

## **G&ES 444: World Environmental Cultures – Spring 2020**

**10:00-10:50 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, Advanced Sci and Tech Hall 152**

### **Prof. Stentor Danielson**

**Office:** Advanced Technology and Science Hall, Room 327 (enter through the Geography main office, Room 319, and go straight back then take a right)

**Phone:** 738-2564

**Email:** stentor.danielson@sru.edu

**Office hours:** Official office hours are 11 a.m-1 p.m. Monday and Wednesday, and 10-11 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday. My door is generally always open when I am in the office, and I welcome students anytime I'm in.

### **About this class**

Modern environmental management, mainstream environmentalism, and common forms of anti-environmentalism all grow out of a common Western cultural tradition. Students who have nearly completed a program in environmental studies or geography from a US university should by now be well-versed in the many ways of understanding the environment within that tradition. This class seeks to broaden students' intellectual base by introducing environmental perspectives from a variety of other cultures. How do people from non-Western perspectives – such as Native Americans or South Asians – conceptualize the relationship of humanity to nature? What kind of environmental management approaches do these cultures support? How can a cross-cultural consideration of the environment expand our understanding of the world? We will take an in-depth look at a small selection of non-Western worldviews and examine how they apply to well-known environmental problems like climate change and deforestation.

### **Outcomes**

By the end of this class, a successful student will be able to:

- Identify aspects of environmental issues that are influenced by modern western cultural ideals
- Describe perspectives on the environment from several non-western cultures (such as Islamic, Native American, or Indian)
- Evaluate the relevance of western and non-western ideas about the environment to key contemporary environmental issues (such as climate change or fossil fuel extraction)
- Present culturally-sensitive analysis of environmental problems in written and oral form

This course addresses the following departmental outcomes:

- Each graduate will demonstrate an understanding of features and patterns of the human environment. (4.2)
- Each graduate will demonstrate an understanding of the major spatial features and patterns in the cultural environment such as language, religion, and agriculture and economic, political, and demographic regions. (4.7)
- Each graduate will demonstrate an understanding of the major processes such as settlement, migration, trade, technological development, diffusion, and landscape transformation that shape cultural patterns. (4.8)
- Each graduate shall develop the ability to respect and integrate diverse worldviews in problem-solving frameworks. (1.5)

- Each graduate will deliver oral presentations, demonstrating the ability to effectively communicate discipline-specific concepts. (1.1)
- Each graduate will write scholarly papers using acceptable format and organization with proper citations to appropriate literature. (1.2)
- Each graduate will demonstrate professionalism and integrity in his/her academic conduct. (1.4)
- Each graduate will demonstrate the ability to develop valid research questions and hypotheses. (2.1)
- Each graduate will demonstrate the ability to apply proper techniques for data acquisition and interpretation in a problem-solving context. (2.2)
- Each graduate will demonstrate the ability to solve open-ended problems using scientific methodology. (2.3)
- Each graduate will develop the ability to make informed, scientifically-based decisions regarding environmental issues. (2.4)

And the following university-wide outcomes:

- Communication: Communicate effectively in speech and in writing, using appropriate information sources, presentation formats, and technologies. (1)
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: Locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and ideas from multiple perspectives--mathematical, scientific, and humanistic. Apply this information literacy to contemporary challenges. (2)
- Values and Ethics: Demonstrate an understanding of how the values of personal integrity, cooperative action, and respect for diversity influence one's own behavior and the individual and group behavior of others. (3)
- Social Awareness and Civic Responsibility: Use knowledge of evolving human institutions and of diverse cultural and historical perspectives to interact effectively in a variety of social and political contexts. (4)
- Global Interdependence: Act with an understanding of the cultural, socio-economic, and biological interdependence of planetary life. (5)
- Personal Development: Demonstrate intellectual curiosity, as well as a commitment to wellness, and to emotional and spiritual growth. (6)
- Professional Proficiency: Apply knowledge and skills to meet professional competencies within a specific discipline. (8)

## **Assignments**

### *General assignments policies*

All written assignments must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day they're due. Assignments will be docked 5% for each 24 hours or part thereof they are late, unless a documented unforeseeable excuse is provided. Since you have the entire semester's schedule now, please plan your time so as to complete all assignments early, so that you are prepared if something unexpected happens. All written assignments for this class will be submitted electronically, to the dropbox on D2L.

Word limits are meant to give you a sense of how comprehensive the paper ought to be, not as strict rules. If you have something important to say, say it. If you don't, don't waste your time (and mine) by padding the word count.

All information you acquire from sources other than your own creativity must be appropriately cited in APA style (the library webpage has several guides to APA style under the "Cite It!" link. I expect students to exercise critical judgment in evaluating sources, both from the internet and from the library. If you have any questions about sources or citations, please talk to me before the due date – I would rather have you do it right than lose points for doing it wrong.

