

ANTH 414/514: CULTURE & ECOLOGY

Tom Thornton, Ph.D.
Winter 2007, T, Th 2-3:50p
Office: Cramer Hall, Room 141-P
Office Hours: T, Th 4:00 – 5:00 p
Phone: 503-725-3316
Email: tthornto@pdx.edu
Website: <http://web.pdx.edu/~tthornto/index.html>

Anthropology, the science of man [i.e., humans], is often held to be a subject that may satisfy our curiosity regarding the early history of mankind, but of no immediate bearing upon problems that confront us. This view has always seemed to me erroneous. Growing up in our own civilization we know little how we ourselves are conditioned by it, how our bodies, our language, our modes of thinking and acting are determined by limits imposed on us by our environment. Knowledge of the life processes and behavior of man under conditions of life fundamentally different from our own can help us obtain a freer view of our own lives and our problems.

-Franz Boas

OVERVIEW

Most observers agree that the balance between human societies and the natural environment has become increasingly fragile. What can anthropology teach us about this development? Does the study of historical and non-Western cultures shed any light on the contemporary environmental crisis and potential solutions? This course introduces the study of human ecology from a global and intercultural perspective. The texts, lectures, films, discussions, and assignments in this course are designed to provide you with:

1. an overview and appreciation of the origins, development, and variation of human ecological knowledge and practices around the world, including foraging, subsistence agriculture, pastoralism, and intensive and industrial agriculture production systems, as well as patterns of distribution and consumption;
2. an introduction to the major concepts, methods, theories and intellectual history of historical and cultural ecology and environmental anthropology;
3. an understanding of the concept of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and its relationship to Modern Science and contemporary environmental problems, especially in the areas of ecosystem conceptualization and modeling, adaptation, and resource use and management;
4. a means of evaluating the sustainability and potential applications of indigenous ecological knowledge and practices in contemporary society.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND WEB-CT

We will draw our readings from the following sources, which (save for the CR) are available for purchase at the PSU bookstore:

1. *Sacred Ecology (SE)* by Fikret Berkes is a succinct overview of key concepts, theories, and ethnographic literature relating to traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and resource management;
2. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed (COLLAPSE)* by Jared Diamond is biogeographer's attempt to understand the broad sweep of historical ecology, particularly where societies have failed to adapt to changing environmental conditions and collapsed.
3. *Priests and Programmers (PP)* by Stephen Lansing is an in-depth study of indigenous Balinese water management and the culture and ecology of rice production. This text is also supplemented by a unique film chronicling an attempt to relate Balinese TEK to modern scientific management of rice production;
4. *Lines in the Water: Nature and Culture at Lake Titicaca (LW)* by Ben Orlove has been described as lyrical "political ethnoecology." It examines the ecological vision

- and practices of Lake Titicaca's indigenous inhabitants as they confront development and political and ecological change.
5. *Cows, Kin and Globalization: An Ethnography of Sustainability* (CKG) by Susan Crate is a very recent ethnography investigating the "sustainability" of the Viliui Sakha cultural ecology, a Russian indigenous group facing tremendous challenges in dealing changes in the state and global economy.
 6. Other course readings and resources (e.g., syllabus and web links) will be posted on WebCT, an internet resource to facilitate communication and distribution of course materials. Students are automatically enrolled in WebCT and can access class resources with their odin account and a password (usually the last 4 digits of your PSU ID) at www.psuonline.pdx.edu. If you do not have an odin account, please obtain one (www.account.pdx.edu).

These texts will be supplemented with additional resources, including films.

FORMAT & EVALUATION

Weekly classes will feature instructor presentation of new material through lecture, film, and in-class exercises, as well as student-led discussions and presentations. Evaluation is based of the following requirements:

- 1) *Essays (90% or 900 points)*: Three 4-page (~1200 word) essays will be assigned over the course of the term (see Course Schedule), based on exam-style questions. Students will receive detailed guidelines for each paper assignments in separate handouts. Each paper will be graded on a 300 point scale.
- 2) *Talking Points, COLLAPSE Symposium, and other assignments. (10% or 100 points)*: Students will be asked to complete minor assignments both inside and outside of class. Among the most important of these are the COLLAPSE Symposium powerpoint presentations (50 points; further instructions will be given in a separate handout), Talking Points worksheets (questions, comments, quotes, etc. for discussion; see example) to be turned in to the instructor 4-5 times during the term and worth 10 points each. Being a discussant means being prepared and ready to listen and contribute, and the Talking Points you prepare should enhance your participation, while at the same time giving the instructor valuable feedback. In addition students may be expected to attend campus or local events and report on them. Full participation in all classes is expected.
- 3) *Graduates Student Research Paper*: Graduate students also will be responsible for an additional 15-page research paper (500 points). You should prepare a 1-page proposal outlining your project by week 6. More details on this assignment will be given in a separate handout;

Grading is: 970+ points = A+; 930-969 = A; 900-929=A-; 870-899=B+; 830-869 =B; 800-829=B-; 770-799=C+; 730-769 =C; 700-729 = C-; 670-699=D+; 630-669 =D; 600-629 = D-; < 600 = F (⊗). Graduate students will be graded on a total of 1500 points (including the 15-page research paper).

