Geography 232 (Environmental Studies 232) 
People, Agriculture and the Environment: An Introduction to Nature-Society Geography
Fall Semester, 2019 [DRAFT]

Class Time and Location: 9:40-11:10, T-R, Carnegie 107
Instructor: Bill Moseley
Office: Rm 104d, Carnegie Hall
Office Hours: 1:30-2:30pm Mon and Wed, 3-4pm Tues and Thurs, or by appointment
Phone: 651-696-6126
Email: moseley@macalester.edu

Teaching Assistants:
1) Emma Heth, Email: eheth@macalester.edu; Office hours Tuesday from 7-8pm and Wednesday from 7-9pm in Car 104 (Geography Office).
2) Sivan Tratt, Email: stratt@macalester.edu; Office hours: Sunday 8-9pm and Monday 7:30-9:30pm in Car 104 (Geography Office).

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 19th 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 (developed and developing countries) 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
The class will meet twice a week. The class will be conducted with both lectures and in-class discussions. You are expected to have done all assigned reading before coming to class, and be prepared to discuss it. In addition to normal classroom banter, we will have several designated discussion days during the term (see schedule).

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 after class or to visit me in my office. 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.

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


A large number of readings are also available on the course Moodle site. 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.

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 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 10 pm the day before a discussion. You are required to complete nine essays and have ten opportunities to write them. Each essay is worth .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 three assignments that involve writing and analysis. Some of these assignments will initially be submitted as drafts, and then revised and resubmitted following feedback from the teaching assistants or myself.

Alternative Agriculture in context (assign #1): Fieldwork is a mainstay of human-environment geography. This shorter, field-based research paper asks you to explore the possibilities and constraints related to alternative agriculture in the upper Midwest of the United States. We will be visiting a CSA farm (Common Harvest Farm in Osceola, WI) on Sat, Sept 14 to better understand a local farm operation and learn from them about the advantages and challenges of organic farming in the region. The visit will be preceded by an in-class lecture given by the farmer, Dan Guenthner, on Sept 12. A draft of the paper is due on Oct 1 and the final paper on Oct 8. Examples of past papers (compiled in a report) may be found here and here. The class will be divided into six groups to each ponder one of four (tentative) research questions collaboratively developed with the CSA farmer. 1) How are upper Midwest farmers dealing with the ongoing trade war in terms of impacts, changing attitudes and coping strategies? 2) While we often think of heat and drought as related to climate change, how has an excessively wet 2019 summer impacted farmers in the upper Midwest & what are successful strategies for dealing with this challenge? 3) What are some of the most exciting innovations in agroecology that could help upper Midwest farmers deal with common challenges in the realm of disease, climate change, insect predation, labor constraints and/or soil degradation? 4) The CSA model, also known a subscription farming, has now been in existence for almost 50 years. How has this model evolved over time, what are some of the challenges it has faced in recent years, and how have CSA farmers sought to deal with these challenges?

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 passed out in class. A progress report is due on Nov 5, a draft on Nov 22, and the final paper on Dec 11. 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 Dec 5 or 10. The instructor will suggest presentation groups of 4-5 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. The exam format will include a combination of question types such as essay, short answer and multiple choice. 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 (10/17): 20%  
Final (12/17): 22%  
Alternative Ag Paper (10/8): 15%  
Comm Progress Report (11/5): 1%  
Commodity Chain Paper Draft (11/22): 2%  
Commodity Chain Paper (12/11): 22%  
Comm Chain Peer Review Exercise (11/26): 1%  
Comm Chain Group Presentation (12/5&10): 5%  
Reaction essays: 4.5%  
Discussion (partici & leadership): 7.5%  
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.

