

## Syllabus

### **Environmental Problems in Historical and Cross-cultural Perspective**

11:374:312:01

TF2, 10:55AM - 12:15PM

Thompson 206

Spring, 2006

Course website: <http://humanecology.rutgers.edu> (Follow link to courses). The course also will have an ecompanion website that will be available through <http://rutgersonline.net>

Instructor: Tom Rudel

Office: Cook Office Building 214

Office Hours: Thursdays, 10:30 - 12:00 PM.  
and by appointment.

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This course examines environmental problems from the historical perspective provided by our two centuries-long experiment with industrial civilization. The first third of the course sketches out the broad historical patterns in the ways that Americans have used natural resources. The second third of the course looks at the history of pollution generated by American industry. In this section of the course we will consider important historical features of the American environmental movement, in particular the way that the movement has changed in response to changes in environmental problems. The last third of the course will consider environment-society relations in the developing world with particular attention to the following question: to what extent are developing countries repeating the American historical experience with the environment? This question will lead us into an historical examination of sustainable development in both developed and developing countries. Finally, we will address questions about whether or not a single overarching historical pattern of environment and development characterizes our relations with the natural world.

Requirements: There will be two essay exams, two short reaction papers, and an oral report that students will have to complete successfully in order to receive credit for this course. The reaction papers should be short (3-5 pages) assessments of a question that arises out of the readings for the course. They will not require additional library research. I will give you the topic for each paper several weeks before the paper is due. The oral reports to be delivered in class will be short verbal answers to a specific question that we will be considering in class that day. The questions and the dates for the oral reports are listed at the end of the syllabus. You should sign up for a topic at the end of the first class. The relative weights of each exercise in the computation of final grades will be as follows: the two papers (20% each) - 40%, two exams (25% - midterm, 30% - final) - 55%, oral report - 5%. Active participation in class discussions will help you in the computation of final grades, especially if you are near the cut off point between two grades. The final exam is scheduled for May 4th, 12:00-3:00PM.

Readings: the readings in the course provide both conceptual and factual points of departure for

discussions in class. To appreciate the significance of our discussions and participate in them, you will have to have done the readings for that particular day. The readings are either from books to be purchased or from a set of readings on reserve and electronic reserve at the Chang library.

Questions, Problems, Concerns: I have an office in the Department of Human Ecology (Rm. 214). My office hours are listed above. If these times are not workable for you, you could see me after class, or we could arrange another time to meet. You can also contact me via email; I check it every day. In addition to the syllabus, I will put the instructions for reaction papers on the course website.

Books to be Purchased (at the Cook/Douglass bookstore)

L. Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*  
Wm. Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*  
Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: the Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West*.  
Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner, *Deceit and Denial: the Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution*  
D. Stewart, *After the Trees: Living on the Transamazon Highway*.

Readings on Reserve (at the Chang Library and on Chang's electronic reserve list - under Rudel)

Chris Barrett et al., "Biodiversity Conservation amid Weak Institutions"  
Wm. Freudenburg and Robt. Gramling, *Oil on Troubled Waters: Perception, Politics, and the Battle over Offshore Drilling*.  
J.F. Hart, "Broiler areas and broiler people."  
N. S. Hughes, "Death without Weeping"  
E. Klinenberg. "Heat Wave".  
D. Maharidge and M. Williamson, "And Their Children after Them."  
J. McCarthy, "Wild Logging: the Rise and Fall of Logging Networks and Biodiversity Conservation Projects on Sumatra's Rainforest Frontier"  
K. Packer, "How did Suzie Kolber's T-shirt end up in Nigeria?"  
David Sonnenfeld, "Contradictions of Ecological Modernization: Pulp and Paper Manufacturing in Southeast Asia"  
K. Sucato, "What's Wrong in Tom's River?"  
R. White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*.  
D. Worster, *Dust Bowl: the Southern Plains in the 1930s*

Website

<http://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/museum/landscape.html>

Schedule of Classes

<u>Date</u>		<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Jan. 17	Tues.	Introduction	
<u>Natural Resources and Society: the American Historical Experience</u>			
Jan. 20	Fri.	Amerindians and the Fur Trade	White
Jan. 24	Tues.	Reforestation and Sustainable Agriculture in Colonial and 19 <sup>th</sup> Century New England	Cronon, 'Harvard website'
Jan. 27	Fri.	Reforestation and Sustainable Agriculture in Contemporary New England	Cronon, continued
Jan. 31	Tues.	Cotton Culture and Reforestation in the in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century South	Maharidge and Williamson
Feb. 3	Fri.	The Dust Bowl	Worster, pp. 1-25
Feb. 7	Tues.	Other Dust Bowls in the West	Langston, pp. 3-10, 42-85, 201-246
Feb. 10	Fri.	The Oil Patch: Offshore Oil and Latecomer Effects	Freudenburg & Gramling, pp. 1-11
Feb. 14	Tues.	Adaptive Management in Western Forests	Langston , pp 11-41, 86-200, 296-306
Feb. 17	Fri.	Pollution Problems and the Increasing Scale in American Agriculture	Hart
Feb. 21	Tues.	The Turner Thesis and Natural Resource Use (First reaction paper due)	
<u>Environment and Society: Treadmills and Industrial Pollution in the U.S.</u>			
Feb. 24	Fri.	Industrial Treadmills and Air Pollution in the Middle West	Markowitz
Feb. 28	Tues.	Industrial Treadmills and the Emergence of Environmental Injustice	Markovitz, cont.
Mar. 3	Fri.	Accidents on the Treadmill: Bhopal, Chernobyl,	

