

## ANTH3623 Environmental Anthropology

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### COURSE MEETING TIME(S):

Time: 11:10-12:30 Tues. & Thurs.

Place: Caldwell Lab 277

### REQUIRED TEXTS:

All readings will be provided in PDF format on **Carmen** (*see the course bibliography at the end*).

### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This course serves as an overview of the subfield of environmental anthropology. In other words, it explores anthropological approaches to understanding the relationship between humans and their surrounding environments. During the course, we will draw from many prominent scholars that have shaped this subfield, tracing how perspectives in the study of human-environment relationships have changed and evolved over time. With case studies from Amazonia to the Arctic, this course will look specifically at how different human groups mediate their interactions with the environment through their social organization, subsistence practices, technology, religion, and cosmovision. We will also examine contemporary U.S. cultural practices and beliefs in relation to the environment, and several course assignments will engage with human-environmental problems of regional and national concern. Toward the end of the course, we will explore new theoretical and empirical developments in our understanding of human relationships to the environment, discussing specifically how climate change and the threat of global ecological crisis challenge are prompting collective rethinking of humanity's place on Earth.

### COURSE GOALS:

By the conclusion of the course, each student should:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how culture shapes human perceptions and interactions with the environment.
2. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of different theoretical approaches in the history of environmental anthropology.
3. Apply theoretical concepts from environmental anthropology to describe and explain human-environmental interactions.
4. Produce creative reflections on one's personal relationship to the environment through an anthropological lens.

### ASSESSMENT AND GRADING:

Task	Points
Attendance	20
Discussion Board Posts (7 x 3 points each)	21
In-Class Activities (5 x 2 points each)	10
Out-of-Class Assignments (4 x 5 points each)	20
Essay	10
End of Semester Exhibition	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>101</b>

## **BREAKDOWN OF GRADING:**

**Attendance (20 points):** Regular attendance is expected of all students. Participation in class discussions is also strongly encouraged not only because it contributes to the intellectual environment of the classroom, but it facilitates individual learning as well. However, due to the challenges posed by COVID-19 (and the general state of the world today), **all students are granted 4 excused absences during the semester—no questions asked.** If you miss more than four classes, please reach out to me.

**Discussion Board (7 x 3 points each):** Participation via the discussion board is also important to course engagement. At the beginning of most weeks, questions will be posted to the discussion board on Carmen. To receive the full 3 points, you will be required to respond to the discussion prompt (in 3 to 5 sentences or more) and also comment on at least one classmate's post (in at least 2 to 3 sentences). These discussions should help to build a sense of intellectual community over the course of the semester and will offer a space for reflection. **Discussion posts must be made by the end of the day Wednesday (11:59PM) on weeks they are assigned.**

**In-Class Activities (5 x 2 points):** During the semester, we will engage in several participatory activities related to human-environment relations during our live class sessions. Five of these in-class activities will be graded for participation points during the semester.

**Out-of-Class Assignments (5 x 5 points):** Five small out-of-class assignments related to course readings and concepts will be administered during semester. Be sure to read the chapters or articles assigned here in the syllabus BEFORE the start of each class.

**Object Lesson Essay (10 points):** This essay is designed to explore your personal relationship to the environment through a specific object of your choice. The essay should highlight distinctive aspects of the object as well as your personal relationship to it. You will also be asked to identify an over-arching lesson about human-environment relationships that can be gleaned from this object.

**End-of-Semester Exhibition (20 points):** The whole class will contribute to an end-of-semester exhibition in which revised versions of the “Object Lesson essay” will be presented alongside artistic renderings of the chosen objects. These individual contributions will be shared with the class and used as an opportunity for final reflection on human-environment relationships. More details on the exhibition will be provided in the second half of the course.

**TOTAL: 101 points**

## **COURSE GRADING SCALE:**

100- 92.0%	A
91.9-90.0%	A-
89.9-88.0%	B+
87.9-82.0%	B
81.9-80.0%	B-
79.9-78.0%	C+
77.9-72.0%	C
71.9-70.0%	C-
69.9-68.0%	D+
69.9-60.0%	D
<60.0%	E

## **OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES STATEMENT**

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

## **MENTAL HEALTH STATEMENT**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

## **TITLE IX STATEMENT**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

## **DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

## **COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT STATEMENT**

All students should become familiar with the rules governing academic misconduct, especially as they pertain to plagiarism and cheating. Ignorance of the rules is not an excuse and all alleged cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM). It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all

instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

## CALENDAR:

### **Week 1 (Jan. 11 & 13) Introduction to Environmental Anthropology**

(Tu): What is Environmental Anthropology (& What Can We Learn from It)?

