

# *Anthropology and the Environment*

ANT 385 Special Topics in Anthropology

Fall 2005

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## **Course description and objectives:**

As I place the finishing touches on this syllabus, much of the United States is reeling from the immediate after-effects of hurricane Katrina. Water levels in New Orleans continue to rise, along with official death counts. This course will investigate humanity's interaction(s) with nature on numerous levels. Anthropology has examined the interrelationship between 'culture' and 'nature' from multiple perspectives. We will explore and consider the theories of cultural ecology, political ecology, and symbolic anthropology. We will examine several forms of environmental activism. Why do we call this hurricane by a name, Katrina, and in what ways and to what extent do we personify 'her' by doing so? How have our political and economic systems impacted Katrina 'herself' and/or 'her' impact on us? These are the sorts of questions this course will raise in various contexts. We will question more deeply our cultural relationships to nature, while examining those of other cultures. In this course you will think about human-nature relationships in multiple ways – from the subsistence strategies of hunters and gatherers to your own relationship with your grandmother's flower garden.

The course fulfills a sophomore writing requirement; it will be a writing-intensive course. I will work individually with each student to improve his/her writing skills. We will also work consciously not only to understand anthropological theories on the environment, but also to learn how to read and analyze theoretical materials.

We will have several guest speakers, hour-long outings, and one fieldtrip to west Atlanta. The course will thus mix traditional academic work and experiential learning.

## **Required Texts:**

Environmental Anthropology, From Pigs to Policies by Patricia Townsend 2000

Loving Nature, Toward an Ecology of Emotion by Kay Milton 2002

The Meaning of Water by Victoria Strang 2004

There are also numerous required readings posted on e-reserve, most of which are listed on this syllabus under the course schedule (below) and some which will be added through the course of the semester.

## **Grade Break Down:**

Weekly response papers

25%

Weekly pop quizzes	10%
Attendance and Participation	20%
Student led discussions and related paper, 2@ 5% each	10%
Project	35%
Annotated Bibliography	5%
Rough Draft	10%
Final	20%

### **Academic Honesty:**

Both Oxford College and I take academic honesty quite seriously. Please refer to the Honor Code and know that you are bound by this code for this course. I have found in teaching that many students do not always understand what exactly constitutes plagiarism. We will discuss proper citation and the common pitfalls of “accidental” plagiarism later in the semester. I WILL turn any situations over to the honor council that I suspect do not meet the school standard of academic honesty.

### **Attendance and Participation:**

Participation is 20% of your grade in this course. I expect you to come to class each day ready to discuss the topic at hand, and any assigned readings. Since this is a small class, I am hoping it will be highly interactive. I will be watching attendance (as you obviously can’t participate if you don’t attend!) and you will each be allowed 2 absences during the semester. Beyond this, each additional absence will lose you one point of your final grade. Of course I make exceptions in highly exceptional circumstances.

Perfect attendance without participation will give you an 80% on your final attendance and participation grade. I recognize that some students are by nature quieter than others, but I encourage you all to participate in most classroom discussions, AND to help encourage the participation of your fellow classmates. Your participation grade is based on thoughtful and consistent participation, not on some contest of who can speak the most in class.

### **Weekly Response Papers:**

Each Thursday you will be required to turn in a short (two page) response paper. The paper should be a response to the course readings of that week. As a RESPONSE paper, it should not be a summary of the readings, but rather your thoughts and reflections that emerged from the material. You should include a discussion question in each response paper. The paper should be typed and must be turned in during class. **LATE RESPONSES ARE NOT ACCEPTED.** They are due by 2:00 on Thursday. These papers will be graded check, check plus, check minus. I will be correcting them for writing mistakes, and use them to understand the patterns in each student’s writing style. I will not be grading them based on the writing and recognize that these papers will not reflect your BEST writing. I will count the 10 highest paper grades together as 10% of your final grade.

### **Student Led Discussions and related papers:**

There will be several student led discussions throughout the semester. Discussion leaders will work in groups of two or three. I will give the discussion leaders additional

articles to read, and present to the class. You will be expected to work with your fellow discussion leaders to address the articles and topics of the day with the rest of the class. (Note: the rest of the class is NOT required to read the additional articles.) Discussion leaders will also turn in a 3-4 page paper about the topic and articles of that day. Papers are due the day of the discussion, and your paper and presentation combined are worth 5% of your grade. Each student will help lead a student presentation (and do the corresponding paper) twice during the semester. Teams of discussion leaders will rotate. On the week that you do the student led discussion and paper, you do not turn in the regular response paper.

### **Reading Quizzes**

Each week there will be a reading quiz. This very short (usually 4 questions) quiz will be designed to confirm that you are doing the assigned reading. Students who have read the material should be able to easily get all questions right, while students who have not read will be unable to answer the questions. The reading quiz will be given at the beginning of class once a week, usually Tuesday. ***If you are absent or late to class, you will not be allowed to make up a reading quiz.*** I will drop your lowest grade, and average the rest for 10% of your final grade.

