EVST 167H.01: Nature and Society (in Western Society)

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NATURE AND SOCIETY [IN WESTERN SOCIETY]

EVST 167H_01 Dr. Dan Spencer
Spring, 2007; UH 210 Rankin Hall 102, Tel. 243-6111
MWF 10:10-11:00 am Office Hours: MW 4-5 pm. Tu 9 am – 12 pm, or by appointment
CRN: 33406 e-mail: daniel.spencer@umontana.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores how the relationship between human societies and the natural world has been influenced throughout history by various thinkers and ideas. We also consider how nature itself and our ability to manipulate it has influenced society, and in turn, environmental thought. Thus, we examine ecological and biogeographical constraints and ways humans have culturally adapted in attempting to surmount those limits. We explore Western (Euro-American) environmental thought from prehistory until today. To help us understand its distinctiveness we also touch on some contrasting nonwestern perspectives. We necessarily are only able to give limited attention to the various ages, even within the western tradition, and thus, environmental thought and developments of many societies and civilizations are not covered.

Nevertheless, we will examine major paradigmatic shifts and strive to understand how environmental thought has affected the way different societies have viewed nature, their place with respect to the natural world, and in turn, their interactions with it. By exploring that theme, we will also see connections between ideas, writers, and thinkers of the past and the current global environmental crisis. We will ponder if the answers to a more sustainable, prosperous, and just society in the future reside in history and its lessons, or whether we will need to forge new ideas, sensibilities, and ways of relating to each other and nature. Students are encouraged to explore their own connections with the past, develop principles and values that have personal meaning, and contemplate their place in nature and society.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate the distinctive ideas, and social and historical contexts, of influential thinkers and their writings about the role of humans in relation to the natural world.
2. Think critically about the effects of such views on different societies’ interactions with the natural world.
3. Recognize the importance of other historical factors, particularly scientific advancements, technological developments, and changes in social organization.
4. Synthesize ideas and events that led to several major paradigmatic shifts, from pre-history to the present, regarding dominant societal views of the place of humans in nature.
5. Analyze current environmental issues utilizing historical ideas, thinkers, and events.
6. Articulate their personal perspectives on human-nature interactions in relation to historical ideas, thinkers, and events.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

- 1 -
REQUIRED TEXTS

ISBN: 1-55778-652-6 (NW)
ERES Readings: Electronic Reserve and Hard Copies on Reserve in the Mansfield Library

REQUIREMENTS

- Regular class attendance and participation that demonstrates a grasp of the reading assignments
- Short critical response essay on *Ishmael*
- Weekly response essays to the readings (2 pages)
- Written midterm and final exams
- 5 hours of “ecological immersion” and reflective essay
- Final essay synthesizing learnings from the course

CLASS MEETINGS AND FORMAT

Class meets Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:10--11:00 am. On Monday and Wednesday we meet in University Hall 210. Each Friday the class will be divided into smaller activity sections, which will meet separately with either the instructor or one of the teaching assistants. Your class location and teacher for Friday class will be announced in class the first week. Readings not listed in the course schedule may be assigned for Friday sections by your teacher (see Electronic Reserves). Quizzes, in-class writing and reading, discussion, and other activities will occur on Fridays and will usually, but not always, cover material, ideas, and questions raised during the week. Special assignments for sections can also be expected.

ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASSES

NW = *Nature’s Web*; ERES = Electronic Reserve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic and Assigned Reading</th>
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**Introduction**

1/22 M 1  Introduction: Laying out themes and structure of the course

1/24 W 2  Why It Matters: The Planetary Challenge to the Human Race
Larry Rasmussen “Sweet Betsy and Her Avalanche” in
*Earth Community, Earth Ethics* pp 38-52 ERES #1
Edward O. Wilson “The Diversity of Life” 193-195 ERES #2
Anne Ehrlich and Paul Ehrlich “Extinction: Life in Peril”
pp 335-342 ERES #3

1/26 F 3 Section Meetings: Meeting Each Other and Getting Organized

1/29 M 4 Raising Questions I: The Relation of Culture and Ecology

*Ishmael*: Chs. 1-5 (pp. 3-91)

1/31 W 5 Raising Questions II: Takers, Leavers, and a Crashing Culture?

*Ishmael*: Chs. 6-10 (pp. 95-184)

2/2 F 6 Section Meetings: Discuss *Ishmael*

*Ishmael*: Chs. 11-13 (pp. 187-263)

*Introduce & Hand Out Ecological Identity Worksheets*

**I. Setting the Context: From Pre-History to Early Civilization**

2/5 M 7 *A Quick History of Our Human Trek: From the Savanna to Planetary Crisis*

John Poggie, et al “Introduction” to *The Evolution of Human Adaptations*” 1-15
ERES #4
Jared Diamond “Up to the Starting Line” from *Guns, Germs, and Steel:*
*The Fates of Human Societies* pp 35-52 ERES #5

2/7 W 8 *A Decisive Shift: From Hunting and Gathering to Farming the Earth*

Jared Diamond “Farmer Power”, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* pp 85-92 ERES #6
Jared Diamond “History’s Haves and Have-nots”, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*
pp 93-103 ERES #7
Jared Diamond “To Farm or Not to Farm”, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*
pp 104-113 ERES #8

*Ishmael response essay due in class*

2/9 F 9 Section Meetings: Discuss Ecological Identity Worksheets

Mitchell Thomashow “Voices of Ecological Identity” pp 1-24 ERES #9
II. Viewing Earth, Viewing Humanity: Foundations for Western and Non-Western World Views

2/12 M 10 Urbanism and the Rise of the City

J. John Palen “Emergence of Cities” from *The Urban World* pp 21-25; 29-57 ERES #10

2/14 W 11 “And It Was Good”: Ancient Hebrew Views and the Biblical Tradition

Daniel Hillel “Environment and Culture: A Premise and Its Implications”
From *The Natural History of the Bible* pp 11-25 ERES #11
Hebrew Bible selections from *This Sacred Earth* pp 77-89 ERES #12
“The Judaeo-Christian Tradition: Man’s Dominion over Nature” pp 97-107 NW

1st Reading Response essay due in class

2/16 F 12 Section Meetings: Review for 1st Midterm exam

Go Over Ecological Immersion Requirements

2/19 M No Class: Presidents Day

2/21 W 13 Gaia, Telos, and Rational Hierarchy: Classical Views of Nature and the Greek and Roman Imprint

“Early Greece: Gaia” pp 62-79 NW
“The Romans: The Way of the Soldier” pp 80-88 NW

(Meet in UH 210)

Lynn White “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” ERES #13
Victor Ferkiss “To Serve Man or to Serve Nature?” pp 1-17 ERES #14

2nd Reading Response essay due in class

2/26 M 15 1st Midterm Exam (UH 210)

III. Moving Toward Modernity: The Disenchantment and Domination of Nature

2/28 W 16 Science Rising: Method, Monster, or Savior?

“Philosophers of the Brave New World” pp. 180-193 NW
Rene Descartes “Part Two: The Principle Rules of the Method” pp 10-17 ERES #15
3/2  F  17  Section Meetings: Discuss class readings

3/5  M  18  The Enlightenment, Private Property, and Man’s New Ascendancy

John Locke “Of Property” from The Two Treatises of Government ERES #16
“John Locke and the state of nature” pp 210-213 NW
“The Enlightenment: The Disenchantment of Nature” pp 214-221 NW

3/7  W  19  Wedding Science with Technology: Colonialism, the Industrial Revolution and the New Global Economy

Victor Ferkiss “Technology Triumphs: The Industrial Revolution” pp 47-63 ERES #17
“Karl Marx’s inorganic body” pp 314-318 NW

3rd Reading Response essay due in class

3/9  F  20  Section Meetings: Discuss class readings

3/12  M  21  The Scientific Method Meets Biology: Darwin and Social Darwinism

Charles Darwin The Origin of Species 27-30; 115-121 ERES #18
Donald Worster “Scrambling for Place” from Nature’s Economy: The Roots of Ecology” pp 145-169 ERES #19
Recommended: “Darwinism and the Web of Life” 319-332 NW

