

Environmental Geopolitics

GEOG 571/EVRN 420

Fall 2007

Instructor: Professor Shannon O'Lear

Class meeting times and location:

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30 – 3:45 pm in Lindley Hall Room 317

Office hours and contact information:

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00 – 2:00 pm and by appointment

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Telephone: 864.2041

Course description

Since the end of the Cold War and the demise the Soviet Union, there has been a shift in focus to other geopolitical threats. Frequently cited entities and processes posing a threat to security often involve natural resources – either their scarcity, their control by non-friendly agents, or their shrinking ability to meet the increasing demands of a growing population. Concerns with “environmental security” and “resource conflicts” have generated a great deal of scholarly literature, sparked political debate, and attract public attention. Additionally, since the attacks on New York’s World Trade Center, the U.S. has mobilized in a “war on terror”, and concepts of terrorism – including biological terrorism – are frequently part of public discourse. Missing from most of these conversations is a critical perspective which questions fundamental assumptions embedded in particular arguments or discourses. For example, when we talk about environmental security, *whose* security are we talking about? *What kind* of security are we talking about?

In this course, we will first engage with literature that demonstrates critical thinking about how human relationships with the biophysical world are portrayed. Then we will examine key contributions to the environmental security, resource conflicts, and related literatures. Many of these readings will draw from the perspective of critical geopolitics. Geopolitics, in short, considers how spatial arrangements are suited to particular forms of power. Critical geopolitics is a perspective that we can use to examine assumptions underlying the way that uneven power relationships are explained and justified. Throughout this process we will discuss how and why the environment is featured in debates about security and conflict as well as the geopolitical assumptions on which these debates build. Learning objectives for this course include: 1) develop and apply, in writing and in discussion, critical thinking skills with particular attention to geopolitical interests, 2) develop and demonstrate an understanding of key debates about environment and security, resource conflicts, and the construction of environmental fears, 3) develop and demonstrate an ability to identify and discuss how themes in the course are evident in mainstream media and public debate.

Required text:

(Available new at University Bookstore and Jayhawk Bookstore. Available used at www.amazon.com and possibly at www.half.com)

Making Threats: Biofears and Environmental Anxieties 2005 B. Hartmann, B. Subramaniam, and C. Zerner, editors. Rowman & Littlefield

Indicated as “MTBEA” on reading schedule

Other readings

Many of the readings for this class are available online, and links are included on this syllabus wherever possible. If you are unable to find a particular reading via the URL on the syllabus, you can use the citation information provided here to find the article online. A good starting point for such a search is <http://scholar.google.com>

Additional readings will be distributed electronically by the instructor.

Communication

Please make sure that the e-mail address you use for the Blackboard site is up-to-date and operational. You can expect to receive announcements about the class and assignments through the Blackboard communication system.

Student work

You will have several opportunities to reflect on and write about material that we will cover in this class.

- I. Reading Responses: Throughout the semester, I will ask you to write approximately ten short responses to reading material. These will be due during weeks when we do not have a Special Topics assignment (see below). Most weeks, you may choose which day’s reading to respond to (Tuesday or Thursday of that week), and your paper is due at the beginning of class on the day that we will discuss that reading. The purpose of these papers is to reflect on the reading, what the author aims to communicate, and how well that task is accomplished. You might find it useful to discuss how the day’s reading helps you to understand (or how it raises new questions about) a particular topic or theme of the course. Your paper should not simply be a summary of the article or chapter assigned for reading. If more than one reading is assigned for a given day, comment on both items (e.g., What is link between them? How do the readings make similar or different arguments?, etc.). In your paper go beyond, “What did the article say?” by thinking about how well the article makes an argument, why this article is (or is not) more convincing than previous articles or chapters we have discussed in class, and by raising questions that remain for you after reading the article. In short, these papers are an opportunity for you to write about how the reading assignment for a particular day helps you to understand overarching themes of environmental geopolitics.
 - These papers should be approximately two pages in length (single spaced, one inch margins, 10- or 12-point font).
 - The weeks that these papers are due are indicated in the week column of the syllabus with an “RR”.

