

# Geography 310: Environmental Geography Syllabus, Fall 2011

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Class Schedule: TTh 9:00- 10:20, Barnett 2224

## Purpose

The purpose of this course is to convey to students a geographical understanding of the interactions of humans with their natural environment. The study of human-environmental interactions is inescapably interdisciplinary, since it involves the study of 1) human society and the motivations why people behave as they do (social sciences), 2) human thought about and perception of the natural and social environment (the humanities), and 3) the biosphere and the physical environment as they are affected by humans and in turn affect human society (the natural sciences). The field of environmental geography addresses all three of these aspects and is therefore of potential interest to students in a wide variety of disciplines. For science majors, it may offer new insights into problems they have previously studied from a different angle (e.g., in biology courses). Majors in the social sciences and the humanities may learn how research approaches and theories they have learned about in other courses may be applied to the study of environmental issues, and how the natural world is relevant to issues they may have studied from a purely social science point of view. Business majors may learn more about the impacts of our modern economy on the environment, as well as some ideas how the environmental impacts might be mitigated. Majors in all areas must be ready to explore modes of inquiry which are not common in their own field of study.

In this course, we will approach environmental issues through the analysis of scarcity. In the assigned class text, I argue that it is a paradox of our times that, although a significant minority of the world population has more material wealth than anybody even dreamed of a hundred years ago, nobody ever seems to have enough. This condition of never having enough drives the growth economy that accepts no limits and therefore endangers the basis of survival of humans as well as countless other species on Earth. When available resources do not meet the demand (people “don’t have enough”), there is scarcity; when there is such scarcity in spite of mass consumption, this scarcity must have been produced in some way. Numerous ways to generate scarcity are in operation in contemporary society, and are thus responsible for our current ecological and social predicament. These scarcity-generating institutions, as well as existing and potential abundance-generating alternatives, will be the focus of attention in this course. This perspective on environmental issues is unusual, and therefore it is at times necessary to go beyond the geographical literature in pursuing it. However, the environmental and geographical relevance of all readings will be made apparent through discussion.

This course has been recognized as an *Honors* course in the General Honors Program. The honors designation means that it is a challenging course, both in terms of content and in terms of expectations of student performance (such as writing). It has also been accepted as a *Writing Enhanced* course. In keeping with these designations, a major portion of the work for this course consists of the term paper, further described below. Through deep revision, students are encouraged to perfect their use of writing as a mode

of learning as well as communication, and to organize their thoughts clearly and cogently in an analytical paper geared toward an academic audience. Furthermore, this course can be used towards completing minors in Geography, Environmental Studies, or International Studies.

## Grades

The grade for this course will be based on:

1. a proposal for the term paper (5% of the course grade),
2. a term paper, which will be evaluated in stages (40% of the course grade),
3. an oral presentation of this term paper (5%),
4. five short writing assignments (one page single-spaced) designed to ensure that students enter the classroom ready to engage in discussion (25%), and
5. a comprehensive final exam (25%).

Note that good written expression is of the essence in all assignments and in the final exam.

Also, while attendance is not a formal part of the grade, I do consider it of great importance that you take an active part in class discussions, and keep up with the readings. Otherwise, it is not likely that you will do well on the assignments and the final exam.

## Text

Course Text: Wolfgang Hoeschele, 2010, *The Economics of Abundance: A Political Economy of Freedom, Equity, and Sustainability*, Aldershot, UK: Gower Publishers.

In addition to the assigned text, students will be assigned readings for each class session, which will be accessible through library databases such as JSTOR (as noted after each citation) or available through electronic reserve at the library. Please make sure that you read them before the relevant class session, in order to be prepared to discuss the ideas presented in them.

## Course Outline

### I. Introduction

August 25: Introducing the course and what it's all about.

August 30: Some fundamental terms, e.g., scarcity, needs, wants, resources

Read: Hoeschele, Chapter 1.

\*\*\***Due Date:** *Short Writing Assignment 1*\*\*\*

### II. Property Relations and Markets

September 1: Introduction to various forms of property regimes (open access, common property, private property, state property)

Read: Hoeschele, pp. 31-41.

September 6: Case study of property regimes and land

Read: Paul Robbins. 1998. Authority and Environment: Institutional Landscapes in Rajasthan, India. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88 (3): 410-435. Use JSTOR to access this article.

September 8: Case study of property regimes and fisheries

Read: Emily Young. 2001. State Intervention and Abuse of the Commons: Fisheries Development in Baja California Sur, Mexico. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91 (2): 283-306. Use JSTOR to access this article.

September 13: Case study on lacking rights to a clean environment

Read: Laura Pulido. 2000. Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90 (1): 12-40. Use JSTOR to access this article.

Hoeschele, Chapter 2 (with particular attention to “Privilege and Subordination”)

September 15: Introduction to Markets: free markets, oligopoly, monopoly, trade barriers, methods to distort markets in favor of some players over others.

Read: Hoeschele, pp.41-60.

\*\*\***Due Date:** Paper Proposal\*\*\*

September 20: Agricultural Commodity Chains

Read: Peter Dicken 2007. *Global Shift: Mapping the Changing Contours of the Global Economy* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). New York: Guilford Press. Chapter 12: “We Are What We Eat”: The Agro-Food Industries. Hoeschele, pp.73-87.

September 22: Scarcity-Generation in the Oil Industry

Read: Matthew Huber. 2011. Enforcing Scarcity: Oil, Violence, and the Making of the Market. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101 (4): 816-826.

Read: Hoeschele, pp. 87-93.

### **III. The Creation of Needs and Wants (the case of transport)**

September 27: Creating Needs

Read: Hoeschele, Chapter 4.

George Gonzalez. 2009. *Urban Sprawl, Global Warming, and the Empire of Capital*. Albany, New York: SUNY Press. Chapter Four: The Federal Government and the National Establishment of Urban Sprawl (pp. 53-66).

September 29: Transport and the city: an Indian case.

René Veron. 2006. Remaking Urban Environments: The Political Ecology of Air Pollution in Delhi. *Environment & Planning A* 38 (11): 2093-2109.

### **IV. Global Control Systems**

October 4: How is a small part of the world population able to lay claim to the resources of the globe?

Read: Hoeschele, Chapter 6, and

Richard Peet. 2003. *Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank and WTO*. London: Zed Books. Chapter 4: The World Bank.

October 6: Case Study of Global Control in Ghana

Read: J. Henry Owusu. 1998. Current Convenience, Desperate Deforestation: Ghana's Adjustment Program and the Forestry Sector. *The Professional Geographer* 50 (4): 418-436. Use EBSCOHost to access this article.

#### IV. Generating Abundance

October 11: How can we create wealth without imposing scarcities? What philosophical approach can help achieve the goals of individual freedom, social equity and ecological sustainability at the same time?

Read: Hoeschele, Chapter 7.

\*\*\***Due Date:** *Short Writing Assignment 2*\*\*\*

October 18: Attempting a “Postdevelopment” Economy

Read: J. K. Gibson-Graham. 2005. Surplus Possibilities: Postdevelopment and Community Economies. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 26 (1): 4-26. Use EBSCOHost to access this article.

\*\*\***Due Date:** *Paper Draft I*\*\*\*

October 20: Reforming Property

Read: Hoeschele, Chapter 8

Peter Barnes. 2001. *Who Owns the Sky? Our Common Assets and the Future of Capitalism*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press. Selected chapters.

October 25: The Challenges of Promoting Organic, Fair Trade Coffee

Read: Laura Reynolds, Douglas Murray and Andrew Heller. 2007. Regulating Sustainability in the Coffee Sector: A Comparative Analysis of Third-Party Environmental and Social Certification Initiatives. *Agriculture and Human Values* 24: 147-163.

