ANTHROPOLOGY & THE ENVIRONMENT

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OVERVIEW

In this course we explore key themes, concepts and debates in the field of environmental anthropology from a historical perspective. Grounded in cultural ecology, political economy and political ecology approaches, we trace the development of major debates in Environmental Anthropology using memorable works that have been key in shaping debates. Readings cover a range of geographical locations and will examine important issues such as tropical forest deforestation, climate change, indigenous knowledge, and food and agriculture systems.

We consider the role of human-environment relations in the context of development. We will examine how various exclusions to natural resource use occurred and by what means. We address the role of conflict in natural resource management and control. We consider questions such as: who has the right to control local resources? And how are politics involved in these negotiations?

COURSE AIMS

• To introduce the students to ways in which various ideologies and global inequalities influence human-environment interactions and produce stratified relationships with respect to access to natural resources
• To help students critically analyze environmental problems using political economy and political ecological approaches.

READING SCHEDULE

WEEK 1. May 26 – May 29th
The Nature/Culture Divide

The nature-culture dichotomy underlies much of the policy-making

READINGS


Other readings will be posted on: https://laulima.hawaii.edu/portal/site/MAN.91932.201540/page/e37cca6d-ad09-4287-a5b9-86314d356ef9

MILESTONES

EVERY FRIDAY by Midnight

Reading and film responses due. Post on class discussion page https://laulima.hawaii.edu/portal/site/MAN.91932.201540/page/7daff46e-a71d-4141-9d6b-472b02701cac
regarding conservation and sustainable development. It springs from the belief that people are separate from “nature” and that they are inherently threatening to the environment. Key to the nature-culture dichotomy are questions of how nature is perceived, with anthropologists demonstrating that Western and indigenous ways of knowing and relating to nature are very different.

Read:

Introduction: Major Historical Currents in Environmental Anthropology, Dove and Carpenter (pg. 1-86)

Indigenous Management of Tropical Forest Ecosystems: The Case of the Kayapó Indians of the Brazilian Amazon: Darrell Posey. (Chapter 1)

False Forest History, Complicit Social Analysis: Rethinking Some West African Environmental Narratives: James Fairhead and Melissa Leach. (Chapter 2)

Documentary: The 10th Parallel

10th PARALLEL takes us on a 300-mile journey up Brazil’s Envira River, into the heart of the Amazon rainforest—to the frontier of a territory populated by some of the country’s last “un-contacted” indigenous tribes. Our guide is the sertanista (as his job is called) José Carlos Meirelles. Together with anthropologist Txai Terri de Aquino, he leads us to a remote outpost he founded for the National Indian Foundation of Brazil (FUNAI). Decades ago, FUNAI’s policy was to contact isolated tribes and integrate them into Brazilian society. The results were disastrous: thousands of indigenous people died, others wound up virtually enslaved to government and industry. But Brazil has changed its approach: since 1987, it has worked to protect the tribes by maintaining their isolation. Exposing the complexities of FUNAI’s work, 10th PARALLEL follows Meirelles’ frequently dangerous, always delicate work. Apart from the difficulties of the journey itself, Meirelles must keep the peace between different communities and conflicting interests, such as established riverside indigenous settlements, and traffickers and squatters from outside who invade the area. All the while, with decades of experience but few resources, protecting the autonomy of the un-contacted tribes.

WEEK 2. June 1 – June 5

Environment and Social Organization

These early writings in cultural and human ecology helped to shape today’s critiques of “environmental determinism” which advanced a simplistic relationship between human culture and the environment. Environmental deterministic thinking would support ideas that the environment determined cultural traits, for example people from temperate regions were industrious because of the favorable weather
and people from tropical countries were less productive (or even considered lazy) because they were from hot and humid locations and lived more subsistence oriented lifestyles. However the relationship between culture, social organization and the environment are very complex and cannot be explained in such simplistic terms.

Read:

Ecologic Relationships of Ethnic Groups in Swat, North Pakistan: Fredrik Barth. (Chapter 7)

The Wet and the Dry: Traditional Irrigation in Bali and Morocco: Clifford Geertz (Chapter 8)

Critical Pressures on Food Supply and Their Economic Effects: Raymond Firth. (Chapter 9)

Documentary TBD

WEEK 3. June 8 – June 12

Methodological Debates

Anthropological investigations into agricultural livelihoods were key to unmasking the fallacy of the nature-culture divide and its implication for the livelihoods of cultivating and forest-dependent peoples in the tropics. Critiques dispelled negative ideas of swidden agriculture as degrading of environments, non-productive, backward and practiced by “poor” communities thereby exposing the state’s motives for control of forests by exclusion. Developments in anthropological thought also helped dispel the myth of the bounded and balanced traditional rural community. In this section we will read seminal works from anthropology and cultural ecology that were key contributors to these debates and continue to have relevance in the contemporary context.

