GEOG431 Culture and Natural Resource Management

Fall Semester 2017

Instructor Dr. Martha Geores

Class time and place: TTH 11-12:15

Classroom: 1158 Lefrak hall

Office hours TTH 12:30-1:30 Tuesday

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Office 1157 Lefrak Hall, across the hall from the classroom

**Course Syllabus**

­Purpose and Goals -

Culture and Natural Resource Management is an upper level geography course taught within the framework of Political Ecology. Political ecology focuses on the cultural interface between people and the natural resources. This cultural interface includes all aspects of cultures – there is a distinctiveness of social frameworks at scales from individual agency through national and international political institutions and policies. Likewise, natural resources have definitions and roles at different scales, are found across spatial scales, and have important temporal scale aspects. One consistent theme of the study of political ecology is an emphasis on justice in the resource use pattern. To come to any conclusion of what is just in certain cases you must understand natural resources and the cultures of all relevant stakeholders and how they relate to each other on multiple scales.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE COURSE:

Zen pretty much comes down to three things – everything changes; everything is connected; pay attention. (Jane Hirshfield)

Goal:

The goal of the course is to enable you to critically evaluate natural resource management patterns.

Learning Outcomes:

1. To learn to define natural resources in a social, cultural, and political context.
2. To understand the impact of the spatial distribution of natural resources.
3. To understand the role of scale in natural resource management.
4. To be able to critically evaluate natural resource use.
5. To identify the role of conflict in making natural resource management decisions.
6. To understand the concept of resource ownership as a fluid concept along a continuum from private ownership to public ownership.
7. To formulate a framework for evaluating environmental justice in natural resource management.

Please refer to ­ <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

­for the University policies governing classes. It contains your rights and responsibilities in academic matters.

# Current events are part of this course and we all need to recognize that we are in a time of political turmoil. The scientific evidence of climate change which is wreaking havoc throughout the country and the world, has been called into question. We an outlier in a world that recognizes climate change, with an administration that dismisses scientific evidence of climate change. The weather is unrecognizable from any past experiences, so planning and managing are at best a guessing game. What we think of as natural resources – forests, rivers, fertile flood plains have turned into natural disasters for people living near them. Regulation of natural resources is undergoing a seismic change here in the United States. **Culture** is a major factor in how we deal with the changing natural resource chaos. We will discuss the current natural events, particularly in reference to the cultural influence on how people are coping.

There is a basic axiom in geography - the water always wins. It goes where it wants to, when it wants to, overpowering even elaborate structures designed to keep it in check. In recognition of the importance of water, rivers are a constant theme in this course, although they are not the only natural resource covered. The Mississippi River is one of the greatest natural resources in the United States. It has a storied history which includes its division between the Eastern and Western halves of the country, an economic cog in the national economy, and home to diverse cultures. Rising Tide is an excellent political ecology study of the 1927 flood, the worst flood in American history and it is very informative about the River and management of it at that time. Two films about the Flood of 1927 will be the introduction to this course.

Evaluation criteria:

Each assignment will be evaluated based on an understanding of the question, knowledge of the course materials, a critical analysis of the materials as they apply to the question, and a defendable answer to the question. Each assignment contains a rubric which should not stifle your creativity.

With the exception of the capstone project all of the completed assignments will be posted on Elms.

# Assignments:

1. **Class participation** **(200 points)** – **This section is student graded. Part a and c are graded by all classmates, part b is graded within your group. Instructor will review the grade**
2. There are 3 types of class participation:
3. Presentation of assigned readings (50 points)
4. Contribution to the discussion in your group (125 points)
5. Discussions in the groups which will focus on questions posed by the presenters. Everyone will be expected to talk about currents germane to the topic.
6. Contributions from outside sources that relate specifically to your river/region. This material related to your river and region will be building toward your individual papers and capstone project.
7. Participation in class-wide discussion. (50 points)
8. An essay based on a comparison the role of scale issues present in Silent Spring, then and now. **125 points**
9. Two book reviews 125 points each (**250 total**)
10. **Diamond, J.** 2011. Collapse: How Societies chose to Fail or Succeed. ISBN 978-0-14-311700-1 (pbk)
11. **A “food” book from the list of approved books.**
12. A midterm exam **150 points**
13. The annotated bibliography accumulated over the semester (50 points)
14. An individual final paper related to your river, on the topic of your choice. (125 points)
15. A capstone project presentation (oral and written) (200 points).

# Books

Required:

Robbins,P. 2011 ­Political Ecology: Critical Introductions to Geography.2 ed (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing) ISBN-13: 978-0470657324; This book is available as an ebook **free** through lib.umd.edu.

Paulson, S. and Gezon L, 2005. Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups (Rutgers) ISBN: 9780813534770

Diamond, J 2005 Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed: Revised Edition ISBN 978-0-14-311700-1 (pbk)

Barry, J. (1998) Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America (New York: Touchstone, Simon and Schuster) ISBN 0-684-84002-2

On line articles and most videos are in Course Reserves section of Blackboard class site, others are on YouTube and the URLs are in the syllabus.

**This is a course in political ecology. The themes are culture, politics, and natural resource management.**

**OUTLINE OF THE COURSE**

**Module 1. Introduction to the course – Political Ecology**

AUGUST 29

Organization of the class

What is a resource? What is management? What is Culture? What is Politics?

What was going on in The Outer Banks this summer?

August 31

Introductions in groups:

What is your favorite natural resource?

What makes it a resource?

What place does the natural resource have in your culture?

Are there conflicts associated with the resource?

What are the politics related to the resource?

The Political Ecology of Rivers – the constant theme throughout the class

What is your favorite river? What is there about it that you like? What are the rules around it.