Note: if you are interested in more literature on fair trade, you can check the website of the Center for Fair and Alternative Trade at the University of Colorado: <http://www.cfat.colostate.edu/>.

October 27: Energy – harnessing the most abundant sources (e.g., wind and solar energy).

Read: Weiping Li, Steve Stadler, and Rama Ramakumar. 2011. Modeling and Assessment of Wind and Insolation Resources with a Focus on their Complementary Nature: A Case Study of Oklahoma. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101 (4): 717-729.

Christian Brannstrom, Wendy Jepson, and Nicole Persons. 2011. Social Perspectives on Wind-Power Development in West Texas. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101 (4): 839-851.

November 1: Transport planning to reduce the need for fossil fuels.

Different students will read different texts on the city of Curitiba, Brazil:

Robert Cervero. 1998. *The Transit Metropolis: A Global Inquiry*. Washington, D. C.: Island Press. Chapter 10, Creating a Linear City with a Surface Metro: Curitiba, Brazil.

Steven Moore. 2007. *Alternative Routes to the Sustainable City: Austin, Curitiba, and Frankfurt*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books. Chapter 3: The Miracle of Curitiba, and Chapter 5, Story versus Space.

\*\*\***Due Date:** *Short Writing Assignment 3*\*\*\*

November 3: Visions for the future

Hoeschele, Chapter 9

Peter Newman, Timothy Beatley, and Heather Boyer. 2009. *Resilient Cities: Responding to Peak Oil and Climate Change*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press. Chapter 4: A Vision for Resilient Cities: The Built Environment.

## V. Student Paper presentations

November 8, 15, 17, and 29; December 1, 6, and 8: Students present their term papers to the class. (Note: on November 10 I will be traveling to a conference and class will be canceled).

\*\*\***Due Date:** *Paper Draft II (November 8)*\*\*\*

\*\*\***Due Date:** *Final Paper (December 8)*\*\*\*

## Assignment Due Dates

Short writing assignments (5 points each)

1. Aug. 30
2. Oct. 11
3. Nov. 1

Plus two additional short writing assignments; differing by student.

Term project	
Paper Proposal	Sep. 15
Paper Draft I	Oct. 18
Paper Draft II	Nov. 8
Final Version of Paper	Dec. 8

## Term Paper

The term project will consist of an approximately 20 page paper (double-spaced, 1-inch margins), and an in-class presentation of that paper. In this paper, you will study an environmental issue in a selected region of the world.

The project will be broken up into stages:

**Paper proposal.** 5% of course grade. The paper proposal will consist of a topic statement or question, a one-page summary of what you are planning to write about and how you plan to organize your paper, and citations of two or more of the references (books or scholarly articles) you are going to use for the project. Select a case study regarding an environmental conflict about a specific place, locality, or region. Examples of potential topics (in no particular order):

- a) Land use (which land uses should be promoted in a particular region, e.g., can changed land-use practices lead to better soil conservation in the U.S. Midwest, who would gain or lose as a result of these changes, and how could one encourage positive change considering the likely sources of resistance?),
- b) Energy (should present patterns of energy use be changed, and how, e.g., is increased use of wind energy to generate electricity helping to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in Denmark, is anybody or anything imposing limits on this use of energy, and do present strategies to promote it need to be modified as a result?),
- c) Water use (who should get which uses of a specific water resource, e.g., how should the waters of the Amu and Syr Darya rivers be allocated among small and large farmers growing different kinds of crops, urban dwellers, and other users in the five Central Asian countries, while also trying to preserve the integrity of Lake Aral?),
- d) Population (what role does population growth play in environmental degradation in a specific region, and how can we tell, e.g., can deforestation in Indonesia be linked to population growth in that country?),
- e) Minerals use (are reserves of a specific mineral commodity liable to be depleted in the near or medium-term future, and what effects is mining these minerals having on the environment, e.g., what are the effects of copper mining on the natural environment and the people in Papua New Guinea, or of uranium mining

on the people in eastern Germany?),

f) Recycling (can recycling contribute to solving environmental problems associated with minerals exploitation, e.g., what role does recycling of aluminum play in selected countries?), and

g) Greening the university (as a contribution to the campus environmental sustainability initiative, and taking into account what is already being done, you might explore the potential for increasing local food consumption, growing food or generating renewable energy, increasing composting, reducing waste etc. on campus, or enhancing the economic links between the campus and sustainable business ventures off campus).