### *1. Progress Reports: Due Feb 28, April 3, and April 24*

Over the course of the semester, you will conduct a cultural assessment of an environmental policy or project.

During Week 3, you will meet with me to select your topic. Your topic should be a specific policy or project (actual or proposed) with significant environmental implications. This project may be one aimed at environmental protection, or one with other goals that is likely to have significant impacts on the environment. Additionally, your topic must be one that is expected to affect a group of people who practice a non-Western culture. Some potential topics (to give you an idea of what I'm looking for) are:

- The Sardar Sarovar (India), Three Gorges (China), or Xayaburi (Laos) Dam
- The Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository in Nevada
- Militarized anti-poaching measures in southern Africa
- The Adani mine in Queensland, Australia
- Anti-deforestation programs for carbon offset credits ("REDD+") in Indonesia
- Whale hunting restrictions imposed by the International Whaling Commission

In your first progress report, you will analyze the Western cultural assumptions behind the project. For this progress report you will examine both the proponents of the project, as well as any opponents who are coming from a Western perspective.

In your second progress report, you will analyze at least one non-Western cultural perspective on the project or policy. You will examine the values and beliefs of this culture, as well as the potential impacts of the project on their way of life.

For your third progress report, you will prepare a draft of your final assessment. Your assessment will detail the cultural conflicts that have arisen, or will arise, if the project or policy proceeds as planned. Then you will suggest ways to resolve those conflicts, by modifying or even canceling the project or policy, and/or by action on the part of the non-Western cultural group.

Progress reports will be graded on timeliness and completeness. If you turn in your report on time and include all required materials, you can expect full credit.

### *2. Peer reviews: Due March 6, April 10, and May 1*

After each progress report, you will be assigned a classmate's work to review. You will critique their work both on its content and on its composition and presentation. Your review will be shared anonymously with the author of the report. Peer reviews will also be graded based on timeliness and completeness.

### *3. Oral presentations: May 6*

During the final exam period, each student will have five minutes to give a short oral presentation summarizing their report. Your presentation should be organized as if you are presenting in front of the organizers of the project and need to persuade them to make the alterations that you suggest.

During your classmates' presentations, you can earn additional points by asking tough but fair questions, of the sort that the project organizers might ask someone who is petitioning them to make changes. Your answers to your classmates' questions will factor into your own grade.

### *4. Final report: Due May 6*

Your final report will be a revised version of your last progress report, incorporating feedback from the peer reviews you received. Your final report should discuss:

- What Western cultural assumptions lie behind the project or policy you are assessing
- What relevant values and beliefs are held by the non-Western group that will be impacted, and how the project will affect their way of life
- What recommendations you would make to the project organizers about changing (or even canceling) the project
- What recommendations you would make to members of the non-Western group about addressing their concerns about the project

### *5. Class participation: Graded May 9*

Interaction with other students is a vital part of social science study. I hope that our classes will feature substantive, critical discussion of the material in the readings as well as relevant ideas from your other experience and the world around us. On the day of the final exam, you must hand in a report of up to 500 words telling me what grade you believe you deserve for your class participation, and giving a justification for that grade. Your justification should give an overview of what you feel has been your level of participation in class discussions, as well as highlighting at least two specific contributions you made to the class. Your grade will be based both on your report as well as my own notes on students' participation during class, so there is no guarantee you will receive the grade that your report asks for – but I do take your reports seriously.

## **Grading**

The final grade for this class will consist of:

- 15% Progress Reports (5% each)
- 15% Peer reviews (5% each)
- 25% Oral presentation
- 25% Final report
- 20% Participation

### **Attendance and Preparation**

World environmental cultures is a complex subject, and no manageable set of readings can cover all of the information that I think is important to highlight on each topic. I expect all students to attend every class, because class lectures and discussions will be key to learning the material. You should come prepared to talk about the readings.

I assume that all members of this class are adults who have chosen to take this class because you are interested in learning about different cultural perspectives on the environment. Therefore, behavior that is disruptive to your own learning or that of others will not be tolerated, and you will be asked to leave. Such behavior includes: eating, smoking, sleeping, working on work for other classes or personal business, talking about topics other than this class, and the use of non-approved electronic devices (iPods, laptops, cell phones, etc.).

### **Access, Rights, and Care**

Your ability to master the class material should not be hindered by anything other than your own effort. If you have a disability, health issue, outside responsibility, or other concern that may affect your ability to succeed in this class, do not hesitate to contact me or the university's Office of Disability Services (738-4877, 105 University Union), and we will work together to find an accommodation for you.

