

**Geography 232 (Environmental Studies 232) <sup>1</sup>**  
**People, Agriculture and the Environment: An Introduction to Nature-Society Geography**  
**Module 1, Fall Semester, 2020**

**Class Time and Location:** 3:15-4:30, M-F, Zoom

**Instructor:** Bill Moseley

**Office:** Rm 104d, Carnegie Hall

**Office Hours:** Contact me for a zoom appt or for a socially distanced meeting outside. I am always available 1:30-2:30 M,T,W,R, as well as at other negotiated times.

**Phone:** 651-696-6126

**Email:** [moseley@macalester.edu](mailto:moseley@macalester.edu)

**Teaching Assistants:**

1) Nick Jacobson, Email: [njacobs1@macalester.edu](mailto:njacobs1@macalester.edu); Office hours: 7:30-9:30pm Tuesday and Thursday via zoom.

2) Nethmi Bathige Email: [nbathige@macalester.edu](mailto:nbathige@macalester.edu); Office hours: 7:30-9pm Sunday and 6:30-8pm Wednesday via zoom.

**Course Description**

The investigation of nature-society relationships lies at the heart of geography and has been one of the pillars of the discipline since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This realm of inquiry also has been an important bridge between geography and other fields. This course introduces you to the study of human-environment interactions from a geographic perspective, with a special emphasis on agriculture. We will examine environmental issues in a variety of geographic contexts (Global South and Global North) and the connections between environmental problems in different locations. Beyond agriculture, we will also examine other sectoral issues in relation to agriculture or as stand alone environmental concerns. These themes include: human population growth, consumption, biodiversity, climate change, and environmental health. We will be trying on a number of theoretical lenses from geography's broad human-environment tradition (such as physical geography, cultural ecology, commodity chain analysis, political ecology, resource geography, the human dimensions of global change, hazards geography and environmental justice). In other words, I not only want us to explore a range of environmental issues, but also to grapple with theory and how this informs our understanding of the human-environment interface.

**Format**

Due to module 1 restrictions, the class will meet five times per week virtually, with asynchronous, recorded lectures and synchronous, live discussions (see schedule on pgs 5-6). Most weeks we will meet 2-3 times for a synchronous check-in on lecture material and/or a discussion of assigned readings (with the remaining class periods devoted to asynchronous, recorded course lectures). This is not my preferred way to teach, but it is consistent with best practices for distance learning in a COVID environment. You are expected to have done all assigned readings before coming to a synchronous class discussion, and have listened to assigned lectures before these are reviewed in class. Recorded lectures may be found on [VoiceThread](#) for this class, as well as pdfs of lecture slides for each lecture.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that this is tentative and subject to change. It is your responsibility to keep up with any changes.

This is your class, and I want to know how it's going. Please let me know if you would like to see changes, from lecture topics to grading. You are welcome to speak with me via zoom or phone. The surest way to contact me is to send me e-mail (moseley@macalester.edu), which normally will be responded to promptly during normal business hours.

### **Texts**

Moseley, W.G., E. Perramond and H. Hapke and P. Laris. 2013. An Introduction to Human-Environment Geography: Local Dynamics and Global Processes. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley/Blackwell. (6 copies of the main textbook are available on library reserves)

Pollan, Michael. 2006. The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. New York: Penguin Press.

A large number of readings are also available on the course Moodle site. Handouts will be provided virtually for assignments via email and the moodle site. The instructor is not responsible for re-sharing handouts to students who are not regularly engaging with the class.

### **Assignments/Exams**

I deliberately use a mix of assessment tools in this class in order to provide a variety of opportunities for you to express your competence (writing, discussion participation, exams, etc.). Many students find that they tend to do better with some formats (e.g., exams) than others (e.g., writing). I believe it is not only fairest to provide you with a variety of assessment exercises, but more reflective of the mix of challenges you will encounter in life.

Reading: Reading assignments for this course are listed on the outline of lecture topics. Information from the textbook supplements lecture and forms the basis of class discussions.