Please note that I expect to have some idea of the topic you are proposing before you hand in the proposal. This will allow us to discuss whether the proposed topic can be realistically tackled in the course of a semester, and whether it falls into the scope of environmental geography. In addition, in many cases I can suggest relevant readings. I typically ask what topics students are considering at the beginning of several of the class sessions early in the semester, so you can tell me about your topic then; you can also discuss it via email or by seeing me in my office.

**Draft I of the paper.** This should be a typed draft of about 10 pages, that is, half of your final paper. This is going to be a work in progress, but the early sections of your paper (as explained in your planned organization of the paper in your proposal) should be approaching completion. Reference citations need to be included.

A review at this stage allows me, the professor, to suggest further relevant readings, and to point out how to improve your paper in a relatively early stage when there is plenty of time for you to respond. At this time, I will also make clear how much revision I expect from each of you at the second draft stage, according to the following scale:

0) You can skip handing in a second draft, because the first draft is a nearly complete paper, uses good English, is well-organized, and presents a coherent argument. If you wish to obtain more feedback, you can hand in a second draft; in that case, please alert me as to where you made substantive changes. Suggested revisions can be made by the time you submit your final version.

1) At the time of your second draft, you do not yet need to revise the parts you have already written (because these portions use good English, are well-organized and present a coherent argument). Instead, submit your draft of new portions of the paper along with the unrevised first draft. If you do make revisions on your first draft and wish to obtain feedback on those changes, please alert me to where you made substantive changes. Revise your final paper in response to my comments on both drafts.

2) For your second draft, revise your first draft as well as submitting new material you have written in the meantime (also resubmit the unrevised first draft so that I can compare it with the revised version). Revisions may involve improving grammar and related matters (good English), presentation of more or better evidence, incorporating references to relevant literature or concepts, or improvements of the argument, but do not require wholesale re-organization of the paper. Based on the quality of your writing so far, I expect that you will be able to do this without consulting either with me or the Writing Center (though you are of course free to do both).

3) For your second draft, revise your first draft as well as submitting new material you have written in the meantime (also resubmit the unrevised first draft so that I can compare it with the revised version). Required revisions are substantial, because of such things as poor English, lack of understanding of the kinds of evidence required in a scholarly paper or of the kinds of literature to which you should be referring, an argument that is seriously flawed or incomplete, or incoherent organization. I do not believe that you will be able to remedy these problems on your own, and therefore expect you to consult with me well before the second draft is due, and have your subsequent work reviewed at the Writing Center before submitting it to me.

**Draft II of the paper.** By this time, your paper should be nearly complete. A review at this stage provides the opportunity to make sure that the final paper will be as good as you can possibly make it in the timeframe of one semester, and to provide feedback on the portions that were not yet done at the time of the first draft. The extent of the required revisions will depend on the feedback on the first draft, as explained above.

**Final paper.** This paper will include revisions in response to feedback on the first two drafts, plus any material that you added subsequently, and any revisions you thought of yourself (superior writers revise not just in response to feedback from others, but also as a result of critically reviewing their own work). Along with your final paper, please turn in your drafts; I need to see those in order to accurately assess the extent of the revisions you made.

The purpose of the term paper is to encourage you to study one issue concerning environmental geography in greater detail than can be provided by class discussion and reading. The structured method of writing the paper in stages, with written evaluations after each stage, ensures that you will be able to improve both your writing skills and the depth of your analysis, conforming to the objectives of Writing Enhanced courses at Truman State University. The term project must be written in a formal style similar to journal articles, and follow conventional citation styles as used in the social and natural sciences. All measurements should be in metric units (e.g., kilometers, kilograms or metric tons, hectares, degrees Centigrade). If you don't know how to convert a given unit into metric units, feel free to consult with me.

