

# Environmental Anthropology

## ANTH 4400/5400



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Office Hours: MW 10-11:30, or by Appt.

“Although it may seem counterintuitive that the foremost influences on the success of *environmental* policy could be *social*...conservation policies and practices are inherently social phenomena,” Michael Mascia et al.

### Course Description

Humanity faces environmental issues ranging from drought and the degradation of farmlands to global climate change and a major extinction crisis. While the “environment” is often treated as whatever is not human, the environmental crisis we face is a human crisis – one which can only be understood if we understand the cultural and social forces which have influenced, and are influenced by, the nonhuman world. Within ecological anthropology – the study of humans and the environment – environmental anthropology refers to an applied approach on using the theories and methods of anthropology to understand and tackle these real-world environmental problems. In this course we explore anthropological theories about the environment, various models for conceptualizing environmental ethics, and the ways in which cultural anthropology can shed light on, and sometimes present solutions for, present-day environmental realities. Ultimately the goal of this course is to facilitate students’ training as environmental anthropologists capable of addressing the complex and pressing environmental crises we face.

### About the Professor

I am a cultural anthropologist who has done research since 2009 on environmental issues across the United States, especially those relating to water and environmental justice. My foremost theoretical interests include indigenous knowledge, the social construction of landscape, and sacred ecology. In addition to degrees in cultural anthropology I am also a trained environmental scientist and am involved in environmental/anthropological consulting on a semi-regular basis. Teaching, however, remains one of my favorite parts of my job, and I look forward to a semester of facilitating your intellectual and career growth.

## Assigned Texts

- Kopnina, Helen and Eleanor Shoreman-Ouimet, *Environmental Anthropology Today* (Routledge, 2011).
- Townsend, Patricia, *Environmental Anthropology: From Pigs to Policies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Waveland Press, Inc., 2011).
- All other readings will be made available through Blackboard.

## Course Objectives

- Students will comprehend major theoretical perspectives within environmental anthropology.
- Students will be able to evaluate different normative positions within environmental anthropology and defend their own professional stance.
- Students will come to comprehend the complex social, political, and cultural factors affecting present-day environmental issues.
- Students will be able to apply environmental anthropology theories and methods to contemporary natural resource problems.

## Grading Scale

90-100 A / 80-89 B / 70-79 C / 60-69 D / 59 and Below F

## Grade Breakdown

Term Paper Outline.....5%  
Attendance.....25%  
Midterm.....30%  
Term Paper.....35%  
Seminar Presentation....5%

## Assignments:

**Term Paper Outline:** Students will turn in a detailed outline or explanation of their term paper, to be 1 page long (single spaced). **Due Date: 10/15/15 at start of class.**

**Attendance:** Students may miss up to two classes for any reason, no excuse necessary (other than the dates on which an assignment is due). Beyond this, each day is a deduction of 20% to your attendance score unless given explicit prior approval from the professor by email.

**Midterm Exam:** Students will have a midterm on 11/02/15. It will be true/false, multiple choice, and short answer. It is open-note. You will have 1 week to complete this test. It will be distributed 10/15/15, and **due at start of class on 11/02/15.**

**Term Paper:** Students will develop a term paper, 18-20 pages double-spaced, on a specific environmental problem and the ways in which environmental anthropology theories or methods can be applied to understand as well as solve this problem. A rubric will be provided. **Due 12/03/15 at start of class.**

**Seminar Presentation:** Students will also present for 10 minutes on their term paper to the class at an end-of-term seminar on **12/03/15.**

## Graduate Students

This course is a cross-listed graduate/upper-level undergraduate course. For graduate students there will sometimes be an extra reading listed for the day on the course schedule below as “GRAD:” and then the reading; these typically are designed to introduce you to some higher-level theory or applied method that may be useful if you intend to pursue environmental anthropology as a research topic or career path.

## Course Policies

**Withdrawal:** If you are unable to complete this course, you must officially withdraw by the University-designated date (for a “W” with instructor approval). Withdrawing from a course is a formal procedure that YOU must initiate. I cannot do it for you. If you simply stop attending and do not withdraw, you will receive a performance grade, usually an “F”.

**Incomplete:** If you need an incomplete grade because of an extenuating circumstance beyond your control, it is your responsibility to approach me about this at least one week before the end of term. Otherwise you will receive a performance grade.

**Extra Credit:** There is no extra credit planned at this time.

**Acceptable Student Behavior:** Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students’ opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student’s conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university’s expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [www.deanofstudents.unt.edu](http://www.deanofstudents.unt.edu).

In this classroom, “**acceptable student behavior**” includes:

Always be respectful of others’ thoughts, opinions, and perspectives.

Do not come late to class.

No cell phone usage, internet browsing, or social media use unless directed by the instructor.

Engage in class discussions, having read assigned readings.

Attend class regularly.

**Contacting the Professor:** Please feel free to come by office hours for assistance. Email is the other best way to get in touch with me outside of class. In the email, indicate your full name to facilitate my response. Please give me 24 hours to respond, and 48 hours over weekends or holidays.

**Do Not Miss the Exam or the Seminar:** If you have a conflict with the midterm exam, term paper due date, or end of term seminar, it is your responsibility to make alternative arrangements the first two weeks of class – NOT the week of the exam or seminar. Allowing such arrangements is up to the discretion of the instructor. The date for the mid-term exam to be turned in is 11/02/15; the date for the seminar is 12/03/15.

**Late Work:** Assignments receive a 20% deduction in points by day unless there are previous arrangements with the instructor. Students may NOT turn in the midterm late, unless there are previous arrangements with the instructor.

