

# Nature, Power and Society

GEOGRAPHY 337/ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 337  
3 credits

January 24 – May 2, 2018

Lectures: 2:30-3:45 pm, Mondays and Wednesdays  
BIRGE B302

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: Mondays and Wednesday, 1:45-2:15 pm  
or by appointment (via e-mail)

## Introduction

News headlines from around the world suggest that our forests, grasslands, 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 climate change (global warming) has become a serious concern. Human livelihoods and quality of life are being threatened globally by various changes. 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. 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 learning outcome of the course is to inspire people to take the ecological and natural resource management challenges seriously, through encouraging critical thinking, which

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

I do not profess to have the answers to all the problems that need to be addressed in today's complex world. I fully encourage students to think about them seriously in balanced, thoughtful, critical and holistic ways. Your comments and questions are encouraged.

### Course Text

Robbins, Paul, John Hintz, and Sarah A. Moore 2014 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). *Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell.

The text should be available at the University Book Store. An e-book of the text can also be purchased on-line for a reduced cost. A hard copy is on Reserve at College Library. It is also possible to order via Amazon.

### Evaluation and Assignments

Writing Assignment #1	10%
Writing Assignment #2	15%
Debate and write-up	20%
Mid-term Exam	15%
Final Exam	30%
Participation	10%

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100%

- 1) **Writing Assignments:** 25%. To pass the course, every student is required to complete two 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 21<sup>st</sup> and Monday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Topics will be discussed during class. The first paper (10%) will be no more than 1,000 words long. The second paper (15%) will be no more than 1,200 words. 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. Write the word count on the paper. There will be a 10% penalty for every calendar day that 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) **Debate and Write-Up:** 20%. A 1,000-word write-up about your debate topic should be submitted one week prior to your designated debate class. You will be

- graded for both your write-up (15%) and your preparation and performance during the debate (5%).
- 3) **Mid-term exam:** 15%. The mid-term exam will take place on Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup> 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.
  - 4) **Final exam:** 30%. The final exam will take place during the exam period, on Thursday, May 6, 2018 (room to be determined) from 7:25 to 9:25 pm. Note that this date, time and locations are determined by the University. The final exam 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.
  - 5) **Participation:** 10%. Participation in class activities, including being in attendance, coming to class on time, not leaving before the end of class, and engaging in class activities.

### **Graduate Students**

Graduate students taking this course are required to complete all the assignments required for other students, but are also required to complete one additional ten-page double-spaced essay, on a topic related to the overall theme of the course and approved by the Course Instructor in advance. It is to be handed in on the last day of classes, on May 2, 2018.

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

### **Credit Hours**

Students should expect to spend 45 hours in-class (including final exam period) and 90 hours reading, writing and preparing for debates out-of-class.

**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 not allowed to use laptop computers, ipads, cell phones or other mobile devices in class, except for specific class-related activities or with special permission. The problem is that too many student use computers and other mobile devises 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.

**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 of Wisconsin-Madison 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. Students should also inform the instructor of their status as soon as possible, so appropriate accommodations can be made.

**Course Schedule**

1	Wednesday, January 24, 2018	Course introduction  Review syllabus, course objectives and content, the course text, etc.
2	Monday, January 29	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 31	Population and scarcity  Chapter 2 of text
4	Monday, February 5	Population and scarcity (cont)  Chapter 2 of text
5	Wednesday, February 7	Markets and commodities  Chapter 3 of text
6	Monday, February 12	Markets and commodities (cont)  Chapter 3 of text
7	Wednesday, February 14	Institutions and “the commons”  Chapter 4 of text
8	Monday, February 19	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 21	Environmental ethics  Chapter 5 of text  Paper #1 due
10	Monday, February 26	Risks and hazards  Chapter 6 of text

11	Wednesday, February 28	Political economy  Chapter 7 in text
12	Monday, March 5	Political economy (cont)  Baird, Ian 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.
13	Wednesday, March 7	Social construction of nature  Chapter 8 of text
14	Monday, March 12	Mid-term
15	Wednesday, March 14	Trees – “Should trees have rights as living things?”  Debate #1  Chapter 10 of text
16	Monday, March 19	Wolves - “Should wolves be hunted in Wisconsin?”  Debate #2  Chapter 11 of text
17	Wednesday, March 21	Uranium - “Should nuclear power development be supported?”  Debate #3  Chapter 12 of text
18	Monday, April 2	Tuna  Chapter 13 of text
19	Wednesday, April 4	Dolphin-safe tuna (Thailand and the USA)  Chapter 13 of text
20	Monday, April 9	Carbon – “Should we use law and regulation to mandate the reduction of releases of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere?”  Debate #4  Chapter 9 of text
21	Wednesday, April 11	In-Class video: “There Once was an Island: Te Henua e Nnoho” (approx. 80 minutes long) (available in Geography library)  Instructor away from class

22	Monday, April 16	Lawns – “Should lawn watering and chemical treatment of lawns be allowed?”  Debate #5  Chapter 14 of text
23	Wednesday, April 18	Bottled Water – “Should bottled water taxes be imposed to reduce the consumption of bottled water and increase recycling or should voluntary reduction be encouraged?”  Debate #6  Chapter 15 of text
24	Monday, April 23	French Fries  Chapter 16 of text  Paper #2 due
25	Wednesday, April 25	E-Waste – “Should the free trade in e-waste be encouraged or not?”  Debate #7  Chapter 17 of text
26	Monday, April 30	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> 19(2): 431-453.
27	Wednesday, May 2	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 content altered. As much advance notice as possible will be provided.