Method of evaluation: I do not consider it appropriate to assign letter grades to a work in progress. Letter grades tell you nothing about what is good or bad about your work, or how to improve it. Instead, I will provide extensive written comments, designed to help you improve your writing. That said, note that the extent of revisions required for the second draft can serve as an indicator of the kind of grade you are heading toward. If I do not require a second draft, you are heading straight toward an A. If the revisions required are of the category 1, you are likely to receive an A if you continue working at the same level. If the required revisions are of category 2, your final grade is less predictable – an A or a B, but it may also be a C. In the final category, you will have to work hard to get a B; if you don't, your grade will be a C or lower.

I assign a grade on the final paper based on its quality, as well as on the process of creating it. A student may have started out at a mediocre level and, through diligent work, end up with an "A" paper. However, even if you do excellent work from the beginning, I expect you to continue making revisions. Therefore, if a student does not submit drafts on time, does less extensive revisions than called for by the time of the second draft, or makes only perfunctory revisions in the final paper (for example, correcting grammatical mistakes, but not responding to more difficult comments concerning the content of the paper), this may lead to downgrading of the final paper by up to two letter grades.

Finally, please note that it is essential that your work follows guidelines of academic integrity. You can check what Truman State University has to say on this topic at <http://conduct.truman.edu/docs/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>. If you have any questions concerning matters of academic integrity, please consult with me.

### **Oral presentation of the paper.**

The presentation, accounting for 5% of the final grade, should resemble a presentation in a conference. This involves a 20 or 25-minute presentation, which means that it will be condensed relative to the length of the entire paper. Presentation of graphic material (e.g., maps, photographs, and diagrams) is recommended. Students will face questions after their presentations. The criteria which I use to evaluate student presentations are shown below.

1. Organization

- Were major sections clearly articulated?
- Were the important points within each section made clear?
- Were transitions between sections and subsections handled effectively?
- Was there a concise conclusion?

2. Content

- Were the two (or more) positions with respect to the issue at hand expertly summarized?
- Was there an analysis of these positions that went beyond simply summarizing others' points of view?
- Was there some sense of the geography of the issue, how it affects or is received in particular places?

3. Graphics (if used)

- Were graphics effectively used to reinforce major points in the argument?
- Were the graphics legible? If portions were not legible, were they adequately explained?

4. Time management

- Was the length of the presentation close to the time limit?

5. Response to questions

- Were questions answered succinctly?

## Short Writing Assignments

Each short writing assignment either involves a response to one or two class readings, or asks you to consider certain questions which will be discussed further in class. Your response should be typed, one single-spaced or two double-spaced pages in length (you can print on both sides of the page if you wish to save paper). Please do not juggle around with fonts and page margins to make a paper appear longer than it is.

1. Due August 30

Identify one important need in your life. To what extent can you fulfill this need through the market? Does your fulfillment of this need interfere with your ability to fulfill any other of your needs? Alternatively, do your attempts to fulfill some other important needs through the market interfere with your ability to fulfill this need?

2. Due October 11

What might the "art of living" mean to you? Is this a phrase that is meaningful to you? If not, what are your objections or reservations? If yes, how might you fill this phrase with content?

3. Due November 1

Select one of the readings for November 1 to read and review. In your review, explain 1) what are the author's main arguments, 2) what evidence does the author use to support these arguments, and 3) how might these points be questioned? You can also discuss how this reading relates to other readings you have read for the class.

Be prepared to talk in class about the reading you reviewed and your responses to it, since the majority of other students in the class will not have read the same reading as you did.

5. Varying Due Dates

Select two additional assigned readings and review them – addressing the same questions as under 3 above.