

Wellesley College
ANTH 234

Cultural Ecology

Spring 2007
Thursdays, 6:30-9:00 pm, PNE 351

Gregory Ruf
Visiting Associate Professor
PNE 346
Office Hours: Th 5:30-6:30 (and by appointment)
Email: gruf@wellesley.edu

Course Description

This course explores theoretical and methodological issues in the study of human culture and social activity in relation to ecological systems and the environment. Readings include both classic studies as well as contemporary research, with particular emphasis placed on the various dimensions and scales of social organization and activity, and on the role of cultural, religious, and political institutions in shaping ecological relationship as well as economic behavior.

Evaluation and Grading

Class sessions will entail a lecture component, combined with discussion of assigned readings. Regular attendance is expected of all participants; absences will be excused (or extensions granted) only in special circumstance, judged in conformity with College practice. Assigned readings must be completed prior to class-time, and each student should prepare notes for questions and discussion. Course grades will be based on the following criteria:

- **Participation = 20%**
- **3 Assigned Essays** (~5-7 pages each) = **20% each**
- **Research-based Term Paper** (~10-12 pages) = **20%**

Details regarding assessment exercises will be announced at appropriate junctures of the course.

Required Texts:

- **J. Stephen Lansing, 1991, Priests and Programmers: Technologies of Power in the Engineered Landscape of Bali**, Princeton ISBN 069102863X [[GN635.I65 L35 1991](#)]
- **Charles Redman, 1999, Human Impact on Ancient Environments**, Tuscon: University of Arizona, ISBN 0816519633
- **Eric Schlosser, 2002, Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal**, NY: Perennial (HarperCollins), ISBN 0060938455 [[TX715 .S2968 2001](#)]
- **Mark Sutton and E.N. Anderson, 2004, An Introduction to Cultural Ecology**, Altamira Press (Rowman & Littlefield, Distributor), ISBN 0759105316
- **Piers Vitebsky, 2005, The Reindeer People: Living with Animals and Spirits in Siberia**, NY: Houghton Mifflin, ISBN 0618773576

Schedule of Topics & Readings

Week 1 Thurs., Feb 1

Introduction & Conceptual Orientations

Recommended:

- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, chs. 1-2
- Redman, Human Impact, chs. 1-3

Week 2 Mon., Feb 8

Theoretical Foundations

Read:

- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, chs. 3-4
- Harold Conklin, 1969 (1954), "An Ethnoecological Approach to Shifting Agriculture," in A. Vayda (ed.), Environment & Cultural Behavior: Ecological Studies in Cultural Anthropology, Garden City: Natural History Press, pp. 221-233 [x]
- S. Piddocke, 1965, "The Potlatch System of the Southern Kwakiutl: A New Perspective," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 21:244-264 (reprinted in A. Vayda (ed.), 1969, Environment & Cultural Behavior: Ecological Studies in Cultural Anthropology, Garden City: Natural History Press, pp. 130-156 [x])
- Marvin Harris, 1977, "Forbidden Flesh" & "The Origin of the Sacred Cow," in Cannibals & Kings (chs. 11 & 12), pp. 193-208 & 211-229 [x]
- James Greenberg & Thomas Park, 1994, "Political Ecology," Journal of Political Ecology 1:1-12 [http://dizzy.library.arizona.edu/ej/jpe/volume_1/FOREWARD.PDF]

Recommended:

- Marvin Harris, 1966, "The Cultural Ecology of India's Sacred Cattle," Current Anthropology 7(1):51-66 [JSTOR]
- Julian Steward and Robert Murphy, 1977, "Tappers and Trappers: Parallel Processes in Acculturation," in J Steward (ed.), Evolution and Ecology, Chicago: University of Illinois, pp. 151-179 (orig 1956 RFM & JS, Economic Development and Culture Change 4:335-353 [JSTOR])
- Andrew Vayda, 1983, "Progressive Contextualization: Methods for Research in Human Ecology," Human Ecology 11(3):265-281 [Science GF1.H84]

Week 3 Thurs., Feb 15

Environmental Footprints of Past Cultures

- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, ch. 6
- Redman, Human Impact, chs. 4-8
- Jared Diamond, 1995, "Easter's End," Discover 16(8):62-69 [[InfoTrac OneFile](#)]

Recommended:

- Jared Diamond, 2005, Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed, NY: Penguin
- Shepherd Krech, 1999, The Ecological Indian: Myth and History, NY: W.W. Norton

Week 4 Thurs., Feb 22 – **Essay 1 DUE**

Hunting-Gathering

- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, ch. 5
- Michael Alvard, 1993, "Testing the 'Ecologically Noble Savage' Hypothesis: Interspecific Prey Choice by Piro Hunters in Amazonian Peru," Human Ecology 21(4):355-387 [x]
- Richard Lee, 1969 (1966), "!Kung Bushman Subsistence: An Input-Output Analysis," in A. Vayda (ed.), Environment & Cultural Behavior: Ecological Studies in Cultural Anthropology, Garden City: Natural History Press, pp. 47-79 [x]

