

Population & Environment Geography 341

Summer 2015

June 22nd – July 17th

M T W Th: 10:00 – 12:50

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Overview

This course explores the dynamic interactions of humans with the natural environment. More specifically, we will study the challenges population growth, in varying societies and places, presents to the environment and other species. In this course we will analyze the relationships between overpopulation, consumption, resource use, technology and environmental degradation, including climate change. We will explore the possibilities and meanings of sustainability in all its incarnations, and we will scrutinize “overpopulation” and its assumed effects on the environment.

The challenges human populations face derive from compound sources that intersect multiple aspects of society, therefore this course is interdisciplinary in its theoretical perspectives and requires critical thinking from students. We will question societies’ values, and modes of living on multiple levels and settings, which also requires us to question deeper meanings of nature and environment.

The course will draw upon numerous case studies, some of which are examples of successful human-environment interactions, and others unsuccessful. From case studies and theoretical readings, we will draw out patterns and themes of human environment relations. Important to this course is the examination of the stories and narratives that flow through technology, the economy and the physical environment that give meaning to place and society.

This course draws upon multiple books, films, popular media and Internet sources. From this, you will gain familiarity with the major historical and contemporary figures and theories that are driving the field. Some of the authors and theories explored in this course are: Thomas Malthus, Paul Ehrlich, Eleanor Ostrom, Garrett Hardin, Peter Singer, Jonathan Swift; concepts include: demography, overpopulation, environmental Kuznets curve, environmental justice, carrying capacity, sustainability and more!

Objectives and aims

The course is designed to introduce students to current and historical debates on the relationship between population and the environment, and to deepen understanding of the dynamic relationship between the two. This will be accomplished through academic readings, media articles, films, lectures and class discussion. The main objectives are:

- 1) Students gain an overview of the debates within population and environment studies.
- 2) Students are able to skillfully deconstruct popular media coverage, literature and academic texts to understand certain underlining perspectives the author/s present.
- 3) Students gain a historical perspective to current debates in population and environment studies
- 4) Students are able to synthesize and critically analyze debates within environmental and population discourses.
- 5) Students broaden their understanding of the dynamic, intricate relationships between humans and the physical world.

Readings (*PARTIAL LIST & SUBJECT TO CHANGE*)

Ehrlich, Paul. (1969). *The Population Bomb* (Later Printing edition). Sierra Club.

Malthus, T. (2008). *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. (G. Gilbert, Ed.) (1 edition). Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Robertson, P. T. (2012). *The Malthusian Moment: Global Population Growth and the Birth of American Environmentalism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Robbins, P. (2007). *Lawn People: How Grasses, Weeds, and Chemicals Make Us Who We Are* (annotated edition edition). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Swift, J. (2008). *A Modest Proposal*. S.I.: Book Jungle.

Films

- (2005) China's Lost Girls (Nat Geo)
- (2008) China's Stolen Children (HBO)
- (2009) Last Supper for Malthus

Grading & Assignments

100 points are possible for this course.

- Weekly quizzes and assignments 40 %
- Participation 20 %
- Mid-term project 20%
- Final presentation 20%

Weekly Quizzes weekly quizzes on readings and lectures will be presented in class on assigned dates.

Assignment (Due 25th): Find an article dealing with the issues of population, food supply and/or the environment. What themes and topics appear in the text that is relevant to the course? Be prepared to present to the class an overview of your article and your findings.

Mid-term project: TBA

Final presentation: TBA

A note on participation: Active participation is mandatory in order to pass the course. With only 4 weeks of classes, much of the learning will originate from class time, both lecture and discussion. Not only is your physical presence expected but your intellectual feedback is also needed to facilitate a meaningful and engaging learning experience for all.

NOTE: SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE!

Schedule:

Week 1: Is population a problem?

Monday, June 22

• Introduction—facts and myths about population and environment Video: *World in the Balance, The People Paradox*

Tuesday, June 23

• Demographic trends □ Reading: Population Reference Bureau 2007 *Population: A Lively Introduction* Video: *Population Transition in Italy*

Wednesday, June 24

• Population and environment—was Malthus right? □ Reading: Malthus 1798 *An Essay on the Principle of Population* □ Reading: Jonathan Swift 1729 *A Modest Proposal* □ Reading: John Bellamy Foster 1998 *Malthus' Essay on Population at Age 200* Video: *Paul Ehrlich and the Population Bomb*

Thursday, June 25

• Is 'Population control' the answer? □ Reading: Garrett Hardin 1968 'Lifeboat ethic'; □ Reading: Peter Singer 1972 'Famine' □ Reading: Barbara Duden 1993 'Population' □ Reading: Jeffrey Sachs 2006 'Lower fertility: a wise investment' Videos: *China's One child; La Operacion*

Week 2 (Part 1): Women, human rights, and population

Monday, July 29

• Women, reproduction, and environment □ Reading: Sen 2000 Population and gender equity Reading: Caldwell et al 1992 Fertility decline in Africa

Tuesday, July 30

- Women, reproduction, and environment (continued) □ Reading: Larsen 2003 Women's empowerment & fertility decline in Tanzania Reading: PRB 2001 Population gender & environment □ Video: *Africa's Children*

Week 2 (part 2): Population and hunger Thursday

- Why people starve □ Reading: Bill Rau 1991 *From Fesat to Famine* Reading: Barry Bearak 2003 *Why People Still Starve* Video: *Global Banquet*

Week 3: Population, environment, violence, and disease

Monday

- Population, environmental conflict: the case of the Rwanda genocide Readings: Robert Kaplan 1994 *The Coming Anarchy* □ Reading: Simon Dalby 1996 *The Environment as Geopolitical Threat* Video: *Blood Diamonds*

Tuesday

- Population, environment, and conflict: the Rwanda genocide Jared Diamond 2004 *Collapse (chapter on Rwanda genocide)* Mahmood Mamdani 2001 *When Victims become Killers* □ Video: *Forsaken Cries; Triumph of Evil*

Wednesday, July

- Population, environment, disease and the AIDS crisis □ Bruce Newbold 2007 *Six Billion Plus: "The Impact of HIV and AIDS"*

Thursday, July

- AIDS continued □ Reading: Oglethorpe & Gelman 2007 "HIV/AIDS and the Environment" Reading: Hunter 2006 "HIV/AIDS and the natural environment" □ Video: *Sowing the Seeds of Hunger: AIDS, Agriculture and Famine in Malawi*

Week 4: Consumption, consumerism, and the environment

Monday, July

- Consumption: consumerism and waste □ John DeGraff 2001: *Affluenza, The All-Consuming Epidemic*
Videos: *Affluenza*, and *China Revs Up*

Tuesday, July

- Consumption: manufacturing desire
Video: *Advertising and the End of the World* Video: *The Persuaders*

Wednesday, July 15th

- Population, lifestyle, and sprawl in the American West Reading: Best 2005 *How Dense Can We Be?* □ Video: *Subdivide and Conquer*

Thursday, July 16th

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS