Course Description

In this class, students will engage in a critical examination of environmental transformations that arise from the complex interactions between natural systems and human activities. The pursuit of knowledge about natural resources and ecological systems is a scientific enterprise, yet addressing questions about the production, consumption, distribution, worth, degradation, and preservation of these resources is a historically, politically, and economically specific endeavor. As geographers, then, we cannot simply approach environmental science as an isolated set of fixed principles that exists somewhere in a universe free of humans.

We will attempt to balance our explorations into aspects of the physical environment—like biomes, the carbon cycle, and climate systems—with various social relations that are inextricable from them—like human behavior, social values, identity, power and the state, capitalism and labor practices. The critical approach applied here will encourage students to develop an appreciation of environmental conditions in historical and political context.
Course Objectives:
By the end of this course, students should have a basic understanding of:

- The fundamental issues and debates that circulate around the intersection of geography and environmental science, with a particular focus on how humans affect and are affected by modifications of the physical environment.
- The importance of ‘thinking ecologically’ when approaching complex environmental problems.
- The key environmental inequalities that underpin contemporary globalization, and the ways that race, class, and gender frequently limit access to social and environmental justice.
- The tensions that arise from global environmental change in particular places and geographic conditions.

Readings and Organization:
There is no “textbook” to purchase for this class. All readings are located on our class Blackboard site or available for download from the FDU library/e-library. Readings will be drawn from a range of sources: academic articles and book excerpts, newspapers and magazine reportage, and fiction. Some of the readings are quite dense, and will require careful reading and reflection. If you put in the effort, the reward for close reading extends far beyond the walls of our classroom. Reading assignments will be supplemented by a number of videos, lectures and discussions. Active participation is critical if the seminar-style discussion sessions are to work effectively. Attendance and participation are accordingly each worth a significant portion of your grade. **BRING THE READINGS TO CLASS.**

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Attendance and Participation:
Attendance and active participation are compulsory in this class. You are required to arrive on time, contribute to our discussions and in-class projects, and stay for the duration of the class. You are allowed two unexcused absences in the course (an excused absence is a documented medical or family emergency as determined by the Dean of Students Office). Each additional unexcused absence will result in the loss of 3 points from your attendance and participation grade. Late arrivals and early departures will count as 1/2 an absence. Five unexcused absences will result in the automatic failure of the course. You are responsible for finding out what you missed while absent and getting the notes from a classmate.

Leading a Discussion [honors only]:
Our class is divided into an honors section and a non-honors section. As part of the increased work associated with the honors section, each honors student will be responsible for leading two class discussions of an additional reading (identified on the syllabus with **). Beginning in week 2, these students will be tasked with connecting the supplemental reading to the specific theme of that day’s class meeting. These should take NO MORE than 10 minutes. Presentations should include visual material (video, diagrams, maps, models, images – no text!) and a prepared and well-delivered. For full credit, I must have all visual materials on my computer before the start of class. These presentations are each worth 5% of your final grade.
**Final Poster Session [group project]:**

In an attempt to draw more campus attention to the issues that lay at the center of this course, we will use our last class meeting to have a ‘poster session’ in the student center. This session will require each group member to be able to present research (verbally, textually, and graphically) about their topic to members of the faculty and the student body. We will work on these projects across the entire semester.

**Response Papers:**

Please write a total of ten (10) short reactions to the articles we’ve read for that day’s class (FORMAT: 250-350 words, double-spaced, Times New Roman in 12 point font, one inch margins on the top and bottom, 1.25 on the sides). I am looking for some sort of critical engagement with the readings: I DO NOT WANT A ‘BOOK REPORT’. Reaction papers will be evaluated based on four criteria. In other words, you will not get full credit for the assignment unless you meet these basic objectives:

1. One sentence that clearly identifies the author/s and the title of the piece you are writing about AND their central claim, assertion, or thesis.
2. One sentence that briefly explains how the author builds and/or supports this thesis.
3. Your CRITICAL thoughts on the reading/readings. Why was this piece written? How might it relate to other readings from the course or to other issues from other classes you are taking/have taken? The best way to go about this is to think about the readings and think through questions like how do these issues impact a culture of environment? Why is it impacting different people differently? or Where and who might this issue challenge or empower in specific ways?
4. PREPARE AND PROOFREAD: I will deduct points if responses are not printed on paper, stapled, and turned in at the beginning of class; have not been checked for errors in grammar, composition, spelling and clarity. These deductions add up!

You choose the ten classes that you want to write a response for, but you are only to hand in one response per class, and it must cite and engage with at minimum one of the readings done for that class.

**Midterm and Final Exam:**

There are two exams for this class. Both will be open-notebook, and draw from readings, lectures, and discussions and focusing on broad course themes and major vocabulary.

**CLASS PROTOCOLS**

The following protocols hold, without exception, for all students in this class:

1. Collegiality and common sense require that you turn off your cell phone in the classroom. If your cell phone rings in class, I will ask you to leave, and you will earn ½ absence for the day.
2. Unless otherwise stated, please do not bring laptops into class. I love digital and networked technology almost as much as you do, and use it in nearly all facets of my life. However, in my recent experience in the classroom, I’ve noticed that laptops primarily distract their users and those around them. Beyond the growing evidence suggesting that students who listen and take notes by hand actually learn more than those who use computers, I think that any classroom discussion would no doubt benefit from students looking at each other and not the back of a digital device. If you require the use of a laptop in class, please provide a note from the university.
3. Respect is paramount. We will be discussing and debating issues in this class that have no clear or inevitable ‘answers’ yet still generate impassioned and/or emotional responses. It is OK—even encouraged—to disagree, but please be mindful of others as we work to develop an open-yet-critical classroom culture.