**Academic Misconduct:** The Department of Anthropology does not tolerate plagiarism, cheating, or helping others to cheat. Students suspected of any of these will be provided the opportunity for a hearing; a guilty finding will merit an automatic “F” in the course. For information on the University’s policies regarding academic integrity and dishonesty, see the UNT Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities, <http://www.unt.edu/csrr/>.

**ADA:** The Anthropology Department does not discriminate based on an individual’s disability, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our program provides academic adjustments or help to individuals with disabilities, and attempts will be made to meet all certified requirements. Please see me if you have a documented disability so that appropriate arrangements can be made to help you get the most out of this class. In such cases, please make sure to obtain documentation through the Office of Disability Accommodation.

## Course Schedule

### Unit 1: Foundations

08/27 Course Introduction

09/03 Theoretical Foundations: Determinism, Discourse, and Everything In-between

Townsend: Chapters 2-4

Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina: "Environmental Anthropology Past and Present" (K & S Introduction), pp. 1-21

09/10 Theoretical Foundations: Determinism, Discourse, and Everything In-between, Part 2

Greider and Garkovich: "Landscapes: The Social Construction of the Environment" (Blackboard)

Anderson: "Drawing from Traditional and 'Indigenous' Socioecological Theories" (K&S 2)

09/17 Environmental Ethics and Philosophy

Mulder and Coppolillo: "The Many Roads to Conservation", 1-26 (Blackboard)

Milton: "Environmentalism and Cultural Theory" (Blackboard), pp. 1-6.

"The Significance of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples"

<http://www.indigenouaction.org/the-significance-of-the-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples/> (Blackboard)

### Unit 2: Life Support Systems

09/24 Water

Hoag: "Water in Lesotho: Contradiction, Disjuncture, and Death" (Blackboard)

Williams: "A River Runs Through Us" (Online) (Blackboard)

Trawick: "The Moral Economy of Water: Equity and Antiquity in the Andean Commons" (Blackboard)

GRAD: Zloniski: "Water Flowing North of the Border: Export Agriculture and Water Politics in a Rural Community in Baja California" (Blackboard)

10/01 Food, Agriculture, GMOs

Townsend: Chapter 6

Shoreman-Ouimet: "Middle-out Conservation: The Role of Elites in Rural American Conservation" (K&S 11)

Gray and Gibson: "Actor-Networks, Farmer Decisions, and Identity" (Blackboard)

10/08 Climate Change and the Energy Crisis (34/63 Pages)

Townsend: Chapter 8

Pokrant and Stoker: "Anthropology, Climate Change and Coastal Planning" (K&S 8)

Perry: "Development, Land Use, and Collective Trauma: The Marcellus Shale Gas Boom in Rural Pennsylvania" (Blackboard)

GRAD: Hirsch et al.: "Linking Climate Action to Local Knowledge and Practice: A Case Study of Diverse Chicago Neighborhoods" (K&S 13)

10/15 Sacred Ecologies

Sponsel: "The Religion and Environment Interface: Spiritual Ecology in Ecological Anthropology" (K&S 1)

Townsend: Chapter 9

Dunstan: "Desecration and Destruction: Responses to Snowmaking on *Dook'o'osliid*, the San Francisco

Peaks” (Blackboard)

**DUE DATE: Term Paper Outline 10/15**

**Take-home Midterm Distributed**

### Unit 3: Sociopolitical Systems

10/22 Environmental Policy and Environmentalism

Larsen: “Environmental Politics and Policy Ambiguities in Environmental Anthropology” (K&S 3)

Rademacher: “When is Housing an Environmental Problem? Reforming Informality in Kathmandu” (Blackboard)

GRAD: Medina: “Governing through the Market: Neoliberal Environmental Government in Belize” (Blackboard)

**DUE DATE: Midterm Due (Start of Class)**

10/29 Biodiversity and “Tragedies of the Commons”

Townsend: Chapters 11 and 12

Trust: “From Ecosystem Services to Unfulfilled Expectations: Factors Influencing Attitudes Towards the Madidi Protected Area” (K&S 9)

GRAD: Charnley and Durham: “Anthropology and Environmental Policy: What Counts?” (Blackboard)

11/05 “Sustainable Development” and Indigenous Knowledge

Berkes: “Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Perspective” (Blackboard)

Haenn: “The Power of Environmental Knowledge: Ethnoecology and Environmental Conflicts in Mexican Conservation” (Blackboard)

GRAD: Nadasdy: “The Politics of TEK: Power and the Integration of ‘Knowledge’” (Blackboard)

11/12 Pollution and Environmental Justice

Townsend: Chapter 7

Robyn: “State-Corporate Crime on the Navajo Nation: Human Consumption of Contaminated Waters” (Blackboard)

Maida: “Participatory Action Research and Urban Environmental Justice: The Pacoima CARE Project” (K & S 7)

11/19 Global Trends in Population and Consumption

Townsend Chapters 10 & 13

Pearce: “Consumption Dwarfs Population as Main Environmental Threat” (Blackboard)

GRAD: Kopnina: “What about the Wrapper? Using Consumption Diaries in Green Education” (K & S 5)

12/03 Practicum (Term Paper Due)

**DUE DATE: TERM PAPER due at start of class.**

**A NOTE ON THE SCHEDULE:** The schedule is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion; please check your email, check Blackboard, and attend class regularly to be apprised of any changes.

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<sup>i</sup> Image Credit: <http://www.eoearth.org/images/144082/350x0/scale/>