

Anthropology 194-01

Culture and the Environment

Fall 2007

MWF 10:50-11:50

Carnegie 05

Arjun Guneratne

Office Hours: MTu 1:00-3:00 p.m. and by appointment

Office: Carnegie 004D (x6362)

Course preceptor: Emily Browning (ebrowning@macalester.edu)

This course is an introduction to environmental anthropology, the study of human-environment relations in the full spectrum of their complexity. The key concept that we will examine is culture, which is understood in different ways in environmental anthropology: as human adaptation to the environment, a sub-field known as cultural ecology, and also as the way in which human beings attribute meaning to and make sense of the world they live in—in other words, culture as a system of symbols. We will also discuss political ecology, an interdisciplinary approach that studies the environment in terms of the political, social and economic issues that frame environmental problems. In addition, the course introduces you to anthropological field methods through an independent research project in which you will write an ethnography (the description of a culture) of a social setting related to the subject matter of this course.

REQUIRED TEXTS (AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE IN THE CAMPUS BOOKSTORE)

Jonathan S. Adams and Thomas O. McShane, 1992. *The Myth of Wild Africa*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Kelly D. Alley, 2002. *On the Banks of the Ganga: When Wastewater meets a Sacred River*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

David McCurdy, James Spradley and Dianna Shandy, 2005. *The Cultural Experience* (Second edition). Waveland Press.

Philip Carl Salzman and Patricia G. Rice, 2008. *Thinking Anthropologically* (Second edition). Prentice Hall.

Paige West, 2006. *Conservation is our Government Now: The Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea*. Durham:Duke University Press.

All other materials for the course except videos are on electronic reserve. Films are on reserve in Media Services.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Regular attendance in class is required. You are permitted two unexcused absences during the course of the semester. Your attendance counts towards your grade for class participation. Failure to attend at least 75 percent of class sessions will result in a grade of D or lower.

Assignments and Grading

Four short essays	50%
Essay 1 = 5%	
Essay 2 = 10%	
Essays 3 = 15%	
Essay 4 = 20%	
Final Project (see below)	45%
Class participation	5%

Class participation refers to timely attendance at all meetings, your ability to contribute to the discussion when called upon to do so, and timely completion of all assignments.

Final project (see additional guidelines appended to this syllabus)

During the course of the semester, you will carry out an ethnographic research project based on at least three interviews with an informant who is part of a *microculture* related in some way to “the environment”. You will write a paper of 10-12 pages based on this research. The text for this project will be *The Cultural Experience*; we will discuss the research methods described in this book at various points during the semester.

Examples of possible microcultures relevant to this course (you are free to study others subject to my approval; this list is to give you an idea of what I have in mind):

- Environmental NGOs (e.g., local chapter of Audubon, Sierra Club, etc)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (located in Science Museum and Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge office in Bloomington)
- Other state and federal agencies dealing with environmental issues
- Recycling or waste management organization
- Hunters, bird watchers, fishermen etc.
- Campus student organization devoted to environmental issues of some kind.
- Community groups dealing with environmental justice issues.

No incompletes on the course will be given except for emergencies and illness. The pressure of your other coursework is not an acceptable reason for giving incompletes, nor for turning in assignments late; this is a normal aspect of college life and you should organize your work accordingly.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

It is an absolute requirement that all work submitted in this course be your own and that it be properly cited to indicate your reliance on the work of others. Please read the guidelines on academic honesty attached to this syllabus; we will review them in class. Instances of plagiarism will be referred to the Academic Dean for further action and will result in a grade of NC for that assignment or for the course.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

I want to help you, to the best of my ability, to be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please visit the Coordinator for Disability Student Services at the beginning of the semester to seek information or to qualify for accommodation. All accommodations must be approved through the Coordinator for Disability Student Services (119 Weyerhaeuser). Call 651-696-6220 or email kao@macalester.edu to make an appointment.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS.

You should have read the material for each day before coming to class.

SEPTEMBER

1 Saturday First class meeting (no readings assigned)

5 Wednesday **Introduction to Anthropology**
Bates, "The Study of Human Behavior."
Salzman and Rice, chs. 1-3

7 Friday **Ethnographic Research Project I**
McCurdy et al., *The Cultural Experience*, chs. 1-3

Read the student ethnographies published in this book at your own pace. They are condensed versions of papers written by Macalester students in the course *Ethnographic Interviewing*, and represent models for your own work. Note: These papers were originally written for a semester long course focused exclusively on methods and based on seven interviews with an informant; your own project will be much less ambitious.

Assignment: Locate a microculture and find an informant who will agree to three interviews over the course of the semester. Write a one paragraph description of the microculture, and what role the informant plays in it. Indicate when your first interview will be. Based on the information in this assignment, I may re-arrange the dates on which I discuss your ethnographic project. Due by September 24 in class; you may turn it in at any time before then. Assignments turned in after this deadline will result in a penalty of 20 percent of the grade of the final ethnographic paper.