2. Special Topics Writing Assignments: For approximately five or six class meetings, I will ask you to prepare a short paper on a topic related to but outside of class material. The purpose of these papers is to give you an opportunity to explore, investigate, and write about particular current events within a framework of course concepts and materials. In your papers, be sure to link the topic specifically to course material. For example, are there particular readings or arguments we have discussed that help you to understand or analyze the week's topic? What kind of questions do you have about the week's topic given the material we have covered in class (and what answers can you find to those questions?). Do not aim to write a comprehensive review of the special topic, but instead approach these papers as a way to apply what you are learning in the class by analyzing the special topic. We will use these papers as the basis for class discussion on the day's topic, so be prepared to discuss what you find!
 - Each of these papers should be no less than two but no more than five pages long (single spaced, one inch margins, 10- or 12-point font, paginated) and should list bibliographic citations for any references cited (not included in page length).
 - Topics for these assignments will be given in class.

All of the above assignments will be **due in hard copy at the beginning of class** so that your thoughts on the reading material will be easily available as we begin discussion. Make-up assignments may be considered on an individual basis but will require prior arrangement and/or with official documentation (e.g., from a doctor, an employer or a court). I discourage late assignments since completed work is of most use to you at the scheduled time.

3. Final Writing: The final exam for this course will take the form of a short paper following the general format of the Special Topics writing assignments. This paper will be optional, and the points can be used to replace one previously assigned Special Topics assignment. Additional details will be provided in class.

10 Reading Responses (10 points each)	=	100 points
5 Special Topics written assignments (20 points each)	=	100 points
(Final paper – optional; to replace one Special Topics assignment)	=	20 points)

Grading scale

In this course, a grade of “C” indicates average performance. This grade means that the work has accomplished the minimum expected outcome. A grade of “B” indicates above average performance, and a grade of “A” recognizes work that goes beyond the call of duty. A grade of “D” indicates below average performance, and an “F” grade indicates that the work does not merit full credit.

Academic integrity

The University has the responsibility for maintaining academic integrity so as to protect the quality of education and research on our campus and to protect those who depend upon our integrity. It is the responsibility of the student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions. In this course, you are expected to do your own, original work and to turn in work that has not been previously submitted for credit. If you have questions or concerns about academic integrity, please bring these to my attention.

Course schedule – The following dates and readings are approximate and subject to change. Exact assignments and exam dates will be announced in class.

MTBEA = *Making Threats: Biofears and Environmental Anxieties*

Week	Date	Reading
I	Th 16 Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dalby, Simon. 2007. Anthropocene Geopolitics: Globalisation, Empire, Environment and Critique. <i>Geography Compass</i> 1(1) : 103-118 Online : http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2007.00007.x
2 RR	Tu 21 Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MTBEA Ch. 1, Introduction : Making Threats : Biofears and Environmental Anxieties MTBEA Ch. 10, Conclusion: Unraveling Fear
	Th 23 Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MTBEA Ch. 2, Duct Tape or Plastic? The Political Economy of Threats and the Production of Fear
3	Tu 28 Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MTBEA Ch. 3, Making Civilian Soldiers: The Militarization of Inner Space MTBEA Reflections – Consuming National Security
	Th 30 Aug	<u>Special Topics Writing</u>
4 RR	Tu 4 Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MTBEA Ch. 4, Malthusianism and the Terror of Scarcity MTBEA Reflections – Scarcity, Modernity, Terror
	Th 6 Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gleick, Peter.H. 1991. 'Environment and Security: The Clear Connections' <i>Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists</i> 47(3): 16-21 Deudney, Daniel. 1991. 'Environment and Security: Muddled Thinking' <i>Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists</i> 47(3): 22-9 Haas, Peter M. 2002. 'Constructing Environmental Conflicts from Resource Scarcity' <i>Global Environmental Politics</i> 2(1):1-11 (online page numbers only) Online at: http://people.umass.edu/polsc253/GEP%20Resource%20Scarcity.pdf
5	Tu 11 Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Le Billon, Philippe. 2001. 'The Political Ecology of War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflicts' <i>Political Geography</i> 20: 561-584 Online at: http://www.geog.ubc.ca/~lebillon/ecowar.pdf
	Th 13 Sep	<u>Special Topics Writing</u>