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 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 classroom, sleeping, moving your body, and 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**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings and Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tues, 3 Sept</td>
<td>Course Business, introductions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs, 5 Sept</td>
<td>Geography and its Human-Environment Tradition</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Tues, 10 Sept</td>
<td>Human-Environment Tradition</td>
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<td>Thurs, 12 Sept</td>
<td>Guest lecture by Dan Guenther, farmer &amp; co-owner of Common Harvest Farm</td>
<td>Submit alt agriculture paper question by 9/12 at 10pm on moodle, readings for guest lecture (on moodle)</td>
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<td>Sat, 14 Sept</td>
<td>Field trip to Common harvest farm</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Tues, 17 Sept</td>
<td>Environmental &amp; Agricultural Policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs, 19 Sept</td>
<td>Physical Geography</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Tues, 24 Sept</td>
<td>Agricultural Systems around the world</td>
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<td>Thurs, 26 Sept</td>
<td>Agricultural Systems around the world</td>
<td>Discussion Readings</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Tues, 1 Oct</td>
<td>Cultural Ecology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs, 3 Oct</td>
<td>Political Ecology</td>
<td>Discussion readings</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Tues, 8 Oct</td>
<td>Agricultural problems / challenges</td>
<td>Final alt ag paper due 10/8 at 10pm via moodle</td>
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<td>Thurs, 10 Oct</td>
<td>Agricultural solutions &amp; alternatives</td>
<td>Discussion readings</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Tues, 15 Oct</td>
<td>Commodity chains and fair trade</td>
<td>Brief proposal for commodity chain paper due in class, Discussion readings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs, 17 Oct</td>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>Evening review session prior to exam</td>
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<td>Dates</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Tues, 22 Oct</td>
<td>The Global Food Crisis &amp; Local Food Production</td>
<td>Library session, LL Library room</td>
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<td>Thurs, 24 Oct</td>
<td>No class. Midterm break</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Tues, 29 Oct</td>
<td>Biodiversity</td>
<td>Chap 11</td>
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<td>Thurs, 31 Oct</td>
<td>Biodiversity</td>
<td>Discussion readings</td>
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<td><strong>Discussion 6: Nature</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Tues, 5 Nov</td>
<td>Biodiversity</td>
<td>Commodity chain progress report due in class</td>
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<td>Thurs, 7 Nov</td>
<td><strong>Disc 7: Biodiversity &amp; Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>Discussion readings</td>
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<td>Population and Consumption</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Tues, 12 Nov</td>
<td>Population and Consumption</td>
<td>Chap 9, Discussion readings</td>
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<td>Thurs, 14 Nov</td>
<td><strong>Discussion 8: Population</strong></td>
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<td>Population and Consumption</td>
<td>Chap 6</td>
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<td>Hazards</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Tues, 19 Nov</td>
<td>Hazards</td>
<td>Discussion readings, Commodity chain paper draft due Wed (11/20) via moodle</td>
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<td>Thurs, 21 Nov</td>
<td><strong>Discussion 9: Hazards, Climate &amp; Ag</strong></td>
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<td>Peer review in class</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Tues, 26 Nov</td>
<td>Hazards</td>
<td>Chap 8</td>
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<td>Thurs, 28 Nov</td>
<td>Environmental Health</td>
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<td><strong>Discussion Reading Schedule (subject to change)</strong></td>
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<td>1. Tuesday, September 10: Geography, Food Debates and Knowledge Politics</td>
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2. Thursday, September 26: Agricultural Revolutions and ‘Progress’

3. Thursday, October 3: Debating the Role of GMOs in the Future of Agriculture
Naylor, L. 2017. “A Place for GMOs in Food Sovereignty?” Geographical Review. DOI: 10.1111/gere.12258

4. Thursday, October 10: Omnivore’s Dilemma Part I

5. Tuesday, October 15: Omnivore’s Dilemma Part II and Critique

6. Thursday, October 31: Wilderness & Humanized Landscapes
7. Thursday, November 7: Biodiversity Conservation & Agriculture


8. Tuesday, November 12: A Very Old Debate: Over-Population, Over-Consumption or Maladapted Technology?


9. Tuesday, November 19: Hazards, Climate & Agriculture


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

10. Tuesday, December 3: Geographies of Environmental (In)Justice and Racism


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