

Introduction to Environmental Anthropology
ANTH S258

Tuesdays/Thursdays 1:00-4:15

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Course Description: This is an undergraduate seminar on the anthropological study of the environment. In asking how anthropologists have studied the environment, this course introduces the key themes, main theories, and ethnographic practice of the cultural anthropology subfield called environmental anthropology. There are no prerequisites. This course will serve as a good introduction for courses on environmental anthropology, cultural ecology, political ecology, anthropology of disaster, environmental justice, anthropology of development and conservation.

We will read classic and contemporary readings that explore themes of social nature, methods of researching nature, environmental history, degradation and collapse, the politics of indigenous and local knowledge, studies of technology, urban nature, water and the management of nature, climate change, and the Anthropocene.

As part of this class, you will conduct your own environmental anthropology project. We will discuss the details of this ethnographic project in our first class meeting, but you should come prepared to discuss a case of nature-human interaction that you think you can observe in person in New Haven. You could volunteer at the Yale Farm, interview fishermen at the beach, talk to the New Haven Department of Parks and Recreation. Do not worry, there are plenty of possibilities.

What happens in class: Each class begins with a close reading of the assigned papers/book. The lecture reviews the main points of the articles: this will teach you what to read for. The lecture will be interactive: it is possible that students will be asked to summarize the readings, or to express their opinion on a specific topic, so keep engaged at all times. The instructor will situate the articles within the discipline. The central part of class involves a discussion amongst students (in small-group in case of high attendance) on the readings. It is important that you use this time to clarify any questions you may have on the readings. A second discussion time may be centered on a specific case study for which you will either listen to a guest speaker, or interpret a current newspaper article with our new anthropological knowledge, or have independently prepared as per the syllabus. Please complete each day's assigned readings before coming to class, and bring electronic or hard copies of the relevant readings and your notes to class for reference.

Your participation in class is important. And you all have important things to say! Come ready to raise questions and exchange ideas. It is totally fine to disagree with others or with the readings, as soon as disagreement is respectful in words and manners. Thinking through

difficult issues can benefit from constructive criticism, and this is also what anthropology is about, advance thinking through alternative interpretations. However, it is crucial to consider this class as a safe space for sharing divergent opinions. As soon as you are respectful of others, never be afraid to talk.

The course is run in English. However, English is not the mother tongue for many of us, including the instructor. As soon as you are able to communicate difficult concepts, do not worry about your pronunciation or making mistakes while talking in class. Again, this is a safe space and comments on others' competence will not be tolerated. However, please proof-read your written assignments for clarity and find some help to make sure they are in good shape.

This class is an introduction to anthropology for many of the students, and each of you will conduct a mini-ethnography in order to better grasp the methods of anthropological knowledge generation. You should aim to learn not only about how anthropologists approach environmental themes but also how to produce and evaluate anthropological scholarship.

Requirements: There are five requirements for this course.

a) Assignment 1 is ungraded but requires completion by the start of our second class meeting. This assignment is composed of two parts. On page one, please introduce yourself to the instructor of the course. What is your background in terms of social sciences/anthropology/environmental studies? Do you have any concerns in relation to this class? Can you foresee any obstacle to your participation? On page two, please reflect on your reasons for taking this class. What interests you about environmental anthropology? What do you hope to learn by the end of the course?

b) Assignment 2 is due on class 3, and its weight is 10% of your final grade. Please present a proposal (3-4 pages) for your local ethnographic project. What is the place where you want to conduct your project? Which is the main question you want to address? Why is this interesting? How do you plan to address this question, which research methodologies will be instrumental to do so? Is this feasible? We will discuss this assignment in our second class meeting.

c) Assignment 3 is due on our last class, and its weight is 20% of your final grade. For this 8-10 pages writing assignment, write an ethnography based on your short fieldwork. Feel free to take inspiration from the ethnographies we have read (but remember: do not plagiarize). Remember to discuss any relevant literature we have read in class in your ethnography.

d) Assignment 4 is a written exam weighted 30% of your final grade. Details and date for the exam will be notified later.

e) Weekly Reading card: Each student will have to submit a reading card (not more than one page) for each of the material you read for each class. Two exceptions are possible, which means that, if necessary, you can excuse yourself twice. Each week will count 3% for a total of 30%. The reading card needs to address the following: author, disciplinary point of view, studied population, key themes, main argument/s, argumentation, methodology of the study,

historical value/key contribution if any, other texts this work is in conversation to, critical notes on the text. You may not have all answers, but this is what you are striving to understand in a text. You may choose to provide a reading card for the portion of the book assigned, or the whole book if you prefer.

Your participation to the class contributes to the final grade by 10%.

Course Policies:

Class attendance is mandatory. See the summer school policy about attendance.

Timely completion of assignments is important. In accordance with Yale College policy, extensions will not be granted except under proven emergency conditions and with a note from your Dean or doctor. Unexcused late work will be marked down.

Please note that the use of laptops and electronic tablets is permitted in class for note-taking and referencing course materials. However, it is important that we focus on our discussions without interruptions or distractions. To that end, please disable wireless connectivity on all devices for the duration of class. No phones.

Assignments should be double spaced in standard Times New Roman 12point font.

Do not plagiarize! Please refer to <http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/cheating-plagiarism-and-documentation>.

If you have a disability, either apparent or not, please come and talk to me and I will do my best to support you. My aim to make this course as accessible and welcoming as possible.

