

<p style="text-align: center;">ER 170 / 270 Environmental Classics</p>
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Fall 2009

M 10 – 12 & W 12 - 1; 186 Barrows

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Call 642 1640 to sign up for OH, or sign up in person at ERG front desk

Motivation and objectives

What is the history and evolution of environmental thinking and writing? How have certain 'environmental classics' shaped the way in which we think about nature, society and development? Why did these become 'classics' and how did they influence environmental thought and environmental policy?

This course will use a selection of 20th century books and papers that have had a major impact on academic *and* wider public thinking -- primarily in the USA -- about the environment/development to probe these issues. Through these classics the class will explore:

- ◆ the evolution of environmental thought;
- ◆ the role of the public intellectual in environmental history and policy; and
- ◆ the links among science, perception, politics and policy.

Requirements

This course requires reading roughly one book per week. Sometimes the book is a slender volume, at other times it is a hefty bit of work. In addition, influential papers that extend the primary reading may be assigned. If you are taking ER270, all the supplementary readings are required; if you are taking ER170 I have indicated which readings are optional.

On Mondays we will situate the key reading in its historical context and discuss its contributions, critiques and consequences. Every other Wednesday we will have a student-led discussion of responses to the readings. *The introductory class begins on W Aug 26.*

Weekly Assignment:

A short (one to two page) commentary, critique, or set of questions, based on the core book / paper. This statement is due electronically by *12 noon on the day before class* and should be sent to the entire class.

ER270 students are required to turn in 2 of these critiques; *ER170 students* should choose 6 out of the readings to comment on.

Final Paper Requirement:

If you are an ER270 student you should turn in a 20-page (single spaced) review paper that, using the themes and ideas that emerge from the class readings and discussions, analyses an environmental issue that is of interest to you. The paper should include a critical analysis of the way in which the problem you have chosen has been written about, reported on etc – from mainstream or from diverse perspectives.

If you are an ER170 student you should turn in a 10 – 12 page piece on an environmental problem or controversy, the kind of piece you might submit to a weekly or monthly magazine. You are especially encouraged to report on a problem or controversy from your home town or from a place with which you are familiar.

Readings

The papers and commentaries are in the reader, available from Central Copy on Bancroft Avenue. Most books are easy to buy online; many are in the ERG Reading Room as well (for reading in situ, please). Several of the books are enduring classics to which you will return again and again, so they're well worth possessing.

Class Schedule

#	Date	Themes and Primary Text
1	8/31	The evolution of environmental thinking and discourse; role of environmental 'classics'; role of the public intellectual; what this class is about and how it will be run
2	9/7	Labor Day; no class
3	9/14	Modern agricultural practices and their impact on nature <i>Silent Spring</i> , Rachel Carson (1962).
4	9/21	Human population and resource degradation <i>The Population Bomb</i> , Paul Ehrlich (1968).
5	9/28	Local commons and sustainability <i>The Tragedy of the Commons</i> , Garret Hardin (1968).
6	10/5	The value of technology, and technology shaping values <i>The Lorax</i> , Dr. Seuss (1971) <i>Small is Beautiful</i> , E. F. Schumacher (1973)
7	10/12	Energy and the national interest <i>Soft Energy Paths</i> , Amory Lovins (1976)
8	10/19	Global commons and sustainability <i>Our Common Future</i> , UN World Commission on Development & Environment (1987)
9	10/26	Nature and the making of the city; the city and the making of nature <i>Nature's Metropolis</i> , William Cronon (1992)
10	11/2	The rise of environmental justice as a theme <i>Dumping in Dixie</i> , Robert Bullard (1990)
11	11/9	Geographic determinism? <i>Guns, Germs & Steel</i> , Jared Diamond (1997)
12	11/16	The co-evolution of plants and people <i>The Botany of Desire</i> , Michael Pollan (2001)
	11/23	Global warming finally goes mainstream <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> , Al Gore (2006)
13	11/30	And as the class ends...a look into a current debate on global warming and the environmentalist response <i>The Death of Environmentalism</i> , Michael Shellenberger & Ted Nordhaus, 2004
14	12/7	Summary and commentary: evolving themes and the impact and place of environmental classics.

8/31

Catch your breath, survey the literature for the course and order the hard to find/out of print volumes from online booksellers. It is important that you do this now so that you have the texts when they are needed, or you will be unable to complete the assignments on time.

As an ER170 or ER270 student your assignments will differ this semester. Scan the readings to consider which books/weeks you wish to summarize and present.

9/14

Silent Spring

Rachel Carson (1962) *Silent Spring* (Fawcett Publications: Greenwich, CT). Ch 3 – 10; 15.

