

# International Studies 150: Humanity and the Global Environment

Location/Time:  
Section 1: T-Th 3:30-4:45 CCC321

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Office Hours: M-W 11-12:00  
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## Course Description:

This is a course that takes a social science and historical perspective on the relationship between **environment and society** on a **global** scale. More specifically, this course explores:

- The dynamic interaction between natural and human social systems;
- The evolution of ideas about the natural environment;
- The politics of movements designed to protect social and environmental well-being.

We will study these themes in four units. Each unit has a question that the content in the class is designed to investigate. To foster your engagement with these questions and the content,

this course utilizes a mix of lecture and small/whole-group discussions. Success in this class will require you to have read the material for the day and to be prepared to discuss it concretely and cogently.

**Learning Outcomes:**

**Enduring Understandings:**

Human societies are inseparably tied to the natural environment.

**Course Objectives:**

Any engaged student who works assiduously in this course will be able to:

- 1) Recognize areas of interaction between society and the natural environment.
- 2) Analyze how the natural environment shapes human societies today and in the past.
- 3) Analyze how human ingenuity (i.e. scientific ideas and technological systems) and institutions (political, social, and economic) influence environmental sustainability.
- 4) Analyze how social, cultural, economic, and political structures influence environmental thinking, behavior, and action.

**Required Reading:**

*Texts:*

Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, Harper Collins, 2015. Available for text rental at the UWSP Bookstore.

Mark Kurlansky, *Cod: A Biography of a Fish that Changed the World*, Penguin Books, 1997. Available for text rental at the UWSP Bookstore.

Tim Winton, *Island Home: A Landscape Memoir*, Milkweed, 2015. Available for purchase at the UWSP bookstore.

**You must purchase the books and bring them to class on the days we discuss them.** Students who fail to bring their readings to class for discussion will be docked attendance.

*Desire2Learn (D2L):* In addition to the books above, you will also be required to read a small number of articles and other readings. These will be available on D2L. They are noted in the schedule below with an asterisk (\*).

You have one of two reading choices for the required readings in this course. You can 1) purchase physical copies of the books and print out the articles in hard copy, or 2) purchase electronic copies of the books and download electronic versions of the articles. If you choose option number 2 there are caveats. Caveat number 1: the only electronic devices permissible for the readings are laptops or ipad-type readers. No cell phones! I am strict of this. If we have an open "book" quiz and all you have is your cell phone, you will fail the quiz. Caveat 2: you must bring your device with you on the day that we discuss those readings. This is the price you pay for going electronic. Understand? Good.

#### **Assignments:**

*Midterm Exam:* There will be a midterm exam. The exam will consist of multiple choice. I will provide a study guide.

*Final Exam:* The final will be in the same format as the midterm and will be cumulative.

*Quizzes:* There will be a series of quizzes on lecture and readings throughout the semester. The format will be short-answer. There will be a quiz for each day we discuss a book. Questions for the book quizzes will be drawn from the reading guides that I hand out for each book. **You cannot make up quizzes unless your absence has been excused.** I will enable D2L to drop your lowest quiz grade in case you have to miss a class in which a quiz is given. Because this is a large class, I will not be returning your quizzes back to you. For the first couple quizzes I will provide feedback on how the class is performing, expectations on answers, etc. If you would like more substantial and individual feedback on your personal performance, you are encouraged to see me during my office hours or make an appointment with me.

*In-Class Activities and Assignments:* We will be engaging in various writing and group exercises throughout the semester. I will be collecting the products of these exercises and giving you credit for them on D2L. They will not be heavily graded or returned to you. Instead, I will be evaluating them on the + v - system. These marks will be recorded in D2L as 3-2-1 respectively. If you complete the work and put forth good effort, you will receive a +. Varying degrees of completeness or effort will result in either a v or a -. You will be in serious danger of **not** passing this class if you do not complete these assignments. See scale below.

\* Late assignments will be docked a third of a grade for every day late.

\*\* Attendance policy: See below.

#### **Grades (weighted):**

Midterm: 25 %

Final Exam: 35 %

Quizzes: 20%

In-Class Activities and Assignments: 20%

Total: 100%

**Grading Scale (percentage):**

A	93-100	B-	80-82	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	C+	77-79	D	60-66
B+	87-89	C	73-76	F	59 and below
B	83-86	C-	70-72		

**Other Stuff:**

*Attendance:* I will record attendance. Students who miss 3 classes will be docked a 1/3 of a grade from their final grade. Students who miss 4-5, 2/3rds of a grade, 6+ a full grade (and so on). For example, if you were to earn a B in this class, but missed 3 classes, your final grade would be a B-. Absences will be unexcused except in extraordinary circumstances, which will require a note from an authority explaining the absence. If you miss an assignment for a class in which you have an excused absence, you must make every effort to make up any missed assignments within a reasonable amount of time. I will not accept missed assignments for excused absences weeks after their due date.

Related to absences: I find it incredibly rude for students to leave in the middle of class. If, for some legitimate reason, you need to leave class early, I would appreciate the common courtesy of letting me know before class begins. Students who leave class without permission will be docked attendance for that class.

*Electronics:* All electronics must be turned off during class unless instructed to use them by me. These include cell phones, laptops, and tablets. In some cases laptop use may be permitted, if the student has an accommodation approved by the Disability Services Office (see below). Please do not be surprised to hear me shout "turn off your cell phone" if I catch you peeking at it in class. Notes should be taken by hand on paper.

