Course Description  This is a course that is broadly concerned with the relationship between society and environment. It both traces evolving ideas about this relationship, particularly in developing world contexts, and explores how these ideas help us understand contemporary conservation and development issues. How do rural societies transform and adapt to their biophysical environments? How do broader political economic, cultural, and biophysical changes affect this interaction at a local level? A number of different analytical approaches have been used to study this complex relationship within a range of disciplines, most notably geography and anthropology. In this course we will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches by reading and discussing a combination of theoretical works and case studies. A strong emphasis of this course will be to trace out how these theories have shaped environment/development policy in the Third World, with material impacts on rural peoples. A number of broader themes, relevant to all society-environment contexts, will be explored. The succession of approaches and corresponding themes covered in this course include:

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<tr>
<th>Approaches to Study Culture x Environment</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Determinism</td>
<td>Joint Production of Culture and Nature</td>
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<td>Cultural Ecology</td>
<td>Material Basis of Environmental Relations</td>
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<td>Human Systems Ecology</td>
<td>Political Economy, Institutions, and Environmental Governance</td>
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<td>Population-Induced Intensification</td>
<td>Changing Views of Ecology</td>
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<td>Common Property Theory</td>
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<td>Political Economy</td>
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<td>Political Ecology</td>
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<td>Environmental Narratives and History</td>
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<td>Landscape Ecology and Questions of Scale</td>
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<td>Nonequilibrium Ecology</td>
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It is important to understand how these approaches first developed. The ordering of these approaches corresponds roughly with when they have been introduced in the social sciences. Still this course deviates strongly from a “history of ideas” course in that we will not attempt to exhaustively review society-nature thought. Instead, we only cover those approaches that have had an enduring influence on contemporary understandings. As a result, each week’s readings often will be a mix of old classics and more contemporary examples.

Learning Goals  Course material is organized for both beginning graduate students and upper division undergraduate students. Among both of these groups, there are students who identify themselves as interested in “theory” and those who are “more applied”. In this course, we strive to breakdown this binary – the “theories” that we engage with in this course very much influence how we (scholars, practitioners, policy-makers) understand the relationship of societies/cultures and environments. As a result, they affect how we view the sources of environmental (mis)management and threats to the environment. Therefore, to be an effective conservationist, planner, activist or policy-maker, one needs to be able to understand the mix of
factors that shape current society-nature relations as well as conservation and policy outcomes. In particular, you will:

1. Develop a cross-cultural perspective about environment-society relations
2. Understand how certain conceptual frameworks for understanding culture-environmental relations developed in the social sciences and how these have affected conservation and development practice around the world.
3. Know the strengths and limitations of these frameworks for understanding the effect of human activities on the environment or in turn the effect of environmental change on human societies.
4. Be able to identify the appropriate frameworks for analyzing particular culture-environment contexts and in so doing, be better placed to develop more effective conservation or development initiatives.

**Reading**

There is a heavy emphasis on assigned reading in this course. Given the course content, we will be reading and discussing a wide range of material from humanities, social sciences, to biophysical sciences. Depending on your background, you will have difficulty with some of the reading. PLEASE ask questions in class or come and see me in office hours. “Required Readings (REQ) and “Recommended Readings” (REC) will be journal articles or book sections that are available through our Learn@UW site. Unless otherwise stated in class, required readings need to be read and thought about prior to our class meeting on the date on which they are assigned. Recommended readings are provided to: 1. provide the necessary background that you may lack; 2. present in more depth case material used in lecture; or 3. provide you readings that allow you to explore further certain topics. Our meetings will be composed of a combination of lecture, full group discussions and small group discussions. I reserve the right to change readings to respond to the needs and interests of the class – any changes will not significantly increase the amount of material to read.

**Writing**

This course emphasizes the development of your critical reasoning abilities in the realm of nature-society relations through individual and group work. A major vehicle for this development is writing. People-environment relations are complex. No matter what your life course will be, you will likely need to first analyze such relations and then be able to make convincing arguments about complex relationships and situations. This is especially the case in the conservation, development and conservation-with-development fields. While this is not an English composition class, you will be expected to engage critically with the material and in so doing, make clear and concise arguments about complex relationships.

**Grading**

Grades will be determined on: 1. short responses to questions about weekly readings (graded on a check, check-, check+ basis) usually due on the Tuesday meeting of each week – 18% of grade; 2. a choice of three of four possible 4-5 page reaction papers corresponding to the four themes of the course submitted by 5pm through assignment dropbox link on February 13, March 6, April 10, and May 5 – 36% of grade; 3. a final 10-12 page paper on a topic of your choice (proposal due on March 20th – 4%; presentation during week of April 28th or May 5th – 5%; paper due on May 14th through dropbox link– 22%); and 4. your participation in discussions (including oral presentations) -- 15% of grade. Written assignments are expected to be turned in on time with 10% of the maximum score deducted from scores for every day the assignment is late. Final letter grades for graduate and undergraduate students will be determined using separate curves. The curve will never be harsher than the standard curve (>92% A; 88-92% AB; 82-88% B; 78-82% BC; 68-78% C; <68 D or F).

**Graduate Students**

For computing final grades, a separate curve will be drawn for graduate students. In addition, graduate students will be expected to write a 7-9 page critical review of the literature associated with one of week’s topics of particular interest to them (at least 10 references). This review will include required
and recommended readings plus additional readings chosen in consultation with Prof Turner. This additional assignment is worth 20 points and so graduate students’ grades will be based on 120 rather than 100 points.

**Academic misconduct.** In the words of the UW-Madison Student Academic Misconduct Policy, academic misconduct is an act in which a student:

* seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
* uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
* forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
* intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
* engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student’s academic performance;
* assists other students in any of these acts.

Therefore, cutting and pasting text from the web without quotation marks and proper citation; paraphrasing from the web without crediting the source; and submitting assignments written by others all are academic misconduct. See Student Assistance and Judicial Affairs at [http://students.wisc.edu/saja/index.html](http://students.wisc.edu/saja/index.html) for more information, and if you’d like more clarification on proper citation and what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me.

**Additional information/resources.** I highly recommend the Writing Center’s services particularly for your final papers. They can assist you in all stages of writing from initial brainstorming to polishing. You can reach the Writing Center at 263-1992, or on the web at: [http://www.wisc.edu/writing](http://www.wisc.edu/writing).

**COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS**

20-January  **Sustainable development. What questions remain?**

**REC:** Williams, R. 1983. Culture. pgs 87-91 In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.


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27-January  Environmental determinism and origins of cultural ecology


3-February  Ecocosmologies and environmental regulation

OR


10-February  Where is the division between culture and environment?


17-February  **Human systems ecology: systems, energetics and carrying capacity**


24-February  **Adding temporal depth to the adaptation framework: Demographic-technical change within rural communities**


**POLITICAL ECONOMY, INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNANCE**

3-March  **Territoriality and customary institutions: Is there a tragedy in the commons?**

10-March  **Introduction to Political Ecology**


17-March  **Political Ecologies (read three cases)**


24-March  **Decentralization, participation, and privatization in development/conservation**


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**CHANGING VIEWS OF ECOLOGY**

7-April  **Environmental history and development narratives (read Hughes + two)**

**REQ:**  Hughes, J. D. 2006. Defining environmental history. pgs 1-17 In *What is Environmental History?*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.


14-April  **Implications of changing views of ecology for people-environment research**


### 21-April Different knowledge systems and environmental management


### 28-April Final project presentations

### 5-May Synthesis, integration and application across themes

**REQ:** On-line module