Michael Smith. “Silence Miss Carson!” *Feminist Studies* (27), Fall 2001.

9/21

The Population Bomb

Paul Ehrlich (1968) *The Population Bomb*. (Ballantine Books: New York). Chs 1 – 3.

Mahmood Mamdani. The myth of population control; family, caste, and class in an Indian village. (selected chapters)

Robert W. Kates (2000) “Population and consumption: What we know, what we need to know”, *Environment*, **42 (3)**, 10 – 19. (optional for 170)

Amartya Sen. Population Delusion & Reality. *New York Review of Books* 1994 (optional for 170)

9/28

The Tragedy of the Commons

Garrett Hardin (1968) The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science*, **162**.

D. Feeny, F. Berkes, B. J. McCay & J. Acheson (1988) “The Tragedy of the Commons: 22 Years Later”, Chapter 5 of *Green Planet Blues*, K. Conca and G. Dabelko (eds)

Jean-Marie Baland & Jean-Philippe Platteau (1996). *Halting the Degradation of Natural Resources: Is there a role for rural communities?* Rome: FAO. Chapter 12

Arun Agrawal and Clark Gibson. ‘Enchantment and Disenchantment: the role of community in natural resource conservation. *World Development* (27) 1999 (optional for 170)

10/5

Small is Beautiful

Dr. Seuss (1971) *The Lorax* (Random House)

E. F. Schumacher (1973) *Small is Beautiful* (Harper & Row: New York), prefaces by John McClaughry and Kirkpatrick Sale, Chapters I.1 – 5, II.5, III.2, and IV.2 & 3 (pages 1 – 82, 155 – 172, 257 – 278.

Optional for all -- but worth reading as an older take on technology and the West:

Mohandas K. Gandhi (1997 edition) *Hind Swaraj, and Other Writings*, edited by Anthony J. Parel (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK). “Economic development and moral development” (1916), and “Gandhi on machinery” (1919 – 47), pages 156 – 169. **NOTE:** *Gandhi was a key inspiration for Schumacher.*

10/12

Soft Energy Paths

Amory B. Lovins (1976) “Energy Strategy: The Road Not Taken?” *Foreign Affairs*, Oct, 1 – 32.

Amory B. Lovins (1989) “The Negawatt Revolution”. Keynote address at the Green Energy Conference, Montreal 1989.

Yergin is the 1992 Pulitzer Prize winning author of *The Prize* – truly an environmental classic. At 800 pages, it isn’t exactly a week’s reading. Here instead is Yergin on – what else – oil, and energy security. An interesting contrast with Lovins, also on energy security, but with a raw materials rather than end-use focus.

Daniel Yergin (2009) “The long aftershock: oil and energy security after the price collapse.”
Testimony to the Joint Economic Committee to the US Congress (May 2009).

10/19

Our Common Future

World Commission on Development and Environment (1987). Widely known as the Brundtland Report. *Our Common Future*. Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York.

Michael Goldman. (1997). ‘Customs in Common: the epistemic world of commons scholars.’ *Theory and Society* (26), 1 – 37. (optional for 170)

10/26

Nature’s Metropolis

William Cronon (1992). *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. Norton: NY.

11/2

Dumping in Dixie

Robert Bullard (1990). *Dumping in Dixie*. Westview Press: Boulder, Colorado.

I broke the chronological order between 10/26 and 11/2. I am too kind to assign 2 hefty volumes – Nature’s Metropolis and GG&S – back to back.

11/9

Guns, Germs & Steel

Diamond, Jared (1997) *Guns, Germs & Steel: the Fates of Human Societies* (W. W. Norton & Co.: New York).

The Editors (1992) “Is poverty the problem?” *The Ecologist*, **22 (4)**, 166 – 171. (optional for 170)

Ricardo Hausman (2001) “Prisoners of geography”, *Foreign Policy*, January, 45 – 53. (optional for 170)

11/16

Botany of Desire

Michael Pollan (2001). *The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s-Eye View of the World*. (Random House: New York and Toronto)

11/23

An Inconvenient Truth

Al Gore (2006): *An Inconvenient Truth*. Opened at Sundance 2006.

Yay! A movie assignment! I will keep a copy on reserve in the ERG reading room, only for use in the room. The movie is widely available for rent from video stores, also from Netflix.

11/30

The Death of Environmentalism

Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus (2004). *The Death of Environmentalism*.

Carl Pope; an in-depth response in *Grist* (<http://www.grist.org/article/pope-reprint/>)

12/7

Last class: Wrap-up