Readings: None

(Th): Environment / Ecology / Nature

Reading: Posey “Indigenous Management of Tropics Ecosystems”

### **Week 2 (Jan. 18 & 20) The Nature-Culture Divide**

(Tu): What is the Nature-Culture Divide?

Reading: Wall Kimmerer “Skywoman Falling”

(Th): “Nature Is the Creation of Culture”

Reading: Krenak and Meirelles “Our Worlds Are at War”

### **Week 3 (Jan. 25 & 27) Ecology, Ritual, and Social Organization**

(Tu): Ecology and Social Morphology

Reading: Mauss “Seasonal Variations”

(Th): Ritual Regulation of Ecosystems

Reading: Rappaport “Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations among a New Guinea People”

### **Week 4 (Feb. 1 & 3) Human-Animal Relations & Ecological Adaptation**

(Tu): Case Studies on Human-Cattle Relations

Readings: Evans-Pritchard “Interest in Cattle”; Harris “The Cultural Ecology of India’s Sacred Cattle”

(Th): The Ecology of Industrial Farming

Reading: Blanchette reading

### **Week 5 (Feb. 8 & 10) Ethnoecology & Native Environmentalism**

(Tu): Ethnoecology and Ethnobotany

Readings: Conklin reading; Wall Kimmerer “The Gift of Strawberries”

(Th): Debates in Native Environmentalism

Readings: Redford reading; Chapin “A Challenge to Conservationists”

### **Week 6 (Feb. 15 & 17) Kincentric & Relational Ecologies**

(Tu): Kincentric Ecology

Readings: Salmon “Kincentric Ecology”

(Th): More-than-Human Relationality

Video: Todd “Listening to Fish”

### **Week 7 (Feb. 22 & 24) Spiritual & Symbolic Ecology**

(Tu): The Ecology Monks of Thailand

Readings: Darlington “The Ordination of a Tree”

(Th): The Symbolic Ecology of the American Lawn

Readings: Robbins and Sharp reading

### **Week 8 (March 1 & 3) Historical Ecology**

(Tu): The Pristine Myth

Readings: Mann “Earthmovers of the Amazon”

(Th): Anthropogenic Environments of Amazonia  
Readings: Marris reading; Watling et al. “Impact of pre-Columbian geoglyph builders”

### **Week 9 (March 8 & 10) Political Ecology**

(Tu): Political Ecology and Environmental Justice  
Reading: TBD  
(Th): Case Study: Political Ecology of the Zapatista Movement  
Readings: Marcos “Our Word Is Our Weapon”

### **\*\*\*SPRING BREAK (March 14–18)\*\*\***

### **Week 10 (March 22 & 24) Environmental Sustainability**

(Tu): The Brundtland Report and the Advent of Sustainability  
Readings: Brundtland “Our Common Future”  
(Th): Critical Reflections on Sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Readings: TBD

### **Week 11 (March 29 & 31 Phenomenology & Posthumanist Ecologies**

(Tu): Phenomenology and Human Perception of the Environment  
Readings: Ingold “Steps to an Ecology of Life”  
(Th): Posthumanist Ecology  
Readings: Pickering “New Ontologies”

### **Week 12 (April 5 & 7) Our Embodied Ecology**

(Tu): The Wildlife of Our Bodies  
Readings: Benezra “Anthropology of Microbes”; Sagan “The Human Is More Than Human”  
(Th): Night Soil and the Metabolic Rift  
Readings: Kawa et al. reading

### **Week 13 (April 12 & 14) Toxicity & Pollution**

(Tu): Bodies in the System  
Readings: Agard-Jones reading  
(Th): Plastics & Pollution  
Reading: Liboiron et al.

### **Week 14 (April 19 & 21) Contending with Ecological Crisis**

(Tu): Anthropogenic Climate Change  
Readings: Steffen et al. “The Anthropocene”; Davis and Todd “On the Importance of a Date”  
(Th): Final Reflections & End-of-Semester Exhibition  
Readings: None

### **Week 15 (April 26 & 28) Course Conclusion**

Final Projects Due

## Bibliography

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Brundtland, Gro Harlem. "Our common future." *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development* (1987).

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Salmon, Enrique. "Kincentric ecology: indigenous perceptions of the human–nature relationship." *Ecological Applications* 10, no. 5 (2000): 1327-1332

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