the Ruth Adams Building is only open 9am-4pm.