Feel free to ask questions and voice your opinions, but always be mindful of others' and their time. In order to facilitate a safe and comfortable learning environment for everyone, racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise harmful language will not be tolerated.

I am always happy to discuss readings, ideas, papers, and class concerns during office hours. Make an appointment!

Class schedule and readings:

The reading list may seem overwhelming, but I will be happy to help you prioritize if needed. Students will not need to read more than 50-60 pages for each class. However, I would like you to be comfortable with full books, so have a close look to the book even when you are requested to read only one article from it. I will teach you how to read a book for what is important. For the course, I would like you to read a full ethnography. Any of the monographs named in the syllabus would do, although I suggest Annu Jalais, *Forest of Tigers: People, Politics and Environment in the Sundarbans* (Routledge 2011). If you want to read a different ethnography, please send me an email about it. Please let me know the title of the book you are reading by updating your profile page on Canvas, preferably by class 3.

The class readings are subjected to change with at least one-week notice.

Week 1: Class 1—Ecological Anthropology

- Orlove, Benjamin S. "Ecological Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 9 (1980): 235-273.
- Baviskar, Amita 2005. *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Introduction.
- Statement on Ethics and Principles of Professional Responsibility, American Anthropological Association, 2012 Version. Available at <http://www.aaanet.org/profdev/ethics/>
- Film: check the story of the Jarawa or other "primitive tribes"
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nta-AD7ThZE>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdvIO6bPG60>

Week 1- Class 2— Social Nature

- William Cronon. 1996. "The Problem with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature", in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York & London: W.W. Norton Company. pages 69-90.
- Ferguson, James. 1994. The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho. *The Ecologist* 24:5 (1994)
Available at:
http://www.colorado.edu/geography/class_homepages/geog_3682_f08/Articles/Ferguson%20-%20The%20Anti%20Politics%20Machine.pdf
- Podcast: Lawn Order by 99%invisible.

Week 2- Class 3— Indigenous, local, environmental knowledge

- Agrawal, Arun 1995. Dismantling the Divide between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge. *Development and Change*, 26: 413-439.
- Waddell, Eric 1975. How the Enga cope with frost: responses to climatic perturbations in the Central Highlands of New Guinea. *Human Ecology* 3 (4), 249–273.
- Recommended: Amimoto Ingersoll, K., 2016. *Waves of Knowing: A Seascape Epistemology*. Duke University Press, Durham. Selections.
- Recommended: Tuan, Yi-Fu 1977. *Space and Place*, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press. Selections.

Week 2- Class 4— Environmental justice

- Fortun, Kim 2001. *Advocacy after Bhopal: Environmentalism, Disaster, New Global Orders*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. Selections.
- Kirsch, Stuart. 2007. Indigenous Movements and the Risks of Counter globalization: Tracking the Campaign against Papua New Guinea's Ok Tedi Mine. *American Ethnologist* 34(2): 303- 321.
- Recommended: Nilsen, Alf 2012. *Dispossession and Resistance in India - The River and the Rage* New Delhi: Routledge. Selections.

- Find material on the Flint (Michigan) water crisis and come prepared to discuss it.

Week 3- Class 5— Disasters, risks, degradation, collapse

- Blaikie, Piers 1985. *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion in Developing Countries*. New York- London: Longman. Chapter 1, 1-11.
- Beck, Ulrich 1996. World Risk Society as Cosmopolitan Society?: Ecological Questions in a Framework of Manufactured Uncertainties. *Theory Culture Society* 13 (4): 1-32.
- Recommended: Simpson, Edward 2014. *The Political Biography of an Earthquake: Aftermath and Amnesia in Gujarat, India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Selections.
- Film: Holly Barker interview about nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands

Week 3- Class 6— Studies of Technology

- Pfaffenberger, Bryan 1992. Social Anthropology of Technology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21: 491-516;
- D'Souza, Rohan 2013. *Environment, Technology and Development: Critical and Subversive Essays* New Delhi: Orient Blackswan. Selections.
- Recommended: Singh, Satyajit 2002. *Taming the Waters: The Political economy of Large Dams in India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Selections.
- Find material on hydraulic fracking in the North East and come prepared to talk about it.

Week 4- Class 7— Development and Conservation

- Mosse, David 2004. Is Good Policy Unimplementable? Reflections on the Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice. *Development and Change* 35(4): 639-671.
- Li, T.M. 2007. Rendering Technical? Chapter 4 of: *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Duke University Press. Pp.123-155, 314-317.
- Find material on the Dakota Access pipeline/ Standing Rock and come prepared to talk about it.

Week 4- Class 8— The management of nature: the case of water

- Geertz, Clifford 1972. "The Wet and the Dry: Traditional Irrigation in Bali and Morocco." *Human Ecology* 1: 1 (23-39).
- Bjorkman, Lisa 2015. *Pipe Politics, Contested Waters: Embedded Infrastructures of Millennial Mumbai* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Selections.
- Rademacher, Anne 2012. *Reigning the River: Urban Ecologies and Political Transformation in Kathmandu*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Selections.
- Anand, Nikhil 2016. *Hydraulic City*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Selections.

Week 5- Class 9— Climate change and the Anthropocene

- Dove, Micheal R. 2014. *The anthropology of climate change, an historical reader*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell. Selections.
- McNeill, John 2016. and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*. Boston: Harvard University Press. Selections.

- Amitava Ghosh 2016. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. Selections.

Week 5 - Class 10—Concluding section

Readings for the last class will be decided based on students' suggestions.