

International Studies 150: Humanity and the Global Environment

Location/Time:
M-W 9:30-10:45 CCC 227

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Office Hours: M-W 11-12:00
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Course Description:

We live in a globalized era of profound environmental and social crisis.

Mass migrations of peoples fleeing poverty, economic exploitation, war, and ecological collapse; the warming of our planet from the burning of fossil fuels; a global population of 7.6 billion people, many of whom don't have access to a basic standard of living; toxic water and air; disease; vulnerable food systems; loss of species biodiversity and the onset of the Earth's sixth great extinction event; rampant consumerism resulting in the overexploitation of natural resources; rising economic inequality within and between nations; the specter of racial nationalism, ideological fundamentalism, and fascism: these are but a smattering of the

challenges facing our world today. How are we to make sense of a world in the midst of such profound social and environmental change?

This course takes a social science and historical perspective on the relationship between **environment and society** on a **global** scale. More specifically, this course explores:

- The dynamic interplay between natural and human social systems;
- The evolution of ideas about the relationship between society and the environment;
- The social and environmental origins of the current crises facing the world today.

By studying human society and its relationship to the environment through the lens of social science and history, this course will provide you with analytical tools to productively engage with the interconnected problems facing the globe today. My hope is that in finishing this course you will have obtained the intellectual means help build a more just and resilient global society and environment in the future.

We will study the interconnection of global society and the global environment in four units. Each unit has a question that the content presented in class is designed to investigate. To foster your engagement with these questions this course utilizes a mix of lecture, small/whole-group discussion of readings, and analytical, problems-based workshops. **This is not a lecture course that simply requires you to sit passively and listen.** I have structured the course around critical readings, questions, and learning opportunities that facilitate your ability to make meaning out of issues related to society and the environment. I am a guide, not a knowledge faucet. You are a seeker, not a vessel waiting to be filled with knowledge. Your success in this course thus requires that you not only attend class, but also complete the readings and come prepared to discuss and work through them with me and your peers. Your active engagement in your own learning will make this a much more rewarding experience.

Learning Outcomes:

Enduring Understandings:

Human societies are inseparably tied to the natural environment.

Course Objectives:

Any engaged student who works assiduously in this course will be able to:

- 1) *Analyze* areas of interaction between society and the natural environment.
- 2) *Analyze* how human societies are constructed and how these constructions shape human relations with the environment today and in the past.
- 3) *Analyze* how institutions and structures (political, social, and economic) influence environmental sustainability and contribute to uneven relationships within and between peoples across the globe.
- 4) *Analyze* how culture shapes environmental thinking, behavior, and action.

Required Reading:

Texts:

Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, Harper Collins, 2015. Available for text rental at the UWSP Bookstore.

Mark Kurlansky, *Cod: A Biography of a Fish that Changed the World*, Penguin Books, 1997. Available for text rental at the UWSP Bookstore.

Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development*, Columbia University Press, 2015. Available for text rental at the UWSP Bookstore. This book is noted as *ASD* in the schedule below.

Tim Winton, *Island Home: A Landscape Memoir*, Milkweed, 2015. Available for purchase at the UWSP bookstore.

Articles on Desire2Learn (D2L): In addition to the books above, you will also be required read articles and bring them to class to discuss. These will be available on D2L. They are noted in the schedule below with an asterisk (*).

A really important note about the reading materials in this course: You have one of two reading choices for the readings in this course: You can 1) print out the articles in hard copy and physically purchase the books, or 2) obtain and read electronic versions of the articles and books. If you choose option number 2 there are caveats. First, the only electronic devices permissible for the readings are laptops or ipad-type readers. No cell phones! I am strict of this. Second, you must bring your device with you on the day that we discuss those readings. This is the price you pay for going electronic. Understand? Good.

You must bring these readings to class on the days they are assigned. Students who fail to bring their readings to class for discussion will be docked attendance.

Assignments:

Quizzes: There will be a series of quizzes on lecture and readings throughout the semester. The format will be short-answer. There will be a quiz for each day we discuss a book. Questions for the book quizzes will be drawn from the reading guides that I hand out for each book. **You cannot make up quizzes unless your absence has been excused.** I will enable D2L to drop your lowest quiz grade in case you have to miss a class in which a quiz is given. Because this is a large class, I will not be returning your quizzes back to you. For the first couple quizzes I will provide feedback on how the class is performing, expectations on answers, etc. If you would like more substantial and individual feedback on your personal performance, you are encouraged to see me during my office hours or make an appointment with me.