Participation and Discussion days: Class will be oriented towards discussion roughly one third of the time. The purpose of the discussion classes is to facilitate critical analysis and lively dialog on controversial issues related to human-environment interactions. The majority of class participation points will be derived from your comments in discussion. Participation points are relatively easy to obtain if you keep up with the reading and speak up during discussion. Please see me if you have difficulty speaking in class. Furthermore, some of the participation points will also be derived from: 1) your role as a co-leader for two discussions; and 2) my assessment of your participation in the lecture review sessions (based on cogency of comments, questions, and answers to questions).

In my opinion, the best discussions are those in which: 1) students listen (and learn) from one another and build on what each other is saying; 2) the discussion is focused on understanding the main argument of each reading and breaking down and analyzing this argument to see if it makes sense; 3) making connections between readings by identifying where authors agree and disagree; and 4) relating insight gained from reading and discussion to other texts or real life events. In sum, I want you to approach discussion as an on-going scholarly debate in which we (as a community of scholars and learners) are attempting to advance our collective knowledge. Student discussion leaders will be assigned to facilitate our scholarly debates.

Reaction essays: Reaction essays are brief essays (1-2 page or 500-650 words) in which you respond to two or more assigned readings for a given discussion. Your essays should include a succinct but detailed summary of the argument(s) to which you are responding and develop your reaction, which may be one of skepticism, all out agreement or disagreement, epiphany, or whole-hearted endorsement. Regardless, your essay should exhibit a line of reflective thought in which you explain the logic and rationale that supports your reaction to the reading(s). Your essays must include at least one question, relevant to the readings, which you would like to ask of your classmates. Thus, the reaction essays should help you prepare for participation in class discussion of the readings. Reaction essays must be submitted via Moodle. The essays are due by 11 pm CST the day before a discussion. You are required to complete nine essays and have ten opportunities to write them. Each essay is worth .55% of your grade (for a total of 5% of your grade). Proof read your essays so that they are free of grammatical and spelling errors. The essays are marked in a credit/no credit fashion and essays submitted late will receive no credit.

Writing Assignments: You will be required to undertake two assignments that involve writing and analysis. The second assignment will initially be submitted as a draft, and then revised and resubmitted following feedback from the teaching assistants or myself.

*Farmer's Market Field Assignment (assign #1):* An important aspect of geography is fieldwork and, as such, you will need to complete this field-based assignment outside of class. You will visit a local farmer's market and be asked to make general observations about the market (e.g., location, approximate number of vendors, type of produce on sale, characteristics of the merchants and clientele at the market) and undertake a more detailed assessment of three vendors. Ideally, you will interview these vendors in order to collect some basic information. This is due Monday, Sept 14 at 11pm CST via moodle. Guidelines will be shared on moodle and via email.

Commodity Chain Analysis Paper (assign #2). Geographers increasingly seek to understand human-environment interactions within the context of a global economy. The problem is that the global nature of our economy often obscures the social and environmental impacts of our consumption decisions. For this paper, you will select a food or other natural resource related product that is available in two (or more) forms. The two forms will differ from each other on at least one important dimension (e.g., locally produced/globally produced, conventional/organic, produced by a big company/produced by a small company, etc.) You will then trace the two versions of the food/product back through the various social and physical transformations they have undergone on the way to you, the consumer. The point of the paper is to explore the range of ways in which the two versions of the product differ, and to understand the origins, transformations, and the environmental impacts that before the product reaches the consumer. This paper should be 10-15 pages in length. Guidelines will be shared on moodle and via email. A proposal is due on Sept 16, a draft is due on Oct 16, and the final paper on Oct 21. See past examples [here](#).

*Class Presentation:* The findings from your commodity chain analysis paper will be shared with the class in a group presentation on Oct 19-20. The instructor will suggest presentation groups of five people based on themes.

