Are there enough energy, water, mineral and land resources for the world's population? What is the social basis of environmental change? What determines the effectiveness of environmental policies and regulations? How has the globalization force transformed the nature (sic!) of environmentalism?

The course will examine issues of environment and resources from the political economy perspective. We will address questions such as the role of natural resources in the world economy, national development and human welfare; the origins of scarcity and abundance; the relationships between population growth, hunger and poverty; and the means by which control of resources or property rights are defined, negotiated, and contested.

Throughout the semester, we discuss these issues through a series of debate on controversial environmental issues such as the merits of endangered species act, the fairness of environmental regulation, or whether recycling is a sound environmental strategy. Students will work in groups and participate in role playing.

Course Objective:

1. To introduce you to a number of concepts, issues, and theories in the political economy of natural resources.
2. To provide you with thinking skills that will enable you to analyze, evaluate, and make decisions concerning environmental and resource issues.
3. To help you to improve your communication skills, both written and oral, in order to enhance your effectiveness in expressing your views. To this end, there will be many written assignments and much class discussion.

Course Requirement:

A. Reading

Students are expected to read roughly 40-50 pages each week. You should complete all these readings before coming to class. Write a journal to synthesize your understanding of the readings. For tips on what to include in a reading journal, see handout #1. Class meetings will consist of lectures, discussions and student presentations/debates on several key issues.
B. Short / informal Writing

1. In-class short writing assignments

Randomly throughout the semester, there will be in-class short writing assignments to address some issues that we discuss in class.

2. Learning logs

Every three or four weeks, review your notes to write a synthesis (1-2 page) of what you have learned thus far.

C. Discussion

Students will discuss and deliberate controversial environmental issues. These are issues on which experts disagree; and reasonable, strong arguments can be made on both sides. Hence there is no one "correct" answer for any of these issues, although they are all important and, I hope, interesting. **You will gain the most from this course by active participation in class.** Some discussions are informal and build upon the short writing notes students do in class. Formal discussions are held through a series of 7 debates (see below).

Class Debates

For each debate, two or three students will take the **PRO** (yes) side of an issue and two or three others will take the **CON** (no) side. Each side shall present (and rebut) their respective positions. After the panelists have presented their arguments, the discussion will be opened up for questions, comments, and criticisms from the other members of the class. (For more details about this panel discussion format, see CLASS HANDOUT #3, "Class Debates").

1. **Each student will serve as a panelist twice** (please sign up), and argue for an assigned position in the in-class debates. **Failure to come to class on your assigned slot will yield 0 point.**
2. Students not serving as panelists will evaluate panelists’ presentation and provide written feedback (as part of the in-class writing assignments).

D. Position Papers

Each time you serve as a panelist, you are required to write a position paper (6-8 pages, typed) outlining the argument of your side of the debate. This paper should be supported by other evidence and arguments from additional research. **The draft is due online by Friday noon prior to your assigned debate.**

I will comment on your draft and return it to you after the debate. Revised position papers are due in class within one week for final grading (100 points each).
E. Grading

- In-class participation and discussion 100 points
- Learning logs - 4@25 points 100 points
- Position papers (panelist role) - 2@100 points 200 points
- Debate presentations – 2@100 points 200 points
- Take-home mid-term exam 150 points
- Take-home Final Exam. 250 points

TOTAL: 1000 points (A = ≥90%; B = 80-89%; C = 70-79%; D = 60-69%; F = <60%)

E. Class policy

- In order to ensure a positive learning environment, the following behaviors are unacceptable: talking out of turn, carrying out side conversations in class, chronic tardiness, sleeping, and reading non-class material. Please maintain a civil attitude in class, turn off cell phones, and let the instructor know if you have any special needs.

- Late submission will not be accepted without justified explanation.

Required books:


- Other reading materials are available online.
Weekly Outline (subject to change without notice)

August 21-23
Introduction, basic concepts

August 28-30
Transformation of nature
   Changes in the land (text) Pp. 3-53.

September 4-6
Resources, Value and Representation
   An Overcrowded World (text). Chapter 1

September 11-13
CLASS DEBATE 1 (Tuesday, September 11)
Should a price be put on the goods and services provided by the world’s ecosystem?

LEARNING LOG #1 DUE ON THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 13

September 18-20
Property Rights
   Changes in the land (text). Pp. 54-126

September 25-27
CLASS DEBATE 2 (Tuesday, September 25)
Is the Endangered Species Act fundamentally sound?

October 2-4
CLASS DEBATE 3 (Tuesday, October 2)
Does environmental regulation unnecessarily limit private property rights?

LEARNING LOG #2 DUE ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4
October 9-11
Population: The politics of number
   An Overcrowded World (text). Pp. 59-90

October 16-18
CLASS DEBATE 4 (Tuesday, October 16)
Is limiting population growth a key factor in protecting the global environment?

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED ON OCTOBER 18, DUE WITHIN A WEEK

October 23-25
Sustainable resources?
   An Overcrowded World (text). Chapter 4.

October 30 – November 2
CLASS DEBATE 5 (Tuesday October 30)
Will biofuel solve our looming energy crisis?
   YES. Goldemberg, Jose. 2007. “Ethanol for a sustainable energy future,” Science 315 (February 9)

LEARNING LOG #3 DUE ON THURSDAY NOVEMBER 2

November 6 & 8
The politics of waste

November 13-15
CLASS DEBATE 6 (Tuesday November 13)
Is recycling an environmentally and economically sound waste management strategy?

November 20 (no class on Thursday November 23 – thanksgiving day)
Hazardous waste
November 27-29
CLASS DEBATE 7 (Tuesday, November 27)
Is the Superfund program successfully protecting the environment from hazardous waste?


December 4-6
LEARNING LOG #4 DUE ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4

Final review/class evaluation

**Final exam will be distributed on the last day of class, and due on the scheduled exam date**
(Thursday December 13, 2006 at 11:45 am)