Portfolios: For each of the units in class you will compile a portfolio of your work completed in class. Each portfolio will also contain a culminating assignment that will require you to answer the question posed in the unit. You will be provided with the assignment instructions on the last class of the unit. Portfolios are typically due a week after completion of the unit. These are noted in the schedule below.

Final Exam: The final will be will be cumulative.

* Late assignments will be docked a third of a grade for every day late.

** You must complete all the portfolios and the final in the class. Otherwise, you will receive and incomplete or fail this class.

*** Attendance policy: See below.

Grades (weighted):

Quizzes: 20%

Portfolios: 60%

Final Exam: 20 %

Total: 100%

Grading Scale (percentage):

A	93-100	B-	80-82	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	C+	77-79	D	60-66
B+	87-89	C	73-76	F	59 and below
B	83-86	C-	70-72		

Other Stuff:

Attendance: I will record attendance. Students who miss 3 classes will be docked a 1/3 of a grade from their final grade. Students who miss 4-5, 2/3rds of a grade, 6+ a full grade (and so on). For example, if you were to earn a B in this class, but missed 3 classes, your final grade would be a B-. Absences will be unexcused except in extraordinary circumstances, which will require a note from an authority explaining the absence. If you miss an assignment for a class in which you have an excused absence, you must make every effort to make up any missed assignments within a reasonable amount of time. I will not accept missed assignments for excused absences weeks after their due date.

Related to absences: I find it incredibly rude for students to leave in the middle of class. If, for some legitimate reason, you need to leave class early, I would appreciate the common courtesy of letting me know before class begins. Students who leave class without permission will be docked attendance for that class.

Electronics: All electronics must be turned off during class unless instructed to use them by me. These include cell phones, laptops, and tablets. In some cases laptop use may be permitted, if the student has an accommodation approved by the Disability Services Office (see below).

Please do not be surprised to hear me shout “turn off your cell phone” if I catch you peeking at it in class. Notes should be taken by hand on paper.

Late Work: Stuff happens. Sometimes life takes priority over school work. If something comes up and you need to miss a class or cannot turn in an assignment let me know immediately. I do not always grant extensions on assignments, but I do try to be flexible. It is imperative, therefore, that when incidents arise you do your diligent best to keep me informed.

Early Finals/Midterms: I do not allow students to take early/late exams except in extremely rare occasions (like you are going to have brain surgery on the scheduled exam day).

Plagiarism: For information on plagiarism, consult <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights>. See Chapter 14, *Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures*, pages 5 -10, for the disciplinary possibilities if you are caught cheating. I will vigorously pursue all incidents of plagiarism. Also I use turnitin.com for the essays.

Equal Educational Opportunities: If you have a learning or physical challenge which requires classroom accommodation, please contact the UWSP Disability and Assistive Technology Center (6th Floor of the Learning Resources Center) with your documentation as early as possible in the semester. They will then notify me, in a confidential memo, of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Voice: (715) 346-3365, TTY: (715) 346-3362, <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/studentinfo.htm>.

Writing/Reading Help: This is a reading and writing intensive course. If you need help you can visit the Tutoring and Learning Center in the basement of the Library. They are there to help you with papers etc. This is totally free! Their webpage is <http://www.uwsp.edu/tlc/Pages/writingReadingTutorials.aspx>. You can also call them to make an appointment at (715) 346-3568.

Notice on Copyright of Course Material: As the instructor, I retain all copyright on lectures, slides, assignments, and other course materials. I do not allow anybody to photograph, film, or otherwise record lectures without my express permission. I do not allow anybody to distribute course materials or otherwise send audio or visual recordings of lectures to people not currently enrolled in this class without my express permission. Posting course material that I have created onto course-sharing websites directly violates my copyright on my academic materials.