6 RR	Tu 18 Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnett, Jon. 2000. 'Destabilizing the Environment-Conflict Thesis' <i>Review of International Studies</i> 26:271-288 • Matthew, Richard A. 2002. 'In Defense of Environment and Security Research' <i>Environmental Change and Security Project Report</i> (The Woodrow Wilson Center) Issue 8 (Summer):109-124 <p>Online at: http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/mar07/mar07.pdf</p>
	Th 20 Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peters, Susanne. 2004. 'Coercive Western Energy Security Strategies: 'Resource Wars' as a New Threat to Global Security' <i>Geopolitics</i> 9(1): 187-212 <p>Online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14650040412331307882</p> <p>----- OR ----- (to be determined in class)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ross, Michael L. 2004. 'How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence From Thirteen Cases' <i>International Organization</i> 58: 35-67 <p>Online at: http://www.polisci.ucla.edu/faculty/ross/HowDoesNat3.pdf</p>
7 RR	Tu 25 Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Klare, Michael. 2004. <i>Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum</i>. New York: Metropolitan Books <p>* Ch. 1, The Dependency Dilemma: Imported Oil and National Security * Ch. 7, Escaping the Dilemma: A Strategy for Energy Autonomy and Integrity</p>
	Th 27 Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furlong, Kathryn. 2006. 'Hidden Theories, Troubled Waters: International Relations, the 'Territorial Trap', and the Southern African Development Community's Transboundary Waters' <i>Political Geography</i> 25(4): 438-458
8	Tu 2 Oct	<u>Special Topics Writing</u>
	Th 4 Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTBEA Ch. 5, Decoding the Debate on 'Frankenfood' • Lien, Marianne E. and B. Nerlich. 2004. <i>The Politics of Food</i>. Oxford: Berg <p>* Ch. 9, Grades and Standards in the social Construction of Safe Food (Lawrence Busch)</p>
9 RR	Tu 9 Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dalby, Simon. 2004. 'Ecological Politics, Violence, and the Theme of Empire' <i>Global Environmental Politics</i> 4(2): 1-11 ((online page numbers only) <p>Online at: http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/152638004323074156</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paterson, Matthew and S. Dalby. 2006. 'Empire's Ecological Tyreprints' <i>Environmental Politics</i> 15(1): 1-22 <p>Online at : http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09644010500418654</p>
	Th 11 Oct	Fall Break – No class meeting
I0 RR	Tu 16 Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Princen, Thomas, M. Maniates, and K. Conca. 2002. <i>Confronting Consumption</i>. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. <p>* Ch. 1, Confronting Consumption (Princen, Maniates, Conca) – OR -- * Ch. 3, Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World? (Michael Maniates)</p>
	Th 18 Oct	No class meeting (Central Eurasian Studies Society Meeting)
II	Tu 23 Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Princen, Thomas, M. Maniates, and K. Conca. 2002. <i>Confronting Consumption</i>. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. <p>* Ch. 7, The Distancing of Waste: Overconsumption in a Global Economy (Jennifer Clapp)</p> <p>----- OR ----- (to be determined in class)</p> <p>* Ch. 8, Environmentally Damaging Consumption: The Impact of American Markets on Tropical Ecosystems in the Twentieth Century (Richard Tucker)</p>
	Th 25 Oct	<u>Special Topics Writing</u>
I2 RR	Tu 30 Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MTBEA Ch. 7, Emerging Cartographies of Environmental Danger: Africa, Ebola, and AIDS MTBEA Reflections – Feeling Invasion
	Th I Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monmonier, Mark. 1997. <i>Cartographies of Danger: Mapping Hazards in America</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <p>* Ch. 1, Map Scale, Danger Zones, and Safe Places * Ch. 14, Emerging Cartographies of Danger -- AND -- * Ch. 9, Short-lived Daughters and ELF Fields – OR – * Ch. 10, Nuclear Nightmares – OR – * Ch. 13, John Snow's Legacy</p>
I3 RR	Tu 6 Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report of the UN Commission on Human Security, Ch. I <p>Online at: http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/index.html</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bunch, Charlotte. 'A Feminist Human Rights Lens on Human Security' (Center for Women's Global Leadership) Online at: https://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/charlotte/humansecurity.pdf
	Th 8 Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barnett, Jon and N. Adger. 'Security and Climate Change: Towards and Improved Understanding' Paper presented at Human Security and Climate Change: An International Workshop. Norway, June 2005 Online at: http://www.cicero.uio.no/humsec/papers/Barnett&Adger.pdf
I4	Tu 13 Nov	<u>Special Topics Writing</u>
	Th 15 Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MTBEA Ch. 8, Inventing Bioterrorism: The Political Construction of Civilian Risk
I5 RR	Tu 20 Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MTBEA Ch. 9, Pernicious Peasants and Angry Young Men: The Strategic Demography of Threats MTBEA Reflections – Bioterrorism and National Security: Peripheral Threats, Core Vulnerabilities
	Th 22 Nov	Thanksgiving Break – No class meeting
I6	Tu 27 Nov	Video – To be determined
	Th 29 Nov	Video, continued – To be determined
I7 RR	Tu 4 Dec	<u>Video -- Discussion</u>
	Th 6 Dec	Last day of class, To be arranged