

**GEOG 379/EVRN 420: Topics in Cultural:
Environment and Society
Fall, 2007
401 Lindley Hall, Tue Thu, 11:00 - 12:15**

**Professor: J. Christopher Brown
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Overview This course introduces how we have come, in the US especially, to think about the environment, and why that matters. We will examine how we deal with the environmental problems we face, covering along the way some basic mechanics of how the lithosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere work as a system. A great deal of the course will be spent examining the environment as something shaped by human values, institutions, and particular histories of human-environment interaction. The class, which involves a considerable amount of reading, writing, and active class discussion, will give students a deeper understanding of how solving environmental problems requires more than simply focusing attention on the environment as a natural entity. It also requires thinking about how society functions and about who we want to be. If you are looking for a lecture class, where you come, sit, take notes, and cram for multiple-choice exams the night before, don't take this course. If you are looking for a class offering 1) fairly challenging readings and weekly writing assignments, 2) a different way of thinking about the environment and your connection to it, 3) active and lively class discussions, and 4) take-home papers, then this could be a very good class for you.

Required Texts

- Environmental Discourse and Practice, by Benton and Short. ISBN-0631211144
- The Omnivore's Dilemma, by Michael Pollan, ISBN-1-59240-082-3
- The Party's Over: Oil, War, and Fate of Industrial Societies, Revised and updated edition.
ISBN 0865715297
- Additional materials as announced in class. Available on blackboard.

Grading: Grades will be assessed according to your performance on the following:

- Portfolio – worth 45 points. Portfolios will be turned in 4 times during the semester. These contain regularly updated reflections on the class, collections/analyses of relevant academic or news articles, links and analyses of resources on the web, etc.
- A final take-home assignment – worth 15 points (required)
- Reactions to readings – each worth 2.5 points (top 10 of 13 graded). For each week of reading, you will write at least a 600-word summary of the readings. For top grades, the summaries must contain questions you come up with while reading that can help spark class discussion, and convinces me you considered the material seriously. These are designed to help you prepare for taking part in class discussions and to give you material to reflect upon for your portfolios. More specific criteria for the reactions will be given in class and will be contained in the prompts for the reactions posted on blackboard.
- Attendance and class participation – 15 points. You earn these points by being in class and actively participating. Attendance will be taken. Earn participation points by asking questions that help facilitate discussion, bringing in relevant outside material to class, engaging fellow students in discussions.
- There is no final exam in the class.

Grading scale: The following standard scale will be followed when assigning final grades: 90-100 (A), 80-89 (B), 70-79 (C), 60-69 (D), below 60 (F).

| Week | Dates | Readings (must be read by date listed) | Weekly writing due dates |
|------|-------|---|---|
| 0 | 8/16 | Intro | |
| 1 | 8/21 | Reading packet including the writings of Yi-Fu Tuan and Robert Sack, handed out first day of class. | Reaction 1 |
| | 8/23 | Disc of reading packet continued | |
| 2 | 8/28 | | |
| | 8/30 | | Turn in portfolio on Friday |
| 3 | 9/4 | Environmental Discourses in History Harper Ch 1, 2 (Handout in class) | Reaction 2 |
| | 9/6 | | |
| 4 | 9/11 | Benton and Short, 1-59 | Reaction 3 |
| | 9/13 | | |
| 5 | 9/18 | Benton and Short, 60-108 | Reaction 4 |
| | 9/20 | | |
| 6 | 9/25 | Environmental Discourses in Practice: Benton and Short, 109-155 | Reaction 5 |
| | 9/27 | | |
| 7 | 10/2 | Benton and Short, 156-212 | Reaction 6 |
| | 10/4 | | |
| 8 | 10/9 | | Turn in portfolio on Friday |
| | 10/11 | Fall Break. No class. | |
| 9 | 10/16 | Issues: Population Harper Ch 5 (Handout in class) | Reaction 7 |
| | 10/18 | Film, Legacy of Malthus | |
| 10 | 10/23 | Food and Agricultural Systems Discussions of Pollan's <i>Omnivore's Dilemma</i> | Reaction 8 |
| | 10/25 | | |
| 11 | 10/30 | | Reaction 9 |
| | 11/1 | | Turn in portfolio on Friday |
| 12 | 11/6 | Energy Discussions of Heinberg's <i>The Party's Over</i> | Reaction 10 |
| | 11/8 | | |
| 13 | 11/10 | | Reaction 11 |
| | 11/15 | | |
| 14 | 11/20 | No class, work on portfolios | |
| | 11/22 | No class, T-giving break | |
| 15 | 11/27 | War Readings TBA | Reaction 12 |
| | 11/29 | | |
| 16 | 12/4 | Ourselves Readings TBA | Reaction 13 |
| | 12/6 | | Turn in portfolio on Friday Final take-home assignment due 12/14 |

Blackboard: Relevant material, announcements, information will be posted on the blackboard site for this course. If you have no clue what I am talking about, go to <http://www.ku.edu/~ids/> and point your mouse to "Blackboard", then "Student's Guide to Blackboard". Make sure you have an updated e-mail registered with Blackboard so you get announcements like "class is cancelled", should that happen (it's happened in the past). If you drop the class, please let me know so that I may take you off the blackboard site for this class.

Students with disabilities: Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities.

Academic misconduct: Be aware that academic misconduct will not be tolerated. If you are found to have violated conduct rules as established by the University, you will be faced with punishment according to published University regulations.

Intellectual property: Anyone receiving this syllabus understands that anyone performing note-taking services or sound recordings of the seminar must advise me of their presence and their activities in the room.