Slippery Rock University and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to meet this commitment and to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator. The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing assignment for a class, or as part of a University-approved research project. Faculty members are obligated to report sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred to the person designated in the University protection of minors policy. Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at: <http://www.sru.edu/offices/diversity-and-equal-opportunity/sexual-misconduct-and-victim-resources>.

I hope to create a space where students have the opportunity to bring all aspects of their selves into the classroom in order to fully engage in this course. I support people of all gender expressions and gender identities and encourage students to use the name and set of pronouns which best reflect who they are. In this spirit, I welcome and expect all students to also use the correct name and pronouns of their classmates. I will do my best to respect and use the language you use to refer to yourself and will encourage other members of our classroom community to do the same. Please inform me if my documentation reflects a name or set of pronouns different from what you use, and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me after class, by email, or during office hours.

## **Changes**

While I do not expect much to change about this syllabus, I reserve the right to make changes and will notify students of them in class and/or by email.

## **Readings**

There are three books for this class, plus a collection of shorter readings. The books are available through the campus bookstore, or from an online seller such as [powells.com](http://powells.com) or [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). The remaining readings are available through the library's electronic reserve system (these are marked [E-Reserve]) or online (URL given after the citation). You are expected to have thoughtfully read each week's readings by the beginning of the week. Many weeks have fairly large reading loads, so plan ahead and don't wait until the weekend before to start reading.

- Keller, Eva. 2015. *Beyond the lens of conservation: Malagasy and Swiss imaginations of one another*. New York: Bergahn Books.
- Kimmerer, Robin W. 2013. *Braiding sweetgrass: indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.
- Shah, Alpa. 2010. *In the shadows of the state: Indigenous politics, environmentalism, and insurgency in Jharkhand, India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

One good strategy for thoughtful reading is called the “yes, no, hmm” method. That is, after finishing the article you should come up with at least one important thing you think the author got right (“yes”), one thing the author got wrong (“no”), and one thing the author said that prompted you to think more deeply and go beyond the text (“hmm”). I expect all students to participate in class discussions, so thinking about the reading in this way will ensure that you have something to contribute.

I reserve the right to add graded response papers or quizzes to the class if it becomes apparent from class discussions that a substantial number of students are not doing the reading, or not doing it thoughtfully.

## **Desire2Learn**

I will use the D2L system to distribute assignments, to record grades, and to send messages about the class. Students should make sure that they are able to log in to the class's D2L site as well as the electronic reserves for this class on the library website. It is your responsibility to contact ITS or the library if you have a problem. You are also responsible for checking your SRU email account daily, as I will be sending class emails through D2L to those addresses.

## **Academic Honesty**

Cheating (any method for getting the correct answers other than knowing the material yourself) and plagiarism (representing others' work as your own) will not be tolerated, and I will be alert for signs of both. In your papers, any idea that you take from any person other than yourself must be properly cited, and any words or phrases that you take from others must be clearly marked as quotations. You may discuss ideas with your classmates, or get help proofreading, but all of the writing must be your own. On the first instance of cheating or plagiarism, you will receive a zero

for that assignment. On the second instance, you will receive a zero for the course. Review the section in your Student Handbook on Academic Honesty for a more detailed explanation of the university's procedures for handling cheating and plagiarism.