IV. Restoring Reverence and Harnessing Humans: Romanticism, Transcendentalism, and the Beginning of the Conservation and Preservation Movements

3/14  W  22  Romanticism and Transcendentalism: The Legacy of Emerson and Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau “Walking” pp 3-32 ERES #20
Roderick Nash “Henry David Thoreau: Philosopher” in Wilderness and the American Mind pp. 84-95 ERES #21
Recommended: “The Romantic Mind and Imagination” pp 267-280 NW

Guest Speaker: Prof. Phil Condon

4th Reading Response essay due in class

3/16  F  23  Section Meetings: Review for Midterm Exam

3/19  M  24  John Muir: The Rise of the Wilderness Movement
Roderick Nash “John Muir: Publicizer” in *Wilderness and the American Mind* pp.122-140 ERES #22
John Muir “The Philosophy of John Muir” from *The Wilderness World of John Muir* pp 311-323 ERES #23
Recommended: “Quotes from John Muir” ERES #24


Aldo Leopold “Thinking Like a Mountain” from *A Sand County Almanac* pp 137-141 ERES #25
Roderick Nash “Aldo Leopold: Prophet” and “Decisions for Permanence” in *Wilderness and the American Mind* pp.182-209 ERES #27

*(no Reading Response this week)*

3/23 F 26  **Section Meetings: Midterm Exam** (Meet in UH 210)

March 27 – 31  **Spring Break – No Class**

4/2 M 27  **Sacred Time versus Sacred Place: Native American Perspectives**

George Tinker. “Native Americans and the Land: ‘The End of Living and the Beginning of Survival’” in *Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside* pp 141-151 ERES #29

4/4 W 28  **Ecology and Conservation Biology: Science, Subversion, or Both?**

“The New World of Ecology” pp 333-347 NW
Aldo Leopold “The Land Ethic” from *A Sand County Almanac* pp 201-226 ERES #30
Recommended: “Leopold and the Wolf” pp 352-355 NW

*5th Reading Response essay due in class*

4/6 F 29  **Section Meetings: Discuss the week’s readings**


Rachel Carson: Excerpts from her writings ERES #31
  “A Fable for Tomorrow” [1962]
  “A New Chapter to *Silent Spring*” [1963]
“The Pollution of Our Environment” [1963]
“Rachel Carson” in Dreamers and Defenders: American Conservationists ERES #32

Guest Speaker: Prof. Neva Hassanein

4/11 W 31 Earth Day and Beyond: Institutionalization of the New Environmental Paradigm

Philip Shabecoff “Saving Ourselves” from A Fierce Green Fire” pp 103-119 ERES 33
Recommended: Philip Shabecoff “The Environmental Revolution” from A Fierce Green Fire” pp 121-139 ERES #34

6th Reading Response essay due in class

4/13 F 32 Section Meetings:
Discuss Garret Hardin “The Tragedy of the Commons” and “Second Thoughts on ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’” from Valuing the Earth: Economics, Ecology, Ethics pp 127-151 ERES #35


4/16 M 33 Dissenters from the Left: The Emergence of Radical Ecology and the Critique of “Shallow” Ecology

Arne Naess “Ecology: The Shallow and the Deep” pp 167-172 ERES #37
Recommended: “Environmental Ethics” pp 403-408 NW

4/18 W 34 Social Ecology, Environmental Justice, and “Two-Thirds World” Critiques
Meet in UA 210

Giovanna Di Chiro “Nature as Community: the convergence of Environment and Social Justice” from Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature pp 298-320 ERES #39

Guest Speaker: Prof. Robin Saha

7th Reading Response essay due in class

4/20 F 35 Section Meetings: Discuss the week’s readings

Go Over Directions for Final Learning Synthesis Essay

4/23 M 36 New and Old Connections: Ecofeminism, Bioregionalism, and Gaia Theory
Jim Dodge “Living by Life: Some Bioregional Theory and Practice” from *CoEvolutionary Quarterly* pp 6-12 ERES #40
Carolyn Merchant “Ecofeminism” in *Radical Ecology* pp 183-210. ERES #41
“The Resurrection of Gaia” pp 391-399 NW
Recommended: “Ecofeminism” pp 408- NW

*Ecological Immersion essay due in class*

4/25 W 37 **New Directions: Green Economics, Biomimicry, and Ecological Design**

Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, L. Hunter Lovins “The Next Industrial Revolution” from *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution* pp 1-21 ERES #43
Recommended: Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, L. Hunter Lovins “Human Capitalism” from *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution* pp 285-308 ERES #44

*(no Reading Response this week)*

4/27 F 38 **Section Meetings**: Discuss Final Essays & week’s readings

4/30 M 39 **Where Do We Go From Here? Ecotopia?**

“Ecotopia Revisited” pp 448-463 NW

*Final Learning Synthesis Essay Due in class*

5/2 W 40 **Wrap-up and Class Review**

5/4 F 41 **Section Meetings**: Review for Final Exam

**Final Exam Period**: Tuesday, May 8th 10:10 am – 12:10 pm, UH 201

**GRADING POLICY**

1. *Ishmael* critical response essay: 10%
2. Participation in the Friday sessions: 10%
3. Weekly response essays to the readings: 15%
4. 5 hours of Ecological Immersion and essay: 10%
5. Midterm Exams: 30% (15% each)
6. Final “Learning Synthesis” Essay: 10%
7. Final exam: 15%
Note Re Papers: Papers are due in class **on or before** the date listed in the syllabus. Unless you have made a prior agreement with me, I will take off one grade level (A becomes A-) for each class day an assignment is late. Papers with an undue number of errors of punctuation, spelling, or grammar will be returned ungraded for correction and the final grade will be marked down one full letter grade. Written work will be evaluated in terms of your depth of critical analysis, thoughtfulness of reflection, clarity of writing, and ability to address issues raised in the text and in class on the topic at hand. Grades given reflect the following criteria of judgment:

- **F**: Failure to meet minimum requirements
- **D**: Unsatisfactory, but some effort to meet minimum requirements
- **C**: Satisfactory; meet minimum requirements of assignment but not much more
- **B**: Good to Very Good: thoughtful reflection, good analysis, clear writing style
- **A**: Excellent depth of critical analysis, thoughtfulness of reflection, and writing style; demonstrate creativity and mature analytical skills in going beyond the primary requirements of the assignment

**Note:** Final Grades will be recorded using pluses and minuses.

**Attendance:** Regular attendance and participation in the class is expected. More than **four** (4) absences will result in losing any benefit of the doubt on your final grade. More than **seven** (7) absences will result in one grade reduction. More than **ten** (10) absences will result in a failing course grade. Late arrivals in class will count as an absence. (**Note:** I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences in totaling your number of absences. If you have a valid reason for missing several classes, such as illness or other conflicting commitments, you still **must** speak with the instructor.)

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:** All work submitted is expected to be the student's own. Any acts of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course, and may result in further academic punishment. If you have any doubts about definitions of plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please review the relevant sections of the University Catalog (p. 22).

**WEIGHT AND TIMELINE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

The total number of points available for class assignments is 500 points. In order of due dates, the assignments are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Ishmael</strong> critical response essay</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Participation in Friday sessions</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 7 Weekly response essays</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. 1st Midterm exam</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td>5. 2nd Midterm exam</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>6. Ecological Immersion Essay</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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DESCRIPTION OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1. *Ishmael* critical response essay (10%): Write a 4-5 page, typed, double-spaced critical response to Daniel Quinn’s novel, *Ishmael*. What are his main arguments in the book? What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of Quinn’s arguments, and why? What do you see as some of the central insights you have gained from the book, and how do they help you to think about cultural views of and responses to nature the environment? Would you recommend this book to others? Why or why not? (Note: Your essay must contain specific references to and relevant quotes from the text to support your exposition and argument). (*Paper Due: February 7*)

2. Weekly Response Essays: Your main job to prepared for the participation portion of this course is to do each assigned reading thoughtfully before class and then to help us discuss it in class, particularly the Friday sessions. To help you think critically about what you read, write a short two page response essay where you identify and discuss two to three points from at least one the weekly readings that you find interesting, important, or provocative. You might:
   - Identify points you disagree or agree with in the readings that you would like to discuss;
   - Relate the material to something you read or experienced elsewhere;
   - Make comparisons between the ideas of different authors;
   - Identify questions or difficulties you had with the reading.

   Turn in your essay to your Friday instructor at the beginning of each *Wednesday* class session starting the week of Wednesday, February 12. Your essays should be typed and double-spaced and proofread for writing errors. They will be evaluated by: check-minus (needs more development); check (satisfactory to strong; could be developed further); check-plus (excellent and insightful). Your 6 strongest responses will be used to calculate your grade for this assignment. Check-plus = 12 pts, check = 10 pts; check-minus = 8 pts; 3 bonus points available for completing all 7 response essays. Late papers will not be accepted.

   The purpose is to help you do the reading well and to prepare for the Friday discussion sessions where we will all share our ideas about the reading. You should be prepared to speak about your ideas or questions during the class discussion (We may select interesting questions from the sheets and identify you as the author, so please come to class prepared to discuss what you have written down!). These papers will also let us know what you are thinking about or struggling with. You should have a conversation with what you read. Talk back to it! *Be an active reader!*

3. Ecological Immersion Exercise and Essay: Each class member should do a minimum of five hours of "ecological immersion" -- participation with a group or in an activity focused on environmental issues. We will discuss various possibilities during the Friday session on *February 16*; you are also free to choose your own activity (just run it by your session instructor
first). After you have completed your 5 hours, write a 3-page reflection/analysis paper describing the activity and analyzing the underlying ethical and philosophical values and assumptions you observed within the group and/or individuals. Can you place the approach(es) and philosophies within the different ecological perspectives we explore during the semester? (Due: Monday April 23)

4. Final “Learning Synthesis” Essay: The assignment is designed to help you synthesize what you have learned throughout the semester by reflecting on your own views in light of the course materials. The specific directions will be handed out and discussed in the Friday sessions on April 20. The essay itself is due a week later on the last day of class. (Due: Monday, April 30)

5. Midterm and Final Exams: These are 50 minute exams that cover material from the first, second and third portions of the semester. The format of the exam will include multiple choice and short answer identifications to cover basic content you should know, as well as an essay question to assess how well you are able to integrate and reflect on what you are learning. Review sessions will take place during the previous week in the Friday sessions on February 16, March 16 and May 54. Midterm exams: February 26 & March 23; Final exam: Tuesday, May 8, 10:10 am -- 12:10 pm. Note: No makeup tests for either date will be allowed without signed official documentation and advanced consent of instructor.

Participation grade: Your participation in the Friday sessions is worth 10% of the final grade in the course, and is based on your attendance, active participation, your timely completion of section assignments, and the quality of your work for those assignments.

ERES: To access the ERES readings:

a. Go into http://eres.lib.umt.edu/
b. Click on Electronic Reserves and Course Materials
c. Under Instructor, find and select SPENCER, Daniel
d. Click on the course name: EVST 167.
e. Enter the password, "green"
f. The first entry, "Reading List," is a Table of Contents. The rest of the readings are entered in the order we will discuss them. The readings are in PDF format.

If you don't like using ERES, there are also hard copies of all the readings on Reserve in the Library where you can read them or make copies.

Important University Policies, Dates and Deadlines

2/9: Last day to drop and add courses by Cyberbear. Last day to receive a full refund for classes dropped. Last day to pay fees or finalize registration otherwise registration is cancelled.

3/6: Class may be added or dropped; or grade options changed only by petition.

4/27: Last day to withdraw from courses for Spring 2007.
5/12: Commencement.

Credit/No Credit Grade option: A minimum grade average of D- (60) is required for a CR grade in the CR/NC Grade option.

Incomplete Grade: Please see the criteria that must be met for an Incomplete on p. 21 of the University Catalog. No exceptions will be made for these criteria.

LIST OF ERES READINGS


