SYLLABUS

COURSE: 415 Ecological Anthropology (Theory) 3 credits
TIME: 1:30-4:00 Wednesdays, Fall Semester 2014
PLACE: Saunders Hall 541, University of Hawai‘i @ Manoa

INSTRUCTOR: Les Sponsel, Professor Emeritus, Anthropology, UHM Director, Research Institute for Spiritual Ecology (RISE)

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WEBSITES:
http://spiritualecology.info
http://www.anthropology.hawaii.edu/people/emeritus/sponsel/index.html
http://www.socialsciences.hawaii.edu/profile/index.cfm?email=sponsel@hawaii.edu

ORIENTATION

“True security rests on a supportive and sustainable ecological base, on spiritual as well as material well-being, on trust and reliance in one’s neighbors, and on justice and understanding in a disarmed world” (Frank Barnaby, ed., 1988, The Gaia Peace Atlas, New York, NY: Doubleday, p.
"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Aldo Leopold, 1949, "The Land Ethic" A Sand County Almanac, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 262).

Ecological anthropology is a mature topical specialization that crosscuts the five subfields of anthropology and has its own separate unit within the American Anthropological Association called the Anthropology and Environment Section with its own website and listserv with more than 2,000 subscribers (http://www.eanth.org); four periodicals (Advances in Research: Environment and Society, Human Ecology, Journal of Ecological Anthropology, Ecological and Environmental Anthropology); at least six publisher’s series; several dozen textbooks and anthologies published since the late 1960s; and so on.

Ecological anthropology explores and documents how culture influences the dynamic interactions between human populations and the ecosystems in their habitat through time. This semester the course successively surveys the following four primary approaches within cultural anthropology to human-environment interactions: cultural ecology, historical ecology, political ecology, and spiritual ecology. Secondary approaches such as ethnoecology, behavioral ecology, and postmodern ecology will be subsumed under the primary ones and only briefly considered because of time constraints. (The applied dimension of ecological anthropology is the focus of a separate course called 482 Environmental Anthropology. Don’t be confused by the titles of the two required textbooks for this course). Secondary themes in 415 include Hawai`i, global climate change, and the relationships between biological and cultural diversity.

Anth 152 (or equivalent) or consent of the instructor is the prerequisite for this course. Basic courses in biological ecology and environmental studies would be helpful background.

FORMAT

A diversity of venues will be used to survey each of the four main
approaches to ecological anthropology with three meetings devoted to each approach: a carefully selected video to illustrate the subject; a sequence of two to three PowerPoint lectures; a case study based on the instructor’s research with PowerPoint or slides, mainly from the Venezuelan Amazon and Thailand; and class and group discussions as well as individual student reports, especially over the required readings. Some discussions may be held online instead of during class if more time is needed.

OBJECTIVES

This course aims to help you to explore and become familiar with these six topics in particular:

1. four primary approaches in current ecological anthropology and the key concepts and principles of each in historical perspective;

2. practical environmental problems and issues as well as environmental discourses viewed from the perspective of these approaches;

3. the pivotal role of culture in human ecology, adaptations, maladaptations, environmental concerns, and environmental change;

4. how people culturally conceptualize, manipulate, transform, and humanize their natural environments over time as well as how the niche of the human species in general has changed through time including with the reality of ongoing global climate change and Anthropocene;

5. critical ecological and anthropological thinking about the above in the larger contexts of the development of ecology and environmentalism; and

6. key resource materials such as books, encyclopedias, periodicals, bibliographies, videos, and websites as revealed in this syllabus, lectures, assigned readings, and a resource guide (for latter see Fall 2011 syllabus available on the Laulima course website and in the Department’s esyllabi at [http://www.socialsciences.hawaii.edu/profile/index.cfm?email=sponsel@hawaii.edu](http://www.socialsciences.hawaii.edu/profile/index.cfm?email=sponsel@hawaii.edu)).

Accordingly, the learning outcomes of this course are for you to demonstrate basic familiarity with each of the above six topics through four
surprise quizzes, the two essays for the final examination, and class discussions and individual reports.

GRADE

Your course grade will be based on:

1. four surprise objective quizzes over class material including required readings (10% each for total of 40%);

2. class attendance (10%);

3. regular, active, and meaningful participation in class discussions as well as individual reports on required reading (20%);

4. two essays for the final take-home examination (30%).

Note that already the two questions and instructions for the final examination are included at the end of this syllabus, thus with self-discipline you may gradually work on it throughout the entire semester. In order to produce higher quality essays you should take advantage of this opportunity, rather than procrastinate until the semester ends and probably earn a lower grade.

Your course work will be evaluated on the basis of these four criteria:

1. general knowledge of all required reading assignments and of all material presented and discussed in class:

2. clear, concise, logical, analytical, and critical thinking;

3. achieving the six objectives of the course: and

4. regular, active, and meaningful participation in class discussions and in individual reports.

Undergraduate and graduate students will be graded separately, and a higher quality and quantity of work is naturally expected for the latter.
Graduate students are also expected to undertake extra readings of their choice in pursuing their own special topical and regional interests.