***Note: I reserve the right to alter this syllabus for any reason.**

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments/Notes
Unit 1: The Origin of Human Society and the Environment:			
How is society possible and how does social organization shape ideas about (and interactions between) human society and the “natural” environment?			
1	Course Introduction		
2	Humans and nature; environment and society.	Optional: <i>ASD</i> , “Introduction to Sustainable Development,” 1-44.	
	Human evolution and the environment	<i>Sapiens</i> , Beginning to ch. 3.	
3	Understanding Subsistence Societies	<i>Sapiens</i> , ch. 4. * Primary sources on Native Americans and textbook history.	
	The Invention of Agriculture and the Myth of the Human/Nature Divide	<i>Sapiens</i> , chs. 5-7 (optional: Ch. 8) * Selections from <i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> and <i>The Bible</i>	
4	Modern Agriculture: <i>Food Inc.</i>	Optional: <i>ASD</i> , “Food Security,” 317-54.	
	<i>Food Inc.</i> & Discussion		
Unit 2: The Origins Modernity:			
How are “modern” societies constituted and how has modernity transformed the relationship between humans and their environment?			
5	Biological Unification: Colonization and the Columbian Exchange	<i>Sapiens</i> , chs. 9, & 11.	
	The Rise of Capitalism	<i>Sapiens</i> , chs. 10 & 16 Optional: <i>Sapiens</i> , Ch. 11.	Portfolio #1 due.
6	Market Commodities: Cod I	<i>Cod</i> Part 1	
	Science and Empire	<i>Sapiens</i> , ch. 14 (up to section “The Ideal of Progress”) & 15.	
7	Factory Production: Cod II	<i>Cod</i> Part 2	

	Industrialization	<i>Sapiens</i> , chs. 17-18. Optional: ASD, "A Brief History of Economic Development."	
8	Workshop: Cod	<i>Cod</i> , Part 3 (optional recipes)	
	Unit 3: Environmentalism(s): How have different social groupings across the globe responded to environmental change?		
	Conservation, the Nation-State, and the Origins of Environmental Sustainability	* Pinchot, "Ends and Means."	
9	Wilderness Preservation		Portfolio # 2 due.
	Environmental Protection: A Perspective from the Global South	* Dowie, "Natural Capital and TEK." * Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation."	
10	Environmental Justice	* Larry Summers Memorandum. * Foster, "Let them Eat Pollution." * DiChiro, "Environmental Justice." Optional: ASD, "Health for All," 275-316.	
	Australian Interlude I	Winton, <i>Island Home</i> , beginning to 113.	
Unit 4: The Great Acceleration: How has globalization since 1945 transformed global consciousness and accelerated global environmental change?			
11	Workshop: The Great Acceleration	* "Introduction" to <i>The Great Acceleration</i> . * Syvitski, "Anthropocene: An Epoch of Our Making." * Vitousek et al., "Human Domination of the Earth's Ecosystems." * Rockstrom, "A Safe Operating Space for Humanity." Optional: ASD, "Planetary Boundaries," 181-218.	
	Nuclear Fallout, Global Environmental Consciousness, and the Modern Environmental Synthesis	* Commoner, "Nuclear Fire."	Portfolio # 3 due.

12	Sustainable Development & Global Environmental Protection in an Era of Globalization	Optional: ASD, "Why Some Countries Developed While Others Stayed Poor," & "Ending Extreme Poverty."	
	<i>Darwin's Nightmare</i>	Optional: ASD, "An Unequal World," 45-70.	
13	<i>Darwin's Nightmare</i> & Discussion		
	Australian Interlude II	Winton, <i>Island Home</i> , rest.	
14	Overpopulation, Development, and the Green Revolution	* Mann, "How Will We Feed the New Global Middle Class?" * Hall, "Tomato Tomorrow," from <i>Wired</i> . URL: https://www.wired.com/story/crispr-tomato-mutant-future-of-food/ Optional: ASD, "Social Inclusion," 219-250.	
	Biodiversity and Extinction	* Quammen, "Planet of Weeds." * Kolbert, "The Sixth Extinction."	
15	<i>Merchants of Doubt</i>	* Oreskes, "The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change." ASD, "Climate Change," 393-446.	
	<i>Merchants of Doubt</i> & Discussion	* Klein, "Capitalism vs. the Climate" Optional: ASD, "Sustainable Development Goals," 481-512.	
Final: Thursday, December 20 10:15-12:15. Portfolio # 4 due.			