POLICIES

All work must be completed to receive a grade. Late papers will be penalized or rejected, except in cases of verifiable illness or emergency. Also, please be advised of the following Department policies: a) a "P" grade for the course requires an accumulated grade of C- or better; b) an "I" grade requires, in addition to the instructor's approval and "passing" standing in the course, a written petition, documenting (extraordinary) circumstances, approved by the Department Chair; c) the Anthropology Department insists upon academic integrity and intellectual honesty and is vigilant on the matter of plagiarism (see: <http://www.anthropology.pdx.edu/assets/plagiarism.pdf>).

Students with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychological, vision, hearing, etc.) who need to arrange reasonable accommodation must contact both the instructor and the Disability Resources Center at the beginning of the term. Also, be aware of your responsibilities for academic integrity and intellectual honesty.

To be an effective participant in class, it is important to keep up with the readings because they provide an important basis for what is covered in class. For discussions to succeed students must attend class and prepare assignments in a timely manner. Please abide by the following principles of discussion:

1. **Prepare “Talking Points”** as you read and engage course materials to help you comprehend, connect, and assess the readings and put key ideas, questions, and concepts into play for discussion. I will collect Talking Points 4-5 times during the term, but encourage you to complete them for each set of reading assignments. Talking Points worksheets are available on WebCT.
2. **Listen actively and reflectively**—Try to understand and analyze others’ opinions as they are spoken; ask questions to clarify and further your understanding. Don’t just sit passively “waiting your turn” or thinking about your own responses. Reflective silence is okay.
3. **Respond constructively**—Imagine what kind of role you are playing in responding to others and to texts. Do you wish to: 1) comprehend their analysis by paraphrasing or analyzing it; 2) extend their analysis by applying it new situations; 3) synthesize or link it with other concepts, issues, or arguments (especially those raised by others in the class and by the texts, which we share) through comparison, etc.; 4) evaluate it against relevant criteria? Do not engage in *ad hominem* or personal attacks. Agreement or disagreement is not necessarily the goal—Comprehending, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating important concepts, theories, and perspectives are the main objectives.

ADVISING

If you are an anthropology major, or are considering declaring the major, please chose a faculty advisor and meet with them once or twice a year to chart a course and assess your progress through the major. A natural sequel to this course is ANTH 418/518 (Environmental Anthropology).

COURSE SCHEDULE (not etched in stone)

Wk	Topics	Assignments
1	1/9: Overview 1/11: Why study human ecology and environmental problems from an anthropological perspective?	SE 1-3 (skim); COLLAPSE (Prologue), 2
2	1/16: The evolution of culture and ecology studies. Archaeology, ethnoecology, economic/subsistence systems, & adaptation. 1/18: Diamond's five-point framework for understanding collapse.	COLLAPSE 4, 5, 6 COLLAPSE 7, 8, 9: Talking Points #1
3	1/23: (Re)considering Easter Island as a prototype for societal collapse. 1/25: <i>Collapse Symposium</i> .	COLLAPSE 10, 11, 12 COLLAPSE 14, 15, 16
4	1/30: Ecocosmologies I: The ethnoecology & behavioral environment of N. hunter-gatherers. Film: <i>Make Prayers to the Raven</i> . 2/1: The (ethno) ecology of supply and demand & the evolution of conservation ethics & resource management regimes. Film: <i>A Time of Gathering</i>	SE 5, 6, Essay 1 Due SE 7, Thornton I (WebCT), Nelson (WebCT) Behavioral Environment Assignment Due.
5	2/6: Environmental science and justice: merging TEK and Western science to understand climate change and its disproportionate effects on Inuit and their livelihoods. Film: <i>Sila Alangotok: Inuit Observations of Climate Change</i> . 2/8: Political Ecology of subsistence and conservation. Film: <i>Haa Shagóon</i> .	<i>The Earth is Faster Now</i> selections (WebCT); Thornton II (WebCT); SE 8, 9, 10 Grad students: Case study proposals due
6	2/13: Ecocosmologies II: Agricultural Rice Production and Water Management in SE Asia. Film: <i>The Goddess and the Computer</i> . 2/15: The ecology of cooperation and state formation.	PP 1, 2, 3 PP 4-end Talking Points #2
7	2/20: Ecocosmologies III. Andean S. America highlands lake ecology. TEK and Ecolinguistics. 2/22: Fisheries and reed tenure.	LW 1, 2, 3 Essay 2 Due LW 4, 5 Talking Points Due #3
8	2/27: Sustainable development--oxymoron? 3/1: Ecocosmologies IV: N. Eurasian pastoralism.	CKG Prologue, 1, 2 CKG 3, 4
9	3/6: Historical ecology. 3/8: Post-Soviet devolution of the state—revitalization of kin?	CKG 5, 6 Talking Points Due #4
10	3/13: Ecology and globalization. 3/15: The Future.	CKG 7, 8 CKG Epilogue
11	3/20: Finals Week.	Essay 3 due 3/20; Grad Student Research Papers due 3/23