Midterm and Final: A midterm exam will be given as well as a quasi-cumulative final at the end of the term. Both will be take-home essay exams. 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**

### Grade Components

Midterm (9/25):	20%	Peer Review Exercise (10/17-18):	1%
Final (10/22-23):	24%	Comm Chain Group Presentation (10/19-20):	5%
Farmer's Market Paper (9/14):	10%	Reaction essays:	5%
Commodity Chain Paper Draft (10/16):	5%	Discussion (partici & leadership):	8%
Commodity Chain Paper (10/21):	22%	Total:	100%

Final grades are based on a weighted average for the term. Grade cutoff points are as follows: A = 93-100%; A- = 90-92%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- = 80-82%; C+ = 77-79%; C = 73-76%; C- = 70-72%; D+ = 67-69%; D = 63-66%; D- = 60-62%, NC = < 60%.

## **Disabilities**

I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please meet with the Director of Disability Services, Melissa Fletcher, who serves as the coordinator for services for students with disabilities. It is important to meet with her at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place to begin the semester successfully. The director may be reached in the Kagin Commons, Rm 125, by phone at 651-696-6974, or email [disabilityservices@macalester.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@macalester.edu).

## **Health and Wellness**

You are encouraged to make your health and well-being a priority throughout this semester and during your career at Macalester. Taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, cultural, financial, etc., and how they can have an impact on your academic experience. I encourage you to remember that you have a body with needs. In the virtual classroom, eat when you are hungry, drink water, use the restroom, and step out if you are upset and need some air. Please do what is necessary so long as it does not impede your or others' ability to be mentally and emotionally present in the course. Outside of the virtual class, sleeping, moving your body, and safely connecting with others can be strategies to help you be resilient at Macalester. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please don't hesitate to contact me and/or find support from Health & Wellness Center. I have included contact information for health and wellness resources on the course moodle page.

## **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 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. Anyone caught cheating on an exam will be reported to the provost in line with recognized university procedures.

**Lecture and Discussion Schedule**

(S = attend synchronous zoom meeting, A = listen to asynchronous lecture, A&S = listen to asynchronous lecture & attend synchronous zoom meeting)

<b>PART I: LAYING THE FOUNDATION: INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT GEOGRAPHY, PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY, CULTURAL/POLITICAL ECOLOGY, AGRICULTURE &amp; COMMODITY CHAINS</b>				
<b>Wk</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>For- mat</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments (all chapter assignment are from Moseley et al. 2013)</b>
1	Wed, 2 Sept	Course Business, introductions	S	
	Thurs, 3 Sept	1.1 A Geographic Perspective	A	Chap 1
	Fri, 4 Sept	1.2 Human-Environment Tradition	A&S	Chap 13
2	Tues, 8 Sept	<b>Discussion 1: Geography, Agriculture &amp; Power</b>	S	Discussion readings
	Wed, 9 Sept	2. Environmental & Agricultural Policy	A	<u>Chap 2</u>
	Thurs, 10 Sept	3.1 Physical Geography	A	Chap 5
	Fri, 11 Sept	3.2 Physical Geography	A&S	Chap 3
3	Mon, 14 Sept	4.1 Agricultural Systems around the world	A	Chap 10, farmer’s market paper due at 11pm CST via moodle
	Tues, 15 Sept	4.2 Agricultural Systems around the world	A	
	Wed, 16 Sept	<b>Discussion 2: Agriculture Revolutions &amp; Progress</b>	S	Discussion Readings; Brief proposal for commodity chain paper due by 9pm CST via moodle
	Thurs, 17 Sept	5. Agricultural Change in the Global South	A&S	
		Library session, commodity chain paper		
Fri, 18 Sept	<b>Discussion 3: Debating GMOs &amp; the Future of Agriculture</b>	S	Discussion readings	
4	Mon, 21 Sept	6.1 Agricultural problems / challenges	A	
		6.2 Agricultural solutions & alternatives		
	Tues, 22 Sept	<b>Discussion 4: Omnivore’s Dilemma, Part I</b>	S	Discussion readings
	Wed, 23 Sept	7. Commodity chains and fair trade	A	
	Thurs, 24 Sept	<b>Discussion 5: Omnivore’s Dilemma, Part II &amp; critiques</b>	S	Discussion readings
Fri, 25 Sept	Take-home midterm exam	A	Evening review session prior to exam	

