

**Social and Environmental Issues  
GEOG 210 (ESE 210)  
Spring 2016**

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Office: Room 137A, Davenport Hall  
Office Hours: 9-11am, Wednesdays

Class Time: TR, 2:00 pm – 3:20 pm  
Location: 1002 Lincoln Hall

**Required Materials (available at Illini Union Bookstore)**

- ❖ Robbins P., Hintz, J. and Moore, S. 2014. *Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- ❖ I>clicker Remote

\*\*\*\*\*Additional readings will be available on the course website\*\*\*\*\*

**Course Description**

This course introduces students to the study of the relationship between people and the natural environment from a social science perspective. The course explores different approaches to thinking about environmental issues and examines the role of population change, political economy, technologies, environmental policymaking and social institutions in causing and resolving contemporary social and environmental issues globally.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Introduce students to many of the major environmental issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
2. Introduce and apply diverse theoretical frameworks to the examination of environmental issues from a social science perspective.
3. Show the complexity of the relationship between environment and society; how these interactions influence each other, and how these processes form non-linear feedback loops.
4. Foster critical thinking and communication skills.

### **Course Format**

The course is lecture, discussion and project based. In addition to weekly lectures, it will include in-class discussions, assignments, and videos paired with worksheets to stimulate critical thinking and analytical skills. The course is divided into two main parts. In part one, we will develop a series of theoretical frameworks for the study of human-environment relationships. We will do so by examining a series of seemingly intractable environment-society issues, such as population, common property resources, commodification and markets, and political economy, ethics and representation. This part of the course will culminate in an in-class mid-term exam.

In the second section of the course, we will draw on these frameworks to examine a series of environment-society 'objects of concern', such as climate change, food, energy, water, and other common property resources. This portion of the course will end with a Final Project.

**\*\*\*\*\*Final Project due (upload to Compass) by 5 pm on Friday May 6, 2016\*\*\*\*\***

### **Student Assessment**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>	<b>Total</b>
Attendance & Participation	75	1	75
Assignments	20	10	200
Midterm Exam	125	1	125
Final Project	200	1	200
<b>Total Points</b>			<b>600</b>

Attendance and Participation, which counts for 75 points of your final grade, may include: 1) in-class discussion questions and exercises; 2) pop quizzes; and 3) handouts on videos. These will be completed in class and cannot be made up. I-clicker Remote technology will be utilized to track responses for in-class questions and other exercises on a weekly basis.

There will be 10 assignments worth 200 total points throughout the semester. These will reinforce the concepts presented in the lessons and readings and give you an opportunity to explore them in greater depth by applying them to real-world environmental issues. These will be turned in via Compass. Each assignment will be due on the respective Monday at 11:55 pm.

The Midterm Exam, which counts for 125 points of your final grade, will include all material discussed in the course, up through March 1 – the last class meeting prior to the midterm exam. The Midterm exam will consist of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions.

There is no Final Exam in this course but there is a substantial Final Project.

Information on the Final Project, which counts for 200 points of your final grade, will be handed out on a future date. Final Projects will be penalized by one letter grade during the first week past the due date. For instance, an "A" paper would become a "B" paper. Thereafter, the paper will revert to a zero.

### **Special Needs**

All efforts will be made to accommodate students with special needs. However, students are responsible for making their needs known to me and for seeking assistance in a timely manner. Please contact me to privately discuss your personal requirements. I.e.: Don't wait until the day an assignment is due to inform me of your needs.

### **Academic Integrity Policy**

Please consult <http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/research/academicintegrity.html> for details about the UIUC plagiarism policy, and for what does and does not constitute plagiarism. If you are unsure about whether you have provided adequate citation, please consult with me.

