

## **International Studies 150: Humanity and the Global Environment**

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Location/Time:  
CCC 213  
Tuesday/Thursday  
3:35-4:50



### **Course Description:**

This course explores the ways in which the natural environment have shaped human societies, the evolution of ideas about nature across time and space, and the impact of human culture (specifically though science and technology) on the global environment. This course takes the long view of human history and the environment, from deep time to the present. You do not need to be a history major to do well in this class. You just need to be cool and interested (and interesting—as a human being, that is.)

The course introduces you to both environmental history and human society. I think you will come away from this class with a better understanding not only of the environment, but the non-western world as well. If you learn one thing in this course, as I note in the box below, it is that humanity and all our institutions, things, and even ideas are intimately connected to the natural environment. We might think that we've escaped from nature! But we haven't.

The class is divided into four units. Each unit has a question that the content in the class is designed to investigate. To foster your engagement with these questions and the content of the course, this course utilizes a mix of lecture and small/whole-group discussions. Success in this class will require you to have read the material for the day and to be prepared to discuss this material concretely and cogently.

**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 how the natural environment has shaped human societies and history.
- 2) Analyze how human ingenuity (i.e. scientific and technological advancement) have contributed to and intensified environmental change from the past to the present.
- 3) Analyze how different cultures throughout history have come to understand their environment.
- 4) Analyze the causes of the modern environmental movement and its social, political, and cultural consequences for humanity and the global environment.

**Required Reading:**

*Texts:*

Mark Kurlansky, *Cod: A Biography of a Fish that Changed the World*.

McCook, *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940*.

Paul Sabin, *The Bet: Paul Ehrlich, Julian Simon, and Our Gamble over Earth's Future*.

You must bring these books to class on the days that we discuss them.

*Desire2Learn (D2L)*: In addition to the books above, you will also be required **to print out and read** various articles and other readings. These will be available on D2L. They are noted in the schedule below with an asterisk (\*).

**Assignments:**

*Portfolios*: For each of the units in class (except the last), 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 prior to the due date. It will be due in my office by 5pm. There will be no class the day the portfolios are due. Treat these portfolio assignments, therefore, as a kind of midterm. More details to come.

*Final*: The final will be structured exactly like the portfolios. Think of it as the final portfolio.

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

\* You must complete all assignments in the class. Otherwise, you will receive an “incomplete” or fail this class.

**Grades (weighted):**

Portfolios: 75% (25% each)

Final: 25%

**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:**

*Electronics*: All electronics must be turned off during class. 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).

*Late Work/Absences*: Stuff happens. Sometimes life takes priority over school work. If something comes up and you need to miss a class or cannot finish an assignment on time, 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.

*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 (6<sup>th</sup> 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 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.**

**Schedule:**

Week	Topic	Readings
<b>Unit 1: Human Origins and Agriculture: Environmental Rupture?</b>		
1	Course Introduction	
2	What is Environmental History? What is global history?	* Worster and Cronon "What is environmental history?"
	Human Evolution & the Problem with Wilderness	* Pollan, "The Idea of a Garden."
3	The Invention of Agriculture	* Diamond, "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race." * Pollan, "Introduction" to <i>The Botany of Desire</i> .
	Ancient and Classical Societies	* Selections from <i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> and <i>The Bible</i> . Note: you need only print and read the first 11 pages of <i>Gilgamesh</i> .
4	The Americas	* Krech, "The Pleistocene Extinctions."
	<b>Portfolio #1 Due 5 PM</b>	No class.

<b>Unit 2: Early Modern Markets as the Engine of Global Environmental Change?</b>		
5	The Columbian Exchange	* Primary sources on the Columbian Exchange.
	Ecological Imperialism	* Crosby, "Ecological Imperialism."
6	Commodities: Sugar	* Pomeranz, Selections from <i>The World that Trade Created</i> .
	Commodities: Fur	<i>Cod</i> , Part I.
7	The Oceans	<i>Cod</i> , Part II.
	Workshop: <i>Cod</i>	<i>Cod</i> , Part III. Optional: recipes.
8	<b>Portfolio # 2 Due 5 PM</b>	No class.
	<b>Unit 3: The Modern State: Modern States as the Engine of Global Environmental Change?</b>	
	Industrialization and the Great Divergence	<i>States of Nature</i> , Introduction.
9	The Modern State	<i>States of Nature</i> , chapters 1 & 2.
	Latin America and the Global Economy	<i>States of Nature</i> , chapters 3 & 4
10	Workshop: <i>States of Nature</i>	<i>States of Nature</i> , entire.
	Conservation, Ecology, and Imperialism	* Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism: A Third World Critique"
11	Film: "Princess Mononoke"	None.
12	<b>Portfolio # 3 Due 5 PM</b>	No class.
	<b>Unit 4: The Anthropocene: Humanity as a Global Geophysical Force?</b>	
	Consuming Nature: Chemicals	* Carson, "The Obligation to Endure" from <i>Silent Spring</i> . * Langston, "Protecting Our Bodies from Hormone-Disrupting Chemicals: A Precautionary Tale" (online).
13	Malthusianism, Development, and the Green Revolution	<i>The Bet</i> , ix-95.
	Workshop: <i>The Bet</i>	<i>The Bet</i> , entire.
14	Consuming Nature: Landscapes and Wilderness	* Wakild, "Purchasing Patagonia." * Ridgeway, "Patagonia Dreaming."
	Fallout and the Ecosphere	* Commoner, "The Ecosphere" from <i>The Closing Circle</i> .
15	Global Warming	* Steffan, Crutzen, and McNeill, "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?" * Oreskes, "The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change."
	Film: "Darwin's Nightmare"	None.
16	Film: "Darwin's Nightmare"	None.
<b>Final Portfolio Due at beginning of Final, December 17, 5PM</b>		