## Schedule of Topics and Readings

### UNIT 1: THINKING CROSS-CULTURALLY

**Week 1, Jan. 22-24**

**Week 2, Jan. 27-31**

**Week 3, Feb. 3-7**

- Bohannon, L. 1971. Shakespeare in the bush. In *Conformity and conflict: readings in cultural anthropology*, eds. J. P. Spradley and D. W. McCurdy. Boston: Little Brown and Co. <http://tinyurl.com/mqj8py7>
- Yunkaporta, T. 2019. Lessons from stone -- indigenous thinking and the Law. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-lessons-from-stone-indigenous-thinking-and-the-law-122617>
- Brosius, J. P. 2001. Local knowledges, global claims: on the significance of indigenous ecologies in Sarawak, East Malaysia. In *Indigenous traditions and ecology*, ed. J. A. Grim, 125–157. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [E-reserve]
- Anderson, E.N. 1996. Ecologies of the heart: emotion, belief, and the environment. Chapter 2: Feng shui: ideology and ecology. pp. 15-27. [E-reserve]
- Butler, James R. A., Alifereti Tawake, Tim Skewes, Lavenia Tawake, and Vic McGrath. 2012. Integrating traditional ecological knowledge and fisheries management in the Torres Strait, Australia: the catalytic role of turtles and dugong as cultural keystone species. *Ecology and Society* 17 (4): 34. <https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol17/iss4/art34/>
- Watkin Lui, F., Kim, M. K., Delisle, A., Stoeckl, N., & Marsh, H. 2016. Setting the table: indigenous engagement on environmental issues in a politicized context. *Society and Natural Resources*, 29 (11), 1263–1279. [E-reserve]
- Huntington, H. P., S. F. Trainor, D. C. Natcher, O. H. Huntington, L. DeWilde, and F. S. Chapin III. 2006. The significance of context in community-based research: understanding discussions about wildfire in Huslia, Alaska. *Ecology and Society* 11 (1):40. <http://tinyurl.com/yfewpe5>
- Eyers, P. 2017. Decolonization ~ meaning what exactly? *Unsettling America* <https://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/2017/10/11/decolonization-meaning-what-exactly/>
- Wråkberg, U., and K. Granqvist. 2014. Decolonizing technoscience in northern Scandinavia: the role of scholarship in Sámi emancipation and the indigenization of Western science. *Journal of Historical Geography* 44:81–92. [E-reserve]
- Rundstrom, R. A. 1995. GIS, indigenous peoples, and epistemological diversity. *Cartography and Geographic Information Systems* 22 (1):45–57. [E-reserve]
- Loften, A. and E. Vaughan-Lee. n.d. Counter mapping. *Emergence* <https://emergencemagazine.org/story/counter-mapping/>

## **UNIT 2: A POTAWATOMI PERSPECTIVE**

**Week 4, Feb. 10-14**

**Week 5, Feb. 17-21**

**Week 6, Feb. 24-28** (Progress Report 1 due Friday)

**Week 7, March 2-6** (Peer Review 1 due Friday)

Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.

*Spring Break – March 12-16*

## **UNIT 3: SWISS AND MALAGASY PERSPECTIVES**

**Week 8, March 16-20**

**Week 9, March 23-27**

**Week 10, March 30-April 3** (Progress Report 2 due Friday)

Keller, E. (2015). *Beyond the lens of conservation: Malagasy and Swiss imaginations of one another*. New York: Bergahn Books.

**Interlude: AAG Meeting**

**Week 11, April 6-10** (Peer Review 2 due Friday)

Kristoff, Matthew and Amy Cardinal Christiansen. 2019 Good Fire Podcast. <https://yourforestpodcast.com/good-fire-podcast>

## **UNIT 4: AN ADIVASI PERSPECTIVE**

**Week 12, April 13-17**

**Week 13, April 20-24** (Progress Report 3 due Friday)

**Week 14, April 27-May 1** (Peer Review 3 due Friday)

**Week 15, May 4**

Shah, Alpa. (2010). *In the shadows of the state: Indigenous politics, environmentalism, and insurgency in Jharkhand, India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

*Final Presentations: Wednesday, May 6, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.*



General essay and presentation grading rubric:

<b>Item</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Completeness 20%</b>	Gives a complete, thoughtful, and integrated answer to all questions in the assignment	Addresses all questions, but gives insufficient depth to some, fails to link them together	Addresses all questions in a perfunctory way, omits some questions or adds irrelevant digressions	Veers significantly from the assigned topic	Essay is on a completely irrelevant topic
<b>Argument 20%</b>	Makes a strong argument, with a clearly stated thesis and demonstration of all key points.	Main argument is apparent but some points weakly argued	Argument is confused or central thesis not clear	Argument difficult to identify, or may contradict itself or leave large gaps	Absence of an argument
<b>Sources 20%</b>	All arguments fully supported by information that is relevant and obtained from reliable sources	Adequate use of information and sources relevant to the argument	Signs of inattention to source quality, some information presented irrelevant or missing but necessary	Failure to distinguish reliable and unreliable sources, “kitchen sink” approach to research results	Large gaps in research and irrelevant digressions, use of manifestly unreliable sources
<b>Citations 10%</b>	All information cited in a clear and consistent manner	Citations may be partially incomplete	Significant inconsistencies in citation style, important points not cited	Pervasive failure to cite sources or to cite them in an understandable way	Citations absent or impossible to follow
<b>Writing 10%</b>	Impeccable grammar and writing style that is enjoyable to read and appropriate to the subject matter	Generally consistent grammar and an easy to understand writing style	Significant grammar mistakes and writing style that is stilted or inappropriate	Rampant grammar mistakes and awkward writing that make it difficult to follow the argument	Pervasive grammar mistakes and clear lack of care about the readability of the text
<b>Insight 20%</b>	Raises new ideas that enter new ground in cultural geography and/or strongly stimulate my own thinking	Reaches deep and substantive conclusions that go beyond the class material	Draws conclusions consistent with the class material, or further insights which are significantly flawed	Contains original ideas that are shallow or clearly incorrect	Lacks any original ideas