Film Screening: "Nai: Story of a !Kung Woman"

Week 5 Thurs., Mar 1

Nomadic Pastoralism

- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, ch. 8
- Daniel Miller, 1999, "Nomads of the Tibetan Plateau Rangelands in Western China – Part Three: Pastoral Development and Future Challenges," Rangelands 21(2):17-20 [e]
- Vitebsky, Reindeer People (entire book)

Recommended:

- Melvyn Goldstein and Cynthia Beall, 1990, Nomads of Western Tibet: The Survival of a Way of Life, California.

Week 6 Thurs., Mar 8

Horticulture

- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, ch. 7
- Roy Rappaport, 1967, "Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations among a New Guinea People," Ethnology 6:17-30 (reprinted in A. Vayda (ed.), 1969, Environment & Cultural Behavior: Ecological Studies in Cultural Anthropology, Garden City: Natural History Press, pp. 181-201 [x])
- Michael Dove, 1983, "Theories of Swidden Agriculture and the Political Economy of Ignorance," Agroforestry Systems 1(1):85-99 [x]
- Marvin Harris, 1977, "Proteins and the Fierce People," in Cannibals & Kings (ch.5), pp.67-80 [x]

Recommended:

- Paul Sillitoe, 2002, "After the 'Affluent Society: Cost of Living in the Papua New Guinea Highlands According to Time and Energy Expenditures-Income," Journal of Biosocial Science 34:433-461 [ILL]

Week 7 Thurs., Mar 15

Agriculture

- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, ch. 9

Recommended:

- Roy Rappaport, 1971, "The Flow of Energy in an Agricultural Society," Scientific American 225(3):116-132 [microform]

[Mar 22 – No Class – Spring Break]

Week 8 Thurs., Mar 29 – **Essay 2 DUE**

Development & Conservation

- James Ferguson & Larry Lohmann, 1994, "The Anti-Politics Machine: Development & Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho," The Ecologist 24(5):176-182 [Expanded Academic ASAP]
- Michael Dove, 1986, "Peasant vs. Governmental Perception and Use of the Environment: A Case Study of Banjarese Ecology and River Basin Development in South Kalimantan," Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 17(3):113-136 [e]
- Roderick Neumann, 1992, "The Political Ecology of Wildlife Conservation in the Mt. Meru Area of Northeast Tanzania," Land Degradation & Rehabilitation 3:85-98 [e]
- J. Peter Brosius and Diane Russell, 2003, "Conservation from Above: An Anthropological Perspective on Transboundary Protected Areas and Ecoregional Planning," Journal of Sustainable Forestry 17(1/2):39-65 [e]

Recommended:

- Bruce Rich, 1994, Mortgaging the Earth: The World Bank, Environmental Impoverishment, and the Crisis of Development, Boston: Beacon

Week 9 Thurs., Apr 5

Hubris of Modernity

Read:

- Lansing, Priests and Programmers (entire book)

Film Screening: "Priests and Programmers"

Week 10 Thurs., Apr 12

Local Participation, State Mobilization, and International Intervention

- Pauline Peters, 1996, "'Who's Local Here? The Politics of Participation in Development,'" Cultural Survival Quarterly 20(3):22-60 [[Ethnic New Watch](#)]
- Dominique Leveil & Benjamin Orlove, 1990, "Local Control of Aquatic Resources: Community & Ecology in Lake Titicaca, Peru," American Anthropologist 92:362-382 [[JSTOR](#)]
- Peter Brosius, 1997, "Endangered Forest, Endangered People: Environmentalists Representations of Indigenous Knowledge," Human Ecology 25(1):47-69 [[Expanded Academic ASAP](#)]

Recommended:

- James Fairhead & Melissa Leach, 1995, "Reading Forest History Backwards: The Interaction of Policy & Local Land Use in Guinea's Forest-Savanna Mosaic," Environment & History 1(1):55-92

Week 11 Thurs., Apr 19

Cultural Ecology of Modern American Society

Read:

- Schlosser, Fast Food Nation (entire book)

Recommended:

- Eric Ross, 1980, "Patterns of Diet and Forces of Production: An Economic and Ecological History of the Ascendancy of Beef in the United States Diet," in E. Ross (ed.), Beyond the Myths of Culture, NY: Academic Press, pp. 181-225

Week 12 Thurs., Apr 26– **Essay 3 DUE**

Challenges Ahead

- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, ch. 10

Film Screening: "An Inconvenient Truth"

Week 13 Thurs., May 3

Student Presentations

Term Paper Due: 9 May