Read:

An Ethnoecological Approach to Shifting Agriculture: Harold Conklin. (Chapter 11)

Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations Among a New Guinea People: Roy A. Rappaport. (Chapter 13)

Links and Boundaries: Reconsidering the Alpine Village as Ecosystem Robert McC. Netting. (Chapter 16)
**Documentary: The Inheritors**

THE INHERITORS takes us into Mexican agricultural fields, immersing us in the daily lives of families who survive only through their unrelenting labor. Children—some barely bigger than the buckets they carry—work long hours, in often hazardous conditions, picking tomatoes, peppers, or beans. Infants in baskets are left alone in the hot sun, or are breast-fed by their mothers while they pick crops. This multiple-award-winning documentary also observes families involved in the routines of producing earthen bricks, cutting cane, gathering firewood, ox-plowing fields and planting by hand, as well as engaging in more artistic endeavors such as carving wooden figures and weaving baskets to sell. In the world portrayed by THE INHERITORS everyone—from the frailest elders to the smallest of toddlers—must work relentlessly, as the cycle of poverty is passed on from one generation to another.

**WEEK 4. June 15 - June 19**

**Politics and Practice**

This section examines the politics of indigeneity and natural resource use. The articulation and the consciousness of indigeneity are relational. They emerge from and are deployed in particular political economic environments to claim control of natural resources. The success of these articulations depend on different variables and can lead to contradictory outcomes.

Read:

Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot: Tania M. Li. (Chapter 18)

Green Dots, Pink Hearts: Displacing Politics from the Malaysian Rain Forest: J. Peter Brosius. (Chapter 19)

Becoming a Tribal Elder, and Other Green Development Fantasies: Anna L. Tsing (Chapter 20)

**Documentary: The Dreamers of Arnhem Land**

This is the story of two Aboriginal elders, Stuart and Valerie Ankin who set out to save their community from cultural extinction by combining traditional knowledge and contemporary scientific expertise. In 1977 the Aborigines of Arnhem Land, on Australia’s north coast, were granted legal ownership of their traditional lands. Like many older Aborigines, Stuart and Valerie Ankin moved back to the lands of their childhood, and returned to a hunter/gatherer way of life. But they also invited scientists and marketing experts to help them exploit resources commercially while ensuring any products were developed sustainably. And that created an economic impetus for young Aborigines to return to their ancestral lands.
WEEK 5.  June 22 – June 26

**Anthropology and Climate Change**

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time. The relationship between climate perturbations, climate disasters and human adaptation has been studied over the decades. In this section, we examine social and cultural adaptations and perceptions of climate change. We examine how many societies build in responses to “disasters” using cultural and environmental practices. We ask questions such as, “how is climate change articulated and understood by different groups” and “whose livelihoods are at stake in the context of climate change?

Read:

How the Enga Cope with Frost: Responses to Climatic Perturbations in the Central Highlands of New Guinea: Eric Waddell. (Chapter 10)


**Documentary: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change**


WEEK 6. June 29 – July 3

**Epistemological Issues in Environmental Anthropology**

This section explores anthropologists’ sense of place, a topic that has also been addressed by cultural geographers and sociologists among others. Readings examine how place is created and contested through its links with local, state and global forces.

Read:
PARTICIPATION

As a 3 credit online class, you will have daily reading assignments and will post a weekly response to the readings as well as weekly comments on responses to the others' posts. In addition you will participate in discussions in the course's Facebook page.

DELIVERABLES:

1. Reading Assignments/Response Papers (6 x 8% each)  
   48%

Response papers are due 6 times throughout the course, 1 every week. There will be no final exam or paper.

Your response papers should be 3 pages, double spaced, have one inch margins and use a 12-point Times New Roman font. Please include a bibliography of works cited. **Late response papers will be docked 10% for each day they are late.**

A response paper is a paper you will write in response to the readings and/or documentaries (posted online) for that week. It does not just mean summarizing the author’s points. You should also tie the author’s work to larger themes we are discussing in class. The idea is to place the text into conversation with the other readings we’ve done, and with ideas we’ve been talking about.

Your answers should reflect your understanding of the course material including readings, websites and videos. Be creative and include your own thoughts, perspectives and ideas. Rather, they are your chance to share your interpretations of the course content and to think critically about the course material. **Please cite a minimum of four concepts and/or theories and two authors for each of your response papers.** I also encourage
you to use relevant outside sources. You might even want to go back to another author’s work and look for illustrations of the connection you are trying to make. You might show, for instance that the author you are analyzing disagrees with another author we’ve read, or you might show how she/he uses that other author's insight in a new and novel way.