<b>PART II: MAKING CONNECTIONS: BIODIVERSITY, POPULATION, ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS, CLIMATE &amp; ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE</b>				
<b>wk</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>For- mat</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments</b>
5	Mon, 28 Sept	8. Cultural & Political Ecology	A	Chap 4
	Tues, 29 Sept	9. The Global Food Crisis & Local Food Production	A&S	
	Wed, 30 Sept	<u>10.1 Biodiversity 1</u>	A	Chap 11
	Thurs, 1 Oct	<b>Discussion 6: Nature</b>	S	Discussion readings
	Fri, 2 Oct	<u>10.2 Biodiversity 2</u>	A	
6	Mon, 5 Oct	Guest lecture: CSA farmer Dan Guenther	S	
	Tues, 6 Oct	<b>Discussion 7: Biodiversity &amp; Agriculture</b>	S	Discussion readings.
	Wed, 7 Oct	11.1 Population and Consumption 1	A	Chap 9, Discussion readings
	Thurs, 8 Oct	<b>Discussion 8: Population</b>	S	Chap 6
	Fri, 9 Oct	11.2 Population and Consumption 2	A	
7	Mon, 12 Oct	12. Hazards	A	
	Tues, 13 Oct	<b>Discuss 9: Hazards, Climate &amp; Ag</b>	S	Discussion readings
	Wed, 14 Oct	13.1 Environmental Health & Justice	A	Chap 8
	Thurs, 15 Oct	<b>Discussion 10: Environmental Justice</b>	S	Discussion readings
	Fri, 16 Oct	13.2 Health, COVID-19 & Food Security	A	<u>Commodity chain paper draft due Fri (16 Oct) at noon CST via moodle</u>
8	Mon, 19 Oct	Final paper Presentations	S	
	Tues, 20 Oct	Final paper Presentations	S	
	Wed, 21 Oct	Study day	A	<u>Commodity Chain Paper due on Wed, 21 Oct at 11pm CST via moodle</u>
	Thurs-Fri, 22-23 Oct	Take-Home Final exam	A	

### **Discussion Reading Schedule (subject to change)**

#### **1. Tuesday, September 8: Geography, Food Debates and Knowledge Politics**

Moseley, W.G. and N. Wilson. 2016. "Agriculture, Food Production, and Rural Land Use in Advanced Placement Human Geography." *Journal of Geography*. 115: 118–124.

National Research Council. 2010. "How will we sustainably feed everyone in the coming decade and beyond?" *Understanding the Changing Planet: Strategic Directions for the Geographical Sciences*. Washington, DC: US National Academy of Science. Pp. 59-66.

Anderson, J. and J. Sumberg. 2017. "Knowledge Politics in Development-Oriented Agronomy." In: Sumberg, J. (ed). *Agronomy for Development: The Politics of Knowledge in Agricultural Research*. Abingdon: Routledge. Pp. 1-13.

## **2. Wednesday, September 16: Agricultural Revolutions and ‘Progress’**

Diamond, Jared. 1987. “The worst mistake in the history of the human race.” Discover. May.

Moseley, W.G. and J. Morgan. 2018. “Why it’s important to recognise multiple food systems in Africa.” The Conversation Africa. June 18.

Page, G. 2012. “How to ensure the world’s food supply.” The Washington Post. August 2.

Moseley, W.G. 2017. “The New Green Revolution for Africa: A Political Ecology Critique.” The Brown Journal of World Affairs. 23(2): 177-190.

## **3. Friday, September 18: Debating the Role of GMOs in the Future of Agriculture**

Ronald, P.C. 2017. “Plant Genetics, Ecologically Based Farming and the Future of Food.” Geographical Review. DOI: 10.1111/gere.12256

Winklerprins, A. 2017. “Genetically Engineered Crops as Necessary Invention.” Geographical Review. DOI: 10.1111/gere.12257

Moseley, W.G. 2017. “A Risky Solution for the Wrong Problem: Why GMOs won’t Feed the Hungry of the World.” Geographical Review. DOI: 10.1111/gere.12259

Naylor, L. 2017. “A Place for GMOs in Food Sovereignty?” Geographical Review. DOI: 10.1111/gere.12258

Luna, Jessie and Brian Dowd. 2020. “How power shaped the ‘success story’ of genetically modified cotton in Burkina Faso.” The Conversation. August 30.