		Three Mile Island	
Mar. 7	Tues.	Midterm exam	
Mar. 10	Fri.	Sprawl	Cohen, pp 5-15, 193-289
Mar. 21	Tues.	Industrial Treadmills, Waste, the Media, and Source Reduction	Sucato
Mar. 24	Fri.	Industrial Treadmills and Recycling	Packer
Mar. 28	Tues.	Treadmills, Consumer Cultures, and Environmental Reform	Cohen, pp. 292-410
Mar. 31	Fri.	The American Environmental Movement in Historical Perspective	

Natural Resources, the Environment, and Society in the Larger World

April 4	Tues.	Tropical Deforestation: Frontiers	Stewart
April 7	Fri.	Preserving Tropical Forests, Latecomer Effects, and Conservation Strategies	McCarthy, Pp. 1-20
April 11	Tues.	Sustainable Development in Settled Agricultural Areas: Coffee (second reaction paper due)	
April 14	Fri.	Potable Water, Urban Development, and Rural Exodus	Hughes
April 18	Tues.	Air Pollution in Growing Cities	Hughes, cont.
April 21	Fri.	Heat Waves, Storms, and Global Warming	Klinenberg
April 25	Tues.	The Emergence of a Global Environmental Movement & Institutions	Sonnenfeld, Barrett et al.
April 28	Fri.	Review	
May 4th	Thurs	Final exam 12:00-3:00PM	

Possible Topics for Oral Reports

Jan. 20

Why does war break out between the Iroquois and the Huron right after the Europeans arrive?  
Why did the Amerindians and early colonists set fire to the forest so frequently? Were they pyromaniacs?  
Did Amerindian populations hasten their own demise?

Jan. 24

Why did New England colonists make such wasteful use of natural resources?  
How do we explain the presence of stone walls in the rocky, upland portions of New Jersey and New England?  
There were no deer in the state of New Jersey at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. How come?  
What are the recent trends in forest cover in New Jersey?

Jan. 27

Did colonial farmers practice organic agriculture?

Jan. 31

Why does New Orleans become the early center for jazz musicians?  
Why did Nashville become the country music capital of the world?  
What sorts of themes set country music apart from other American musical traditions?

Feb. 3

What happened to the Joad family in Grapes of Wrath?  
Why are there so many ghost towns in the western United States?  
Why are there so few national parks in the eastern United States?

Feb. 7

What distinguishes fundamentalists from other religious people?  
How do Mennonites and other fundamentalists keep their children within the fold?  
Why are federal lands in the West overgrazed?

Feb. 10

How do miners (or oil workers) learn their trade?  
What is Dutch disease?

Feb. 14

What is 'adaptive management' of the environment?  
Why can't foresters promote the growth of Ponderosa Pine?  
What is the Forest Service's policy on fire in the Blue mountains?

Feb. 17

Pollution problems in livestock operations: what are they?  
What do northeastern farmers specialize in?

Feb. 21

What is the Turner thesis?

Where else in the world might the Turner thesis in its original version apply?

How according to Potter (in 'People of Plenty') does the Turner thesis apply to contemporary America?

Feb. 24

What is the treadmill of production?

Why do regulators and the regulated 'cozy up' to one another so frequently?

Why do political machines seem to generate so much corrupt behavior?

Feb. 28

What would an environmentally just world look like?

Do poor people move to polluted places or do polluters set up shop in poor places?

Why does the age of environmentalism coincide with increasing amounts of environmental injustice?

Mar. 3

What is a normal accident? How can they be normal?

What is the 'butterfly theorem' in chaos theory?

March 10

How do zoning laws spread people out across the landscape?

How do zoning laws reinforce a 'car culture' in New Jersey?

Why does suburban sprawl seem to generate traffic congestion?

Mar. 21

What makes Greenpeace different from other environmental organizations?

Why did the media find the Love Canal story to be so compelling?

How would Lois Gibbs' lobbying tactics differ from those of the President of the Nature Conservancy or another mainline environmental organization?

Mar. 24

When do attitudes about recycling have no effect on how much someone recycles?

Are there differences between regions in the amounts of recycling that Americans do?

What happens to old BMWs in Germany?

Mar. 28

What is a consumer culture?

How does the growth of consumer culture around a large commodity impact on the environment?

What is a 'positional good'?

Mar. 31

How do conservationists differ from preservationists?  
What is ecofeminism?  
What is deep ecology?

April 4

Why would the lands of farmers, loggers, and agribusinesses burn more than other lands?  
How does the absence of secure property rights in a place effect the likelihood of deforestation?  
Why does the second generation in frontier settings so frequently turn away from agriculture?

April 7

What is sustainable development?  
What is the promise of ecotourism?  
Where are parks the easiest to create? Why?

April 11

Is there a chocolate shortage?  
Where does the coffee served on the Cook campus come from?  
What are the environmental benefits of organic coffee?

April 14

Where in the world can you drink the water out of the tap?  
Why did so many people lose their lives when hurricane Mitch swept through Honduras and Nicaragua?  
Why does the consumption of bottled water continue to grow in the United States?

April 18

What is a weak state?  
What is amoral familism?  
How will NAFTA affect environmental quality in Mexico?

April 21

How do people keep cool in poor, tropical countries?  
How does one measure 'vulnerability' to natural disasters?

April 25

What is ecological modernization?  
Who are the chief agents of ecological modernization?  
What is the resource mobilization theory of social movements?  
What is the 'theory of the critical mass'?