

# Nature, Power and Society

GEOGRAPHY 337/ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 337  
3 credits

January 22 – May 7, 2014

Lectures: 2:30-3:45 pm, Mondays and Wednesdays  
Science Hall, Room 360

Course Instructor:

Dr. Ian Baird, Office: Science Hall 455

e-mail: [ibaird@wisc.edu](mailto:ibaird@wisc.edu) or tel: 608-265-0012 (office)

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesdays, 1:15-2:15 pm  
or by appointment (via e-mail)

## Introduction

News headlines from around the world suggest that our forests, fields, agricultural lands, rivers, oceans, and even the earth's atmosphere are in grave danger. Biodiversity is being lost at rates not experienced in human history, and the issue of climate change (global warming) has recently become a serious concern. Livelihoods and quality of life are being threatened globally by a host of issues. While there are many examples of situations where individuals, institutions and governments working at various scales have organized in ways that have resulted in impressive improvements in environmental quality and natural resource management more generally, overall, the world is facing a multitude of serious ecological and natural resource management challenges. Whether we like it or not, many of these cannot be avoided. Some can potentially be addressed by individuals at local levels; others require national, regional and even global cooperation and collaboration. What is clear is that much more needs to be done to address these issues, and that we can all make a difference. However, the first step to ensuring that well conceptualized actions are taken begins with educating ourselves about the complex issues facing the world. This course is designed to set the foundations for doing exactly that, through providing an introduction to many important issues and key concepts associated with people and resources, or nature and society. In this course we will examine some of the most crucial ecological and natural resource management problems. We will, however, not only consider the biological and ecological factors—as important as they frequently are—but also the social, cultural and political elements associated with them, including issues associated with power. The objective of the course is to inspire people to take the ecological and natural resource management challenges seriously, but also to encourage critical thinking, which is necessary for ensuring good analysis. I do

not profess to have the answers to all the problems that need to be addressed in today's complex world, but I encourage students to think about them seriously in balanced, thoughtful, critical and holistic ways. The future is in all of our hands!

By the end of the course, students should have a good general understanding of the key elements that link nature, power and society.

### Course Text

Robbins, Paul, John Hintz, and Sarah A. Moore 2010. *Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell.

The text is available at the University Book Store. An e-book of the text can also be purchased on-line for a reduced cost.

### Evaluation and Assignments

Writing Assignment #1	10%
Writing Assignment #2	15%
Writing Assignment #3	15%
Mid-term Exam	25%
Final Exam	35%

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100%

- 1) **Writing Assignments:** 40%. To pass the course, every student is required to complete three short concise writing assignments (double spaced, Time New Roman 12 point font, standard margins). Chicago style in-text referencing should be used (not footnotes or endnotes). These assignments are due at the beginning of class (papers handed in during class or at the end of class will be considered to be one day late) on Wednesday, February 19th, Wednesday, March 26th, and Monday, April 28th. Topics will be discussed during class. The first paper will be no more than 1,000 words long. The second and third papers will be no more than 1,200 words each. Hard copies must be handed in, and all pages should be stapled together. E-mail submissions will not be accepted (except under exceptional circumstances, and with prior permission). Printing on two sides of the paper is acceptable, and while not required, is encouraged. There will be a 10% penalty for every calendar day any of the papers are late. There are no exceptions to this apart from cases of documented serious health problems or other documented emergencies that delay the completion of an assignment.
- 2) **Mid-term exam:** 25%. The mid-term exam will take place on Wednesday, March 5th during regular class time. The exam will cover the lecture material and required course readings up to the time of the exam. It will not be enough to concentrate either exclusively on the reading material or the lecture material. Students will need to have a good understanding of both to be successful. The exam will largely be multiple-choice, along with some short answer questions.

- 3) **Final exam:** 35%. The final exam will take place during the exam period, on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 10:05 am to 12:05 pm. It will cover all the lecture and readings for the course, with an emphasis on the course content after the mid-term. The exam will largely be multiple-choice. Some short answer questions will also be included. Students who miss the final exam cannot make it up unless their failure to take the exam was caused by a serious health problem or other fully documented and verifiable emergency.

Good writing is important: I appreciate good writing, and will reward those who demonstrate their ability to write well and concisely. Please remember that your papers should all include a clear thesis statement. If you are not a good writer, consider requesting support from the UW-Madison Writing Center for improving your writing skills.

### **Grading**

90-100	A
82-89	AB
74-81	B
66-73	BC
58-65	C
51-57	D
50 and below	F

### **Conduct in Class**

Students are encouraged to ask questions and make comments in Lecture. Being frank is fine, but it is also important that we are respectful of the views of others. Please put up your hand in you want to ask a question or make a comment, and I will try to get to you as soon as possible, without overly interrupting the flow of the lecture.

Students are allowed to use laptop computers in class to take notes or engage in other class-related activities. Students should not, however, use laptops in class to chat with friends, surf the web about non-class related topics, write e-mails, play computer cards or chess, etc. This can be very distracting for both the lecturer and other students so please strictly follow these rules. Also, please do not engage in any cell phone text messaging or other electronic means of communication during class time.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students who plagiarize should beware, as the UW-Madison policy on plagiarizing will be strictly implemented during this course. Students are responsible for educating themselves on this. Plagiarizing can lead to serious consequences for students, including resulting in students receiving failing grades or other serious discipline. Cheating of all kind will not be tolerated. Students who are aware that other students are cheating are encouraged to report inappropriate actions. Anonymity can be assured, when appropriate.