## **4. Tuesday, September 22: Omnivore’s Dilemma Part I**

Pollan, Michael. 2006. The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. New York: Penguin Press. Parts I and II (Pp 1-273).

## **5. Thursday, September 24: Omnivore’s Dilemma Part II and Critique**

Pollan, Michael. 2006. The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. New York: Penguin Press. Pp 277-415.

Guthman, J. 2007. “Can’t Stomach It: How Michael Pollan et al. Made Me Want to Eat Cheetos.” The Journal of Food and Culture. 7(3): 75-79

Tree, I. 2018. “If you want to save the world, veganism isn’t the answer.” The Guardian. Aug 25.

## **6. Thursday, October 1: Wilderness & Humanized Landscapes**

Mann, C. 2011. “A View From Above.” In 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Vintage Books. Pgs 1-31.

Cronon, W. 1996. “The Trouble With Nature or, Getting Back to the Wrong Wilderness.” Environmental History. 1(1)7-28.

Davison, A. 2008. “The trouble with nature: Ambivalence in the lives of urban Australian environmentalists.” Geoforum. 39 (3): 1284–1295.

## **7. Tuesday, October 6: Biodiversity Conservation & Agriculture**

Terborgh, J. and C. Van Schaik. 2002. "Why the World Needs Parks." In Making Parks Work: Strategies for Preserving Nature. Washington D.C.: Island Press. pgs 3-14.

Guha, R. 1997. "The Authoritarian Biologist and the Arrogance of Anti-Humanism: Wildlife Conservation in the Third World." The Ecologist. 27(1): 14-20.

Vandermeer, J. and I. Perfecto. 2007. "The Agricultural Matrix and a Future Paradigm for Conservation." Conservation Biology. 21(1): 274-277.

## **8. Thursday, October 8: A Very Old Debate: Over-Population, Over-Consumption or Maladapted Technology?**

Ehrlich, Paul. 1968. The Population Bomb. New York: Ballantine Books. Pgs 15-45 (Too many people, too little food).

Lohmann, Larry. 2003. "Re-imagining the population debate." The Corner House.

Simon, J.L. 1981. "World population growth: an anti-doomsday view." Atlantic Monthly. 248(2):70-6.

Allitt, P. 2014. "Remember the Future? The population bomb was ticking, and apocalypse was next in line..." The Weekly Standard. Vol. 19, No. 19. For a related (and audio) NPR story, listen to "A Bet, Five Metals And The Future Of The Planet" (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/money/2013/12/31/258687278/a-bet-five-metals-and-the-future-of-the-planet> )

## **9. Tuesday, October 13: Hazards, Climate & Vulnerability**

Montenegro, M. J. Sbicca, & A. Shattuck. 2019. "Agriculture Needs a 21st-Century New Deal." Dollars and Sense. May/June Issue.

Moseley, W.G. 2011. "Behind Africa's famine, more than just drought. Famine isn't inevitable." The Washington Post. July 28.

Taylor, M. 2018. "What's Smart about Climate Smart Agriculture?" Food First Policy Brief #22.

Moseley, W.G. 2020. "The Geography of COVID-19 and a Vulnerable Global Food System." World Politics Review. May 12.

## **10. Thursday, October 15: Geographies of Environmental Justice**

Kurtz, H.E. 2003. "Scale frames and counter-scale frames: constructing the problem of environmental justice." Political Geography. 22: 887-916.

Pulido, Laura. 2000. "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California." Annals of the Association of American Geographers. 90(1): 12-40.

Kurtz, Hilda. 2013. "Linking food deserts and racial segregation: challenges and limitations." In Geographies of race and food: fields, bodies, markets. Rachel Slocum and Arun Saldanha (eds).

*Welcome to the course! I look forward to working with you this semester.*