*Late Work:* Stuff happens. Sometimes life takes priority over school work. If something comes up and you need to miss a class or cannot turn in an assignment let me know immediately. I do not always grant extensions on assignments, but I do try to be flexible. It is imperative, therefore, that when incidents arise you do your diligent best to keep me informed.

*Early Finals/Midterms:* I do not allow students to take early/late exams except in extremely rare occasions (like you are going to have brain surgery on the scheduled exam day).

*Plagiarism:* For information on plagiarism, consult <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights>. See Chapter 14, *Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures*, pages 5 -10, for the disciplinary possibilities if you are caught cheating. I will vigorously pursue all incidents of plagiarism. Also I use turnitin.com for the essays.

*Equal Educational Opportunities:* If you have a learning or physical challenge which requires classroom accommodation, please contact the UWSP Disability and Assistive Technology Center (6<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Learning Resources Center) with your documentation as early as possible in the semester. They will then notify me, in a confidential memo, of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Voice: (715) 346-3365, TTY: (715) 346-3362, <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/studentinfo.htm>.

*Writing/Reading Help:* This is a reading and writing intensive course. If you need help you can visit the Tutoring and Learning Center in the basement of the Library. They are there to help you with papers etc. This is totally free! Their webpage is <http://www.uwsp.edu/tlc/Pages/writingReadingTutorials.aspx>. You can also call them to make an appointment at (715) 346-3568.

*Notice on Copyright of Course Material:* As the instructor, I retain all copyright on lectures, slides, assignments, and other course materials. I do not allow anybody to photograph, film, or otherwise record lectures without my express permission. I do not allow anybody to distribute course materials or otherwise send audio or visual recordings of lectures to people not currently enrolled in this class without my express permission. Posting course material that I have created onto course-sharing websites directly violates my copyright on my academic materials.

**\*Note: I reserve the right to alter this syllabus for any reason.**

**Schedule:**

Week	Topic	Readings
<b>Unit 1: Human Origins and the Environment</b> <b>Are humans “a part of” or “apart from” nature?</b>		
1	Course Introduction	
	Humans and nature; environment and society	
2	Human Evolution and the Environment	<i>Sapiens</i> , Beginning to Ch. 3.
	The Americas and the Problem of Wilderness	<i>Sapiens</i> , Ch. 4.  * Primary sources on Native Americans and textbook history.
3	The Invention of Agriculture and the Myth of the Human/Nature Divide	<i>Sapiens</i> , Chs. 5-7 (optional: Ch. 8)  * Selections from <i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> and <i>The Bible</i>
	<b>Unit 2: Market Economies</b> <b>How do market-based modes of production transform the environment?</b>	
	Biological Unification: Colonization	<i>Sapiens</i> , Chs. 9 & 15 (optional: Ch. 14)

4	Capitalism	<i>Sapiens</i> , Ch 16 (optional: Ch. 11)
	Market Commodities I: Fur	<i>Cod</i> Part 1
5	Market Commodities II: Sugar	<i>Cod</i> Part 2
	Industrialization	<i>Sapiens</i> , Chs. 17-18.
6	Workshop: <i>Cod</i> and Modes of Production	<i>Cod</i> , Part 3 (optional recipes)
	<b>Unit 3: Environmental Governance: How have societies dealt with environmental change and decline?</b>	
	Conservation, Modern Statecraft, and the Beginning of "Sustainability"	
7	The Wilderness Idea and Transnational Environmental Preservation	* McCormick, "Protection, Conservation, and the United Nations (1945-1961)"
	Australian Interlude I	Winton, <i>Island Home</i> , beginning to 113.
8	Environmental Protection: A Perspective from the Global South	* Dowie, "Natural Capital and TEK" & "Maasai"
	<b>Midterm</b>	
9	<b>Unit 4: The Anthropocene: What are the major environmental problems today, their causes and consequences, and what might we do about them?</b>	
	Workshop: The Anthropocene	* McNeill and Engelke, "Introduction to <i>The Great Acceleration</i> ." * Syvitski, "Anthropocene: An Epoch of Our Making." * Vitousek et al., "Human Domination of the Earth's Ecosystems."
	Nuclear Fallout and How We Came to Know the Global Ecosphere	* Commoner, "Nuclear Fire."
10	The Global Economy: Never-ending Growth and "Sustainable" Development	* Chertow, "The IPAT Equation and its Variants." * Sachs, "Introduction to <i>Sustainable Development</i> ."
	No class! Jerry in Toronto.	
11	<i>Darwin's Nightmare</i>	* Sachs, "An Unequal World."
	<i>Darwin's Nightmare</i> & Discussion	
12	Overpopulation Concerns and the Green Revolution	* Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics." * Malthus, "An Essay on Population."
	Thanksgiving break	
13	Biodiversity and Extinction	* Quammen, "Planet of Weeds." * Kolbert, "The Sixth Extinction?"
	Environmental Inequality: Pollution and Environmental Justice	* Grossman, "The People of Color Environmental Summit." * Larry Summers Memorandum. * Flint Michigan Articles

		* Foster, "Let them Eat Pollution."
14	Australian Interlude II	Winton, <i>Island Home</i> , all.
	Climate Change: Science & Trust	* Oreskes, "The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change." * IPCC Report.
15	<i>Merchants of Doubt</i>	
	<i>Merchants of Doubt</i> & Discussion	
<b>Final: Tuesday, December 19 5-7pm 321 CCC</b>		