**Life Interruptions**

Students are expected to submit work at the times scheduled in the syllabus. Possible exceptions include serious illness, immediate family emergency, or other legitimate conflict. If these apply, you must contact me to request an extension or makeup. Make these arrangements as soon as you know of the conflict—**before** the due date if possible. Students who miss the final exam cannot make it up unless their failure to take the exam was caused by a serious health problem or other fully documented and verifiable emergency. All make-up exams will be essay exams.

**Special Needs**

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me and the McBurney Resource Center located at 702 W. Johnson Street, Suite 2104 <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu> , 608-263-2741 to discuss individual needs for accommodations.

## Course Schedule

1	Wednesday, January 22, 2014	Course introduction  Review syllabus, course objectives and content, the course text, etc.
2	Monday, January 27	Damming the Sesan River and downstream transnational impacts: The case of the Yali Falls dam in upland Vietnam and downstream impacts in northeastern Cambodia  Wyatt, Andrew B. and Ian G. Baird 2007. Transboundary impact assessment in the Sesan River Basin: The case of the Yali Falls Dam. <i>International Journal of Water Resources Development</i> 23(3): 427-442.  Chapter 1 of text
3	Wednesday, January 29	Population and scarcity  Chapter 2 of text
4	Monday, February 3	Population and scarcity (cont)  Chapter 2 of text
5	Wednesday, February 5	Markets and commodities  Chapter 3 of text
6	Monday, February 10	Markets and commodities (cont)  Chapter 3 of text
7	Wednesday, February 12	Institutions and “the commons”  Chapter 4 of text
8	Monday, February 17	Institutions and “the commons” (cont)  Chapter 4 of text  Baird, Ian G. 2010. Private, small groups or communal: <i>Dipterocarpus</i> wood resin tree tenure and management in Teun Commune, Kon Mum District, Ratanakiri Province, northeastern Cambodia. <i>Society and Natural Resources</i> 23: 1-16.
9	Wednesday, February 19	Environmental ethics  Chapter 5 of text Paper #1 due
10	Monday, February 24	Risks and hazards  Chapter 6 of text

11	Wednesday, February 26	Political economy  Chapter 7 in text
12	Monday, March 3	Political economy (cont)  Baird, I.G. 2011. Turning land into capital, turning people into labour: Primitive accumulation and the arrival of large-scale economic land concessions in Laos. <i>New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry</i> 5(1): 10-26.  Chapter 7 in text
13	Wednesday, March 5	Mid-term
14	Monday, March 10	Social construction of nature  Chapter 8 of text
15	Wednesday, March 12	Coastal fisheries and environmental destruction in Thailand: Considering local knowledge and industrial fishing  Stobutzki, Ilona C., Geronimo T. Silverstre and Lens R. Garces 2006. Key issues in coastal fisheries in South and Southeast Asia, outcomes of a regional initiative. <i>Fisheries Research</i> 78: 109-118.  Fahn, James 2003. The coast: on the edge. (part of) Pages 175-184 in <i>A Land on Fire. The Environmental Consequences of the Southeast Asian Boom</i> . Westview, Boulder, Colorado.
16	Monday, March 24	Trees  Chapter 10 of text
17	Wednesday, March 26	Tuna  Chapter 12 of text Paper #2 due
18	Monday, March 31	Dolphin-safe tuna (Thailand and the USA)  Chapter 12 of text  Baird, Ian G. and Noah Quastel 2011. Dolphin-safe tuna from California to Thailand: Localisms in environmental certification of global commodity networks. <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> : 101(2): 337-355.
19	Wednesday, April 2	Carbon dioxide and climate change  Chapter 9 of text

20	Monday, April 7	In-Class video: “There Once was an Island: Te Henua e Nnoho” (approx. 80 minutes long) (available in Geography library)
21	Wednesday, April 9	Guest Speaker: TBA
22	Monday, April 14	Wolves  Chapter 11 of text
23	Wednesday, April 16	Bottled Water  Chapter 13 of text
24	Monday, April 21	Guest Speaker: TBA
25	Wednesday, 23	Guest Speaker: TBA
26	Monday, April 28	Swidden Agriculture: Destruction or Sustainability?  Dove, Michael R. 1983. Theories of swidden and the political economy of ignorance. <i>Agroforestry Systems</i> 1(1): 85-99.  Paper #3 due
27	Wednesday, April 30	French fries  Chapter 14 of text
28	Monday, May 5	The Global Land Grab Meta-Narrative, Asian Money Laundering and Elite Capture: Reconsidering the Cambodian Context  Baird, Ian G. 2014. The global land grab meta-narrative, Asian money laundering and elite capture: Reconsidering the Cambodian context. <i>Geopolitics</i> .
29	Wednesday, May 7	Final class  Course conclusions, final exam preparation

\* Note that during the course it is possible that some of the lectures will have their dates changed, or contents altered. We will try to provide as much advance warning of changes as possible.