- 10 Monday **Materialistic explanations of culture**
 Barrett, "The question of utility."
 Harris, "Forbidden Flesh."
 Salzman and Rice, ch. 4-5
- 12 Wednesday Library Orientation. Meet in Bibliographic Instruction Room on 2nd floor.
- 14 Friday **Ethnographic Research Project II: Ethics in Research.**
 Salzman and Rice, ch. 8
- American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics
<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>
 (download the pdf file and keep with your notes)
- In addition, browse the links on this page under the heading "AAA Ethics": <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethics.htm>
- 17 Monday **Culture as a symbolic system**
 Barrett, "The Native's Rationale and Symbolic Meaning."
 Douglas, "The Abominations of Leviticus."
- 19 Wednesday **Cultural Ecology**
 Sutton & Anderson, "Human Biological Ecology."
 Steward, "The Concept and Method of Cultural Ecology."
 Sutton & Anderson, "Cultural Ecology"
- 21 Friday Video: *The Goddess and the Computer*
- 24 Monday Rappaport, "Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations Among a New Guinea People."
 Harris, "India's Sacred Cow."
- 26 Wednesday **Ethnographic Research Project III: Your First Interview**
 McCurdy et al., *The Cultural Experience*, ch. 4.
 How to conduct and analyze your first interview.
- 28 Friday Diamond, "Under Montana's Big Sky."
 Diamond, "Easter's End."
 Diamond, "Why do some societies make disastrous decisions?"
- OCTOBER
- 1 Monday **The Myth of Primitive Environmental Wisdom**
 Video: *The Kayapo*
- 3 Wednesday **Ethnographic Research Project IV: Eliciting Taxonomies**
 McCurdy et al., *The Cultural Experience*, chs. 5-6.

By this point, you should have completed at least one interview. We will discuss in class how to ask structural questions and prepare taxonomies.

- 5 Friday Milton, "Cultural Theory and Environmentalism."
Brosius, "Endangered Forest, Endangered People: Environmentalist representations of indigenous knowledge."
- 8 Monday Maybury-Lewis, "On the importance of being tribal."
Krech, "Eden."
Hames, "The Ecologically Noble Savage Debate."
- 10 Wednesday **Political Ecology**
Dauvergne, "The Politics of Deforestation in Indonesia."
Stonich & DeWalt, "The Political Ecology of Deforestation in Honduras."
- 12 Friday No class. I am away at a conference. Work on your interviews.
- 15 Monday West, *Conservation is our government now*
Chapters to be assigned

16 Tuesday	24 th Annual World Food Day Teleconference: Climate: Changes, Challenges and Consequences (Details to be announced)
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- 17 Wednesday **Ethnographic Research Project V**
McCurdy et al., *The Cultural Experience*, chs. 7-8.
You should have completed the first two interviews. We will discuss how to focus the project and develop a theme for the paper.
- 19 Friday West, *Conservation is our government now*
Chapters to be assigned
- 22 Monday **Cross-cultural meaning of Environment**
Bird-David, "The Giving Environment."
Van Beek and Banga, "The Dogon and Their Trees."
Salzman and Rice, ch. 10
- 24 Wednesday Rodman, "Restoring Nature: Natives and Exotics."
Herron, "We were born to it: Native Americans, Fire, and Environmental Cultural Continuity."
- 26 Friday **Fall Break**

29 Monday **Science, Culture and the Environment**
Robin Grove-White, “Environmentalism: A new moral discourse for technological society?”
Taylor and Buttel, “How do we know we have global environmental problems?”
Lackey, “Values, Policy and Ecosystem Health.”

31 Wednesday **New directions in environmental anthropology**
Kottak, “The New Ecological Anthropology”

NOVEMBER

2 Friday *On the Banks of the Ganga*, Parts 1 and 2.

5 Monday *On the Banks of the Ganga* Finish book.

7 Wednesday **Ethnographic Research Project VI: Writing the Ethnography**
McCurdy et al., *The Cultural Experience*, ch. 8-9

Today we will discuss how to write your ethnography. You should have completed all three interviews by this point. Conduct additional interviews if you feel you need to, but it is not required.

9 Friday **Poverty, Population and the Environment**
Video: *The Legacy of Malthus*
Read: Malthus, *Essay on Population*, 1798 (excerpts to be assigned)

12 Monday Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons.”
Berkes, et al, “The Benefits of the Commons.”
Sawyer, “Indigenous initiatives and Petroleum Politics in the Ecuadorian Amazon.”

14 Wednesday Beckerman, “Income Levels and the Environment.”
Guha and Martinez-Alier, “Poverty and the Environment: A critique of the conventional wisdom.”

16 Friday Robbins, “Capitalism and the Making of the Consumer.”
Wilk, “The Ecology of Global Consumer Culture.”

19 Monday Individual conferences – sign up sheet on my door
Five page draft of final project paper due by 9 a.m. in my mailbox.

21 Wednesday Individual conferences – sign up sheet on my door

23 Friday **Thanksgiving Break**

- 26 Monday **Imagining Africa : policies, practice, and wildlife conservation**
 Adams & McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa*, Introduction, and chs. 1-5
- 28 Wednesday Adams & McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa*, finish book.
- 30 Friday No class—I am away at a conference. Work on your final paper.

DECEMBER

- 3 Monday Holt, “The Catch-22 of Conservation: Indigenous Peoples, Biologists, and Cultural Change.”
- 5 Wednesday **Applying anthropology to environmental problems**
 Murray, “The domestication of wood in Haiti.”
 Salzman and Rice, ch. 9
- 7 Friday Student presentations
- 10 Monday Student presentations
- 12 Wednesday Student presentations
- 14 Friday Student presentations

Two copies of Ethnographic Research Project due at 5 p.m. in my mailbox in the Anthropology Department.