### **Topic and Reading Schedule (subject to change):**

#### **PART I: APPROACHES AND PERSPECTIVES**

#### **Week 1: Population and Scarcity, January 19 & 21**

(T) First Class & Introduction

(TH) *Introduction and Population and Scarcity*: RMH, Chapters 1 & 2

Assignment 1: Population and Society (due Monday, 1/25)

#### **Week 2: Governing Common Property Resources, January 26 & 28**

(T) *Markets and Commodities*: RMH, Ch. 3

(TH) *Institutions and the Commons*: RMH, Ch. 4

Assignment 2: Institutions and the Commons (due Monday, 2/1)

#### **Week 3: Environmental Ethics, February 2 & 4**

(T) *Environmental Ethics*: RMH, Ch. 5

(TH) Water and the Commons, film and discussion: video – “Thirst”

#### **Week 4: Environmental Risks and Hazards, February 9 & 11**

(T) *Risks and Hazards*: RMH, Ch. 6

(TH) Alagona. Peter S. 2006. “What makes a disaster “natural”? *Space and Culture* 9 (1): 77-79

Assignment 3: Evaluating Risk Through Home Buying (due Monday, 2/15)

**Week 5: The Political Economy of Nature, February 16 & 18**

(T) *Political Economy*: RMH, Chapter 7

(TH) Kosoy, Nicolas & Esteve Corbera. 2010. Payments for ecosystem services as commodity fetishism," *Ecological Economics* 69(6): 1228-1236.

Assignment 4: The Political Economy of Gold (due Monday, 2/22)

**Week 6: The Social Construction of Nature, February 23 & 25**

(T) *Social Construction of Nature*: RMH, Chapter 8

(TH) Raffles, "Speaking up for the Mute Swan"

Assignment 5: Social Construction and the Keystone XL Pipeline (due Monday, 2/29)

**Week 7: Midterm Exam Review and Exam, March 1 & 3**

(T) Final Project Discussion and Midterm Exam review

(TH) Midterm Exam

**PART II: ENVIRONMENT-SOCIETY OBJECTS OF CONCERN**

**Week 8: CO<sub>2</sub>, Climate Change and Vulnerability, March 8 & 10**

(T) *Carbon Dioxide*: RMH, Chapter 9

(TH) Leichenko, R. and K. O' Brien. 2008. Environmental Change and Globalization. Chapter Three: Double exposure.

Assignment 6: *Chasing Ice* video and Response (due Monday, 3/14)

**Week 9: Forests and Trees, March 15 & 17**

(T) *Trees*: RMH, Chapter 10

(TH) Laurance, William. 2007. "A new initiative to use carbon trading for tropical forest conservation," *Biotropica* 39(1): 20-24.

**\*\*\*\*\*Spring Break: NO CLASS MARCH 22 & 24\*\*\*\*\***

**Week 10: Guest Lecture: Ryan Stock, March 29 & 31**

(T) TBA

(TH) TBA

**Week 11: The American Lawn, April 5 & 7**

(T) *Lawns*: RMH, Chapter 14

(TH) Robbins, P. and T. Birkenholtz. (2003). "Turfgrass Revolution: Measuring the Expansion of the American Lawn." *Land Use Policy* 20: 181-194

Assignment 7: Turfgrass Revolution (due Monday, 4/11)

**Week 12: Drinking Water, April 12 & 14**

(T) *Bottled Water*: RMH, Chapter 15

(TH) Birkenholtz, T. (In Review). "Drinking Water."  
Video: "The Story of Water"

Assignment 8: Manufacturing Demand for Bottled Water (due Monday, 4/18)

**Week 13: Industrial Food, April 19 & 21**

(T) *French Fries*: RMH, Chapter 16

(TH) Video: "Food Inc."

Assignment 9: Food Inc. Response (due Monday, 4/25)

**Week 14: Electronics and E-Waste, April 26 & 28**

(T) *E-Waste*: RMH, Chapter 17

(TH) R. Grant and M. Oteng-Ababio 2012. "Mapping the Invisible and Real "African" Economy: Mapping E-Waste Circuitry." *Urban Geography* 2012 33 (1) 1-21.

Assignment 10: Where do our used electronics go? (due Monday, 5/2)

**Week 15: Last Day of Classes, Course Wrap-up, May 3**

**\*\*\*\*Final Project Due on Friday, May 6 at 5:00 PM. Upload to Compass\*\*\*\***