### **Course Project:**

A major part of this class is an independent research project, which you will do in stages. Your project may be either a traditional library research project or a mini-ethnographic research project.

For a library research project you should examine one culture or world area in relationship to one environmental issue. Examples might include the religious importance of sacred groves in parts of West Africa, forestry and village subsistence in Southern India, water distribution in Bolivia, the inclusion versus exclusion of native populations in nature preserves or national parks in various nations, anti-nuclear power activists in Mexico, German culture and the Green party, etc. Your paper topic must be approved by me, and I will help students who may have too few or too many ideas. You will need a ***minimum*** of 8 scholarly sources for your paper.

You may choose to do an ethnographic project if there is a near-by community or activist group dealing with an environmental issue that interests you. Again, your topic must be approved by me, and it also must be approved by the group itself. I will help students who choose this sort of project with ethnographic methods. Each ethnographic paper will require a minimum of 4 interviews and/or participant-observation sessions and a minimum of 5 scholarly sessions.

We will work as a class on our projects. Each of you will give and receive feedback on the progress of these projects as they unfold throughout the semester. You will turn in, and be graded on, both an annotated bibliography and a rough draft of the paper as the semester goes on. For both the rough and final draft of the course project, I will be giving you a split grade, 50% writing and 50% content.

## **Course Schedule**

A FULL course schedule will be distributed within the next two weeks

- Sept 1            Course Introductions
- Sept 6            Sutton and Anderson: Introduction to Cultural Ecology, chap 1  
(passed out in class)
- Sept 8            Environmental Anthropology (here forward EA) chapter 1 & 2
- Sept 13           EA chapter 3  
Julian Steward (e-reserve)
- Sept 15           EA chapter 4  
Case Studies from Sutton and Anderson (e-reserve)
- Sept 20           case studies continued
- Sept 22           EA chapters 5 & 6  
***Guest Speaker: Dr. Eloise Carter & Nature Walk***
- Sept 27           Ann Gold: *Foreign Trees, Lives and Landscapes in Rajasthan* (e-reserve)
- Sept 29           Student Led Discussion One***  
All: Lynch: *The Garden and the Sea*, US Latino Environmental Discourses  
Discussion Leaders:  
*Social Life of Trees and The Perception of the Environment*
- Oct 4            Rosh Hashanah  
***Class meets in the Library for research skills session***
- I will be meeting individually with you October 5,6, or 7 to discuss your individual writing skills and challenges. By this point in the semester I will have an initial assessment of your writing skills and style. We will set 20- minute appointment times the week before.*
- Oct 6            Strang: The Meaning of Water sections 2 and 3 for the week
- Oct 13            Yom Kippur, class cancelled, WORK ON YOUR BIBLIOGRAPHY
- Oct 18            ***Student Led Discussion 2***  
All: *Meaning of Water* section 4  
Discussion Leaders: selections from  
*Death Without Weeping* and *Waiting for Rain*

- Oct 20            Meaning of Water section 5
- Oct 25            ***Guest Speaker: Erik Oliver, President of Town of Oxford's Tree Board***  
Finish Meaning of Water
- Oct 27            ***Student led discussion 3***  
All: *The Southern Challenge* (Guha, on e-reserve)  
Discussion leaders: more Guha
- Nov 1             *No Nature without Social Justice* (Parajuli, on e-reserve)  
*Ecology from the viewpoint of the poor* (Gudynas, on e-reserve)
- Nov 3             ***Student led discussion 4***  
All: Anthropology and Environmental Justice (Johnston, on e reserve)  
Discussion leaders: selection from Diamond
- Nov 5<sup>th</sup>, Saturday FIELDTRIP to West Atlanta***
- Nov 8             Brosius: *Voices for the Borneo Rainforest* (e reserve)  
Conklin and Graham:
- Nov 10            ***Student led discussion 5***  
Discussion Leaders: Mothers and the Mexican Anti-nuclear Power Movement  
All: TBA
- Nov 15            *Environments and Environmentalism* (by Little, on e-reserve)
- Nov 17            ***Guest Speaker: from Georgians Against Nuclear Energy***  
***\*\*\*Annotated Bibliography Due***  
***No reading***
- Nov 22            Milton: Loving Nature, introduction, chapters 3 and 4  
Annotated Bibliography returned to you
- Nov 24            Thanksgiving
- Nov 29            ***\*\*\*Rough Draft Due***  
Milton: Loving Nature chapters 5 and 6  
Dr. Singer discusses GAP
- Dec 1             Dr. Singer at American Anthropological meetings, **CLASS CANCELED**
- Dec 6             ***Student led discussion 6***  
All: Loving Nature chapter 7 and 8

Discussion Leaders: TBA

Dec 8      Rough Drafts Returned to you.  
Reading: TBA

Dec 13     Reading: TBA

**Friday December 16, final exam period, FINAL PROJECT DUE**