**September 5 How do you study a river? Mississippi River as an example.**

The Mississippi River Flood of 1927 was the worst flood in American history.

Assignment:

SEE THIS ON LINE **The Great Flood of 1927 & The Treatment of Blacks**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgPPTQPPM9c>

**WILL WATCH IN CLASS Fatal Flood** Link[PBS **Video** database of America’s history & culture ; v. 351.](javascript:open_window(%22http://catalog.umd.edu/F/L2U6F1P3GA98PD737KTJEB5AQNUK4T485G3IYNYTA9FB4YKVVE-11560?func=service&doc_number=002646127&line_number=0050&service_type=TAG%22);)F349.G74 F38 2001

**Mississippi River Flood of 1927 Rising** **tide**, the great Mississippi flood of 1927 and how it changed America / by John M. Barry.

**September 7 – Getting to know your river and your group**

Each group is assigned to river. Each river has a wealth of scholarship associated with it. In this class you will be expected to use books, non-print media, social media if appropriate, and web resources. Once each week you will discuss how the topic relates to your river within your group and report out.

Individually see the video assigned to your group. In class the groups will discuss the videos as a group, then report out.

1 Jordan <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdZ10YQKYd8>

2 Indus <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmwY2q0_iLY>

3) Niger https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqR3MoXjCyg

4 Danube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ntkY-PxnXs>

5 Mekong <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewFeLw505CE>

Please keep in mind that the capstone is not a survey

Assignment 2-3 page essay What are cultural and political aspects of natural resources? Draw on your own experiences, group discussion and the Mississippi River materials. September 10 at 11pm

**Module 2. What is Political Ecology?**

September 12

The strengths of political ecology as a lens

Robbins Chapter 1 pp.12-24

September 14

Paulson and Gezon, Chapter 2, pages 17-37, “Politics, Ecologies, Genealogies”

Does it matter where we came from?

How does this relate to your river? How would different disciplines study rivers?

Sept. 19

The basics of political ecology and natural resource management

Robbins Chapter 4 “Political Ecology Emerges” pp 82-100

In class Paul Robbins Challenges to Political Ecology <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADUvjJoake4>

Sept.21

Jared Diamond, Collapse

September 26 The Critical Tools, Robbins Chapter 3 pp 49-81

Systems exercise

Sept 28 Political Ecology in actual situations.

Paulson and Gerzon Chapter 4,pp. 61-75 Ferguson and Derman” Whose Water? Political Ecology of Water reform in Zimbabwe”

Chapter 8, pp. 135-153 Gezon, “ Finding the Global in the Local: Environmental Struggles on Northern Madagascar”

Book Review Diamond, Collapse Due October 2 at 11:30

**Module 3. Scale – all you need to know to understand the world**

October 3 Paulson and Gezon Chapter 1, pages 1-16 “Place, Power, Difference: Multiscale Research at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century”

October 5 D. W., W. Adger, F. Berkes, P. Garden, L. Lebel, P. Olsson, L. Pritchard, and O. Young. 2006. Scale and cross-scale dynamics: governance and information in a multilevel world. *Ecology and Society* **11**(2): 8.

[online] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol11/iss2/art8/> and in course reserves

Global Scale

October 10 Paulson and Gezon, Chapter 7:pp. “The political ecology of consumption: Beyond Greed and Guilt”

October 12 Regional and Local Scales - Fracking

# Gasland Part 2 English Movie

# <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvzdc8l_4xM>

Come ready to discuss: the resource at the center of the controversy, the state of the science – does it have dire consequences or not? – why the issue is so polarizing, and the extent of the fracking

**Scale Essay**

Scale is one of the most important concepts in geography and in natural resource management. Nothing exists in just one scale; scales are interlocking and intersecting and scale is an active concept, as is the framing of natural resources and their management. There are different types of scales: temporal, cartographic, observational and operative, to name a few. Culture is also an active concept that can be observed on many scales. Managing natural resources is highly scale dependent. In addition to considering scale, you must consider that all actions and relationships are recursive.

Watch Rachel Carson, Chapter 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeJNRaE11A0&list=PLv9l7a5zKbl5WpdLn1fjQLcFCrnF07rPC>

And

Malaria and the Silent Spring Retro Report <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykPH56Udc60>

Compare the 2 videos using the concepts of scale, focusing on the 4 types of scale presented in class. In your essay, you should not just identify them; you should show how they complicate the situation, sometimes seeming to be complementing each other and sometimes in conflict. Feel free to bring in other sources. Chicago style citations should be used.

These videos are from the PBS American Experience Series aand should be the starting point of the essay.

**The essay should be 7 -10 double spaced pages, 12 point type. Post by 10/16 at 11:30 pm.**

**October 17 Formalizing the Capstone Project**

**Midterm In class OCTOBER 19, 2015**

**Module 4. Studying Natural Resource Management**

October 24

Robbins, Chapter 3 The Critical Tools

Chapter 10 Environmental Conflict, pp 199-214

In our own backyard – available through course reserves

October 26 – Capstone work in class

**Module 5. What is ownership?**

October 31 Schlager and Ostrom, Property Rights Regimes and Natural Resources: A Conceptual Analysis 1992 Land Economics 68(3:249-262

Video: Lighting the Seventh Fire <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEpC-D2Ppug>

**Food Book review due 10/30 at 11:30 pm**

**In class Capstone work Nov. 2, 7, 9, 14, 16**

**Nov. 21 All Capstone Papers Due**

**Capstone Presentations November 21, 28, 30, December 5 and 7.**

**Individual papers due 12/13 at 8am**

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