4. I want all of us to feel comfortable having our voices heard in our discussions. Discussion-based learning requires the completion of the readings, but it also relies on listening and taking risks. For the most vocal students, this might mean taking an occasional backseat, while for those who are more reticent, consider challenging yourself to speak up.

5. Visit me during office hours. I am more than happy to review material and answer questions. If you cannot make posted hours, we can try to arrange an alternative appointment time.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[honors]</th>
<th>[non-honors]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Additional Reading (two @ 5% each)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Papers (ten @ 3% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Poster</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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**Grade determination:**

The numeric grades correspond to the following letter grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numeric Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 99%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 94%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73 – 76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Less than 60%</td>
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**Academic Integrity:**

Cheating, plagiarism, or other violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated. To that end, if you haven’t already done so, please become familiar with FDU’s Academic Integrity Policy. Any and all students in violation of this policy will be subject to automatic failure of the course for a first offense, and will be suspended from the university for a second offense. The inability to prove authorship when questioned about your work’s authenticity could be grounds for the charge of plagiarism. It is entirely your responsibility to read the FDU Academic Integrity Policy carefully and abide by it.
Basic Needs Security:*
An increasing number of students in the U.S. struggle to find and secure safe housing, and some may have difficulty affording food and daily groceries. If you find yourself in such a position (especially if you feel that these conditions impact your performance in the course), please consider reaching out to the Dean of Students for support. If you are comfortable discussing these issues with me, please do so, and I will try to make any accommodations that I can.

*Based on Sara Goldrick-Rab’s Basic Needs Security:
https://medium.com/@saragoldrickrab/basic-needs-security-and-the-syllabus-d24cc7afe8c9

Disability Disclosure:
Fairleigh Dickinson University – College at Florham, in accord with the policies underlying Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), works to ensure that reasonable accommodations are implemented for enrolled students with documented disabilities to function in the academic environment. Any student with documented disabilities, who feels he/she may need academic accommodations while taking this course, should first contact the office of Disability Support Services at 973-443-8079 to discuss his/her specific needs. Once the disability is verified, pick-up your letters from the office of Disability Support Services, then make an appointment to see the professor.


The satellite images above show the extent of tropical rainforest deforestation in the Amazon: https://goo.gl/yTw1ox

The image at the top of the syllabus is of Wintershall’s offshore platform in the Brage oil field in the North Sea: http://tinyurl.com/ycqpmxtt

The image at the bottom of the syllabus is by Nick Oxford for Reuters. It’s of flooding during Hurricane Harvey: https://goo.gl/hDF8gp
### COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday, August 29:</th>
<th>Friday, September 1:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introductions: Learning to Die, or, Where do we go from Here?</strong></td>
<td><strong>In, Out, or Around? Social Nature and the Wilderness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Tuesday, September 5:</th>
<th>Friday, September 8:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Histories of the Present I: Great Accelerations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Humanity, Scale, and the Problems with Population</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| Tuesday, September 12: | |
|------------------------||
| **Environmental Histories of the Present II: The Anthropocene** | |

- Calculate your ecological footprint: http://www.footprintnetwork.org (you’ll need to give your email): []
- Cymene Howe, ‘Timely’, in *Theorizing the Contemporary, Cultural Anthropology* (January 21 2016)

Friday, September 15:  
**Behold! The World We’ve Made: The Meadowlands**


Tuesday, September 19:  
**Environmental Histories of the Present III: Extinctions**


Friday, September 22:  
**Biomes, Biodiversity, and Interspecies Interaction**


Tuesday, September 26  
**Environmental Histories of the Present IV: Conservation, Preservation, & the Land Ethic**


Friday, September 29:  
**Law, Land Use, and the Trouble with Borders: The Colorado River**


Tuesday, October 3:
Environmental Histories of the Present V: Capital Encounters & Exploitations


Friday, October 6:
Race, Conservation, and Environmentalism


Tuesday, October 10
Feminist Political Ecologies and Gendered Environments


Friday, October 13: MIDTERM EXAM

Tuesday, October 17 NO CLASS: FALL RECESS

Friday, October 20 NO CLASS: I’M AWAY AT A CONFERENCE
### Tuesday, October 24:
**The Geographic Challenges of Global and Domestic Climate Legislation**


** Dimitrov, Radoslav S. “The Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Behind Closed Doors.” *Global Environmental Politics* 16, no. 3 (July 15, 2016): 1–11. doi:10.1162/GLEP_a_00361.

### Friday, October 27:
**Urban and Suburban Environments: Land, Value, and Risk**


### Tuesday, October 31
**Infrastructures of Life and Death I: Flint, Detroit, and Environmental Racism**


### Friday, November 3
**Infrastructures of Life and Death II: The Dakota Access Pipeline and Slow Violence**


Tuesday, November 7: Waste, Pollution, and Health


Friday, November 10: There’s No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster


Tuesday, November 14: Landscapes of Extraction: Oil, Natural Gas, Coal


Friday, November 17: Carbon Democracy


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Tuesday, December 5
Futures II: Scarcity, Resilience, and Survival


Friday, December 8:
Poster Sessions

Friday, December 15: FINAL EXAM @ 12:30