

Geography 30

Geographic Perspectives on Sustainability and Human-Environment Systems Fall Semester, 2008

Instructor Dr. Petra Tschakert, Assistant Professor of Geography/AESEDA
315 Walker, Phone: 863-9399, E-mail: petra@psu.edu

Lecture 26 Hosler, Monday and Wednesday, 11:15 - 12:05pm

Office Hours Wednesday 4-5:30pm, Friday 10-11am, or by appointment

Teaching Assistants Peter Howe: 334 Walker, pdh143@psu.edu, ph: 863-1813
Office hours: Thursday 11:10am to 1:10pm, or by appointment
Greg Lankenau: 335 Walker, grl11@psu.edu, ph: 863-1825
Office hours: Monday 1:20 to 3:20pm

Recitations

Section	Time	Place	TA
001	M 4:40-5:30pm	025 Deike	Greg Lankenau
002	M 12:20-1:10pm	218 Hosler	Greg Lankenau
003	W 1:25-2:15pm	110 Walker	Greg Lankenau
004	T 1:25-2:15pm	103 Willard	Greg Lankenau
005	W 1:25-2:15pm	025 Deike	Peter Howe
006	W 9:05-9:55am	101 Walker	Peter Howe
007	R 10:10-11am	218A Hosler	Peter Howe
008	T 2:30-3:20pm	009 Walker	Peter Howe

Required Texts

- 1) Gerald G. Marten. 2004. Human Ecology: Basic Concepts for Sustainable Development. Earthscan.

Handouts will be distributed from time to time in class. The instructor is not responsible for providing handouts for students who are absent from class.

Course Description

This course introduces you to the study of human-environment interactions from a geographic perspective, with a special emphasis on the role of humans in changing the face of the earth and how, in turn, this changed environment influences humans. We take a complex system's perspective

on major environmental and societal challenges and examine linked human-environmental issues in a variety of geographic contexts (developed and developing countries). We explore critical concepts such as carrying capacity, ecological footprints, feedback, stability domains, and resilience and adaptation, as well as various sectoral issues related to climate change, genetically modified food, environmental service provision, disease, mineral extraction, and sustainable development.

Format

The class will meet twice a week in 26 Hosler. The class will be conducted with lectures, in-class discussions, presentations, and interactive activities, whenever appropriate. You are expected to have done all assigned reading before coming to class, and be prepared to discuss the material. In addition to normal classroom interaction, you will have recitation discussions once a week (see schedule). This is your class, and I want to know how it's going. Please let me know if you have constructive suggestions on how to improve it!

Assignments/Exams

I deliberately use a mix of class room and assessment tools in this course in order to provide a variety of opportunities for you to express your competence (writing assignments, observation, mapping, discussion participation, multiple choice questions, short essay questions, graphics, etc.).

Reading: Reading assignments for this course are listed on the outline of lecture and recitation topics. Information from the textbook and other readings supplements lecture and forms the basis of class discussions. Therefore, readings should be completed prior to each lecture and recitation.

Attendance and Class Participation: Do the reading, follow in class, participate in short team work - be active! Some participation points will also be derived from the instructor's assessment of your participation in the lecture sessions (based on cogency of comments, questions, and answers to questions).

Recitations: The purpose of the recitations is to facilitate critical analysis and lively dialog on looking at some of the most pressing environmental issues facing the human race today. Most of the recitation topics will be based on a BBC News Online series called 'Planet Under Pressure.' (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/3686106.stm>). The majority of class participation points will be derived from your comments and participation in recitation discussions. Valuable discussions are those in which: 1) students listen (and learn) from one another; 2) the discussion is focused on understanding and analyzing the main argument of a text; 3) making connections between readings; and 4) relating new insight to other texts or real life events. Keep in mind that recitations are mandatory. TA's will take note of your presence. After one unexcused absence each additional unexcused absence will lower the recitation portion of your grade by one full letter. More than three unexcused absences will result in an F for the recitation portion of your grade.

Writing Assignments: You will be asked to undertake two short writing assignments (2-3 double-spaced, typed pages, 12-font, Times) during the semester. Both assignments will be handed out in class (with detailed instructions) one week prior to their due date. You are expected to hand in hard copies of your written assignments at the beginning of class when they are due.

Short Assignments: You will also have to undertake three short assignments. You will receive more detailed instructions. You are expected to hand in all three assignments at the beginning of class on their due dates.

Mid-term and Final Exams: Two exams will be given, one mid-term and one final exam. Since the course is structured around the understanding of complex systems, the final exam will be quasi-cumulative (drawing from what you have learned during the first half of the course, but with emphasis on the second half). The exam format will include a combination of question types such as essay, short answer and multiple choice. Questions will be derived from material covered in both lectures and recitations. Make-up exams will only be given in the event of illness or other verifiable emergency. In the event of an absence during an exam, it is the student's responsibility to contact me no later than one (1) class period after the test date.

Grading and Exams

I grade numerically, as objectively as I can (and the same is true for the TAs). There are many ways to earn points, including participation, creativity, examination, group work, observation, and other assignments. I do not so much give grades as you earn them.

In this course, grades will be based on the following components:

Mid-term Exam:	200 pts.	(20%)
Final Exam:	200 pts.	(20%)
Participation/discussions/presentations:	200 pts.	(20%)
2 writing assignments:	150 pts. (75 pts. each)	(15%)
"Future of the Lakes" Management Plan:	100 pts.	(10%)
3 short assignments:	100 pts. (30, 35, 35 pts)	(10%)
Worldometer:	50 pts.	(5%)
Total:	1,000 pts	(100%)

Another way to think about grading for the course: 40% of your grade is related to exams; 20% to active participation in discussions and presentations, 15% to analysis and design, 15% to writing, and 10% to group work and consensus building.