*Please note:* Your response papers must have an easily identifiable thesis statement in the first paragraph. Please underline you thesis statement. If you are not sure how to write a thesis statement, please refer to the following website (http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/ thesis.html) or contact me.

UPLOAD RESPONSE PAPERS TO “DISCUSSIONS” IN LAULIMA. FILES SHOULD BE NAMED LASTNAME_DATE Eg Louis_5May2015

2. Discussion

Every week you will post a response to your colleagues’ response papers. These discussions are your opportunity to critically engage your peers in an academic discussion of the course materials. For example, you can engage in dialogue, agree or disagree with your peers interpretations of the course materials, raise questions, refine concepts, ask for clarification or offer relevant examples from your personal experience. This is your only chance to share your views on the readings with your peers, so make sure to take advantage of it. If you don’t understand a concept or what the author is saying, this is your opportunity to ask others what they think.

YOUR DISCUSSION SHOULD BE ADDED AT THE END OF YOUR RESPONSE PAPER AND UPLOADED TO “DISCUSSIONS” IN LAULIMA. NAME THE DISCUSSION LASTNAME_DATE_DISCUSSION. Eg Louis_7May2015_Discussion

3. YouTube Interview

Hawaii is a rich tapestry of cultures mingling and colliding. Environmental problems are deeply polarizing and provide a good opportunity to deepen our understanding of how nature, culture and development interact and impact people. For this class you will interview one person in your community on an environmental issue of your choice, something that people in the community feel strongly about. Some examples are 1) the recent protests against building observatories on Mauna Kea, a volcano considered sacred to Native Hawaiians, 2) Opposition to Monsanto’s seed breeding on Moloka’i Island, 3) the issue of genetically modified kalo (taro) by University of Hawaii, 4) Opposition
to wind farms on Molokai, 5) Hawaii’s push for food self-sufficiency in the face of fears of “when the boat stops coming”, 6) issues surrounding tourism’s impact on natural resources such as pollution of the oceans; 7) the military’s control of large swathes of land in the Waiana’e; the military’s dumping of radioactive chemicals on the Waiana’e coast and its impact on Native Hawaiians; 8) The “keep the country, country” campaign to prevent development in Oahu’s agricultural zones; 9) the emergence of initiatives to promote sustainable management of ahupua’a (watersheds) and fishponds that provided food security to Native Hawaiians and others, 10) the impacts of the death of the plantation economy on livelihoods on the Islands.

Interviews should be video recorded. You can use a camera or your phone. Please upload in MP4 format. Interviews should last approximately 5-10 minutes, not more than 10 minutes. To prepare for the interview you will need to do two things,

1) Get consent from people interviewed to be filmed. Since it is a closed group only other students in the class will get to view the interview. I will put a sample consent form on Laulima in the Resources/Interview folder

2) Come up with a list of 10 open-ended questions to serve as a guide to your interview. For information on how to prepare questions for an unstructured or semi-structured interview go here http://pages.ucsd.edu/~dkjordan/resources/InterviewingTips.html

You should upload a 1-page document with your interview topic, reason for selecting this topic and interview questions to Laulima in the Resources/Interviews folder.

Interviews should aim at eliciting respondents’ own views on the issue being interviewed about. Why respondents feel a certain way and how that relates to their socioeconomic situation should be easy to understand from the interview. In other words, how they value a particular resource. For example, opposition to GM Kalo (taro) may resonate with Native Hawaiians and kama ainas because of the cultural and religious significance of kalo as a native food and its being central to Native Hawaii an creation mythology. Also taro represents a pre-colonial lifestyle and subsistence ethic that resonates with the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Taro and taro leaf are still very much a part of local diets but since it is hard to come by, it is more expensive. It is also considered much healthier than other starches like white rice and bread, which have been implicated for high obesity and diabetes rates among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations. Genetic modification is seen as a science that is imposed on and displaces local knowledges and also threatens the ecological integrity of the kalo species. You get the point, here several issues intertwined to create a strong emotional response against genetically modifying taro.
Before you conduct the interview, please send me a 1-page document containing the topic you have selected, your reason for selecting this topic (not more than one paragraph) and the list of questions. Once this is approved you will post this to the Facebook page along with your interview.

4. Course Facebook Site

A closed Facebook page is created for the class. You get an invitation to be included in this group. Interviews will be uploaded on the Facebook page using YouTube. All students are required to comment on your peers’ interviews and respond to comments to your interviews. Please read the guideline for respectful participation in social media forums below before you post.

I will post links to short films/documentaries on the Facebook site. These are part of your course and you will need to include them in your responses and discussions.

Note: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability is invited to contact me privately. I would be happy to work with you to ensure reasonable accommodations in my course.

IF YOU DO NOT USE FACEBOOK, PLEASE LET ME KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.