Final grades are based on a weighted average for the term. Grade cutoff points (in terms of percentage) are as follows:

A = 93-100%	C+ = 77-79%
A- = 90-92%	C = 73-76%
B+ = 87-89%	C- = 70-72%
B = 83-86%	D+ = 67-69%
B- = 80-82%	D = 63-66%
	D- = 60-62%
	F = <60

Disabilities

If you have a documented disability, or any other problem you think may affect your ability to perform well in this class, please see me early in the semester so that arrangements may be made to accommodate you.

Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism and cheating are both academic crimes. Never (1) turn in an assignment that you did not write yourself, (2) turn in an assignment for this class that you previously turned in for another class, or (3) cheat on a take-home assignment or an exam. If you do so, it may result in a failing grade for the class, and possibly even suspension from the college. Please see me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism.

Any violations of academic integrity will be dealt with following the University's procedures, which are described in detail at <http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html>

Assignment and Exam Schedule:

Week	Date	Assignment	Comments
2	Sept 3	Short Assignment 1	"What's in my food?"
3	Sept 8	Writing Assignment 1	"A place called home"
5	Sept 22	Short Assignment 2	"Where does my water come from?"
6	Sept 29	Worldometers (part 1)	http://www.worldometers.info/
7	Oct 8	Mid-term	
10	Oct 27	Writing Assignment 2	"Food, fields, and farmers in 2050"
11	Nov 5	Short Assignment 3	Recycling cell phones
13	Nov 19	Worldometers (part 2)	http://www.worldometers.info/
15	Dec 1 + 3	Management Plan "Future of the Lakes"	Group effort
16	Dec 10	Final Exam	

Welcome to the course!

Schedule and Assigned Readings for Lectures and Recitations

Please note that this schedule might be subject to change. It is your responsibility to keep up with any changes.

Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Recitation Topic
1	Aug 25	Course Introduction: Planet Under Pressure	Food for Thought: A Tale of Fish and Chocolate
	Aug 27	Food, Genetic Engineering, and Suicide Seeds (http://www.truefoodnow.org/)	
2	Sept 1	No class!	BBC - Climate Change
	Sept 3	Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and post-2012	
3	Sept 8	HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other Killers (incl. Movie)	BBC - Climate Change
	Sept 10	Geography, Human, Ecology, and Us (Marten, Foreword, Preface, Chap.1: 1-12)	
4	Sept 15	Feedbacks and Carrying Capacity (Marten, Chap. 2: 14-25)	BBC - World Water Crisis
	Sept 17	Ecological Footprints (Wackernagel et al., 2002: "Ecological Footprint of Nations")	
5	Sept 22	Populations & Revolutions (Marten, Chap. 3: 26-40)	BBC - Pollution
	Sept 24	Complex Coupled Systems (Marten, Chap. 4: 42-58)	
6	Sept 29	Ecosystem Organization (Marten, Chap 5: 60-70)	Prep for mid-term
	Oct 1	Mosaics Made by Man (Marten, Chap 5: 71-74)	
7	Oct 6	Why your cell phones kill gorillas + people! (Barouski, 2007: 'Blood Minerals')	BBC - Soaring energy demand
	Oct 8	MID-TERM	
8	Oct 13	Darwin's Nightmare (Movie part I)	BBC - Feeding the world
	Oct 15	Darwin's Nightmare (Movie part II)	
9	Oct 20	Succession, Fragmentation, and Forest Loss (Marten, Chap. 6: 76-88)	BBC - Biodiversity

	Oct 22	Coevolution & Coadaptation (Marten, Chap. 7: 96-104)	
10	Oct 27	Ecosystem Services (Marten, Chap. 8: 106-110, 114-119)	Fieldtrip "Feel the Field"
	Oct 29	The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Perceptions of Nature Excerpts from "Powaqqatsi" (1988) (Marten, Chap. 9: 121-125; 133-134;	
11	Nov 3	Unsustainable human-ecosystem interaction (Marten, Chap. 10: 137-143)	Preparation for Group Role Game "Future of the Lakes" (Carpenter et al., 2003: "Futures of the Lakes: Scenarios for the Future of Wisconsin's Northern Highland Lake District")
	Nov 5	The Tragedy of the Commons (Marten, Chap. 10: 143-145, 152-155)	
12	Nov 10	Institutions, Rules, and Regulations (Marten, Chap. 11: 157-168)	Role Game "Future of the Lakes" (Film it!)
	Nov 12	Resilience and Adaptive Capacity (Martin, Chap. 11: 169-181)	
13	Nov 17	Ecologically Sustainable Development: (Martin, Chap. 12: 183-214)	Action Plan "Future of the Lakes"
	Nov 19	Class Synthesis	
14	Nov 24	Thanksgiving!	No recitation!
	Nov 26	No Class!	
15	Dec 1	Future of the Lakes (Student Group Presentations I)	Fine-tune projects!
	Dec 3	Future of the Lakes (Student Group Presentations II)	
16	Dec 8	Review for Final Exam	No recitation!
	Dec 10	FINAL EXAM	
17	Dec 15- 19	Finals Week - You are all done ☺	