Class attendance will be taken regularly at the beginning and end of the period. You are expected to attend every single class meeting throughout the entire semester for the full period (1:30-4:00), unless a convincing written excuse is provided such as from a medical doctor. **Every two unapproved absences will result in the lowering of the final course grade by one letter grade.** You are expected to arrive at class on time and to remain attentive throughout the entire period (that is, no sleeping, regular conversation, video games, emailing, reading newspapers, and the like). Any student who wishes to sleep, carry on private conversations, or use electronic devices unrelated to the class should do so outside of the classroom to avoid distracting other students and the instructor. Be sure to turn off your cell phone before the class begins.

**Like the instructor, you are expected to take this class very seriously.** Anyone who does not is wasting the time of other students and the instructor. If you are not able or inclined to regularly read the assignments and to actively participate in class discussions and individual reports, then you should drop the course instead of waiting for a low grade or failure at the end of the semester.

Being concise in class discussions and reports is important because the time in class is extremely limited and everyone should have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion, rather than one or a few persons dominating the class for an entire semester.

Everyone is required to be open minded as well as courteous and professional in class. Anyone can say anything as long as it is relevant, concise, and polite. The ideals of freedom and democracy apply in this class, even if they are restricted elsewhere. Ideally the university is a place to open minds, rather than to close them.

Extra credit may be earned by writing a one-page and single-spaced reaction (not summary) to a video, journal article, book chapter, lecture, or website from any of the material covered in the syllabus or class. Five high-quality extra credit papers can make the difference for a borderline course grade, while ten such papers can elevate the grade to the next level. Other alternatives for more extra credit include writing either a review of an extra
book or a research paper, but in either case the specifics have to be approved by the instructor in advance. Thus, in principle, with enough high quality work any student can earn an A in this course.

READING

You are required to thoroughly read and critically discuss in class each of these two textbooks:


While optional these selected books are recommended, especially for graduate students:


The two required textbooks should be available in the UHM Bookstore for anyone who may wish to purchase one or both of them. Furthermore, the UHM Bookstore makes available purchases online: http://www.bookstore.hawaii.edu/manoa/CourseMaterials.aspx. Although outside online book orders will add shipping and handling charges, used copies may still be cheaper in many cases. You may reduce the cost of texts by purchasing used copies, reselling them at the end of the semester to a bookstore, and/or sharing them with another student.

In addition, a few chapters and articles will be assigned. Numerous other resources are recommended in the Schedule of this syllabus and the instructor’s previous 415 syllabi at: http://www.socialsciences.hawaii.edu/profile/index.cfm?email=sponsel@hawaii.edu. (The 2011 syllabus includes numerous additional resources which the present syllabus does not and is in a file on the Laulima course website). Students are encouraged to occasionally read articles or chapters, view extra videos, and explore websites recommended in the syllabus and during classes. Other articles may be found in these periodicals:

Ecological and Environmental Anthropology (2005-)

Human Ecology: An Interdisciplinary Journal (1972-)
Available free online through Hamilton Library Hawai`i Voyager at: http://library.manoa.hawaii.edu.

Journal of Ecological Anthropology (1997-)
http://shell.cas.usf.edu/~jea/.

Many journals are available free online through the Hamilton Library Hawai`i Voyager Catalog at http://library.manoa.hawaii.edu.

Also extremely useful are the literature survey articles in the Annual Review of Anthropology (see the Hawai`i Voyager for print and online versions). Especially helpful for locating periodical articles on particular topics or regions are AnthroSource, Anthropology Index Online, and Biological Abstracts which are available through Hawai`i Voyager. Brief survey articles can be found in the Encyclopedia of Earth at

Under Recommended readings in the Schedule below are included many of the instructor’s publications because they are the basis of much of what he presents in lectures and discussions.

Please alert the instructor if there are any problems with the websites or other resources listed in this syllabus.

You should plan and read ahead to cover the material gradually in a manageable way, instead of waiting until the last moment to try to read everything in preparation for class discussion on the day specified in the schedule.

Students who take advantage of as many of the resources provided in this course as feasible will obtain a systematic and thorough overview of the subject.

If any student feels the need for reasonable accommodations because of the impact of a disability, then they should contact the KOKUA Program in QLCSS 013 (phones 956-7511 or 956-7612), or speak to the instructor in private to discuss specific needs. The instructor is quite willing to collaborate with any student and KOKUA about access needs related to a documented disability.

You can avoid getting lost among the trees in the forest of the course schedule, readings, and other materials by keeping in focus the specific pivotal questions identified under each of the four approaches.

Before presenting the full Schedule, here is a brief summary of the syllabus so far.

SUMMARY

This course surveys the four primary approaches in ecological anthropology for studying how culture influences the dynamic interactions between humans and nature: cultural, historical, political, and spiritual ecologies. Each of these four approaches will be pursued through a combination of a background video; two to three successive overview...
lectures with PowerPoint; a case study with PowerPoint or slides from the instructor’s research; and class and group discussions as well as individual reports of assigned readings.

Two textbooks and a few additional selected articles and chapters are required as reading while additional resources are recommended in the Schedule. There will also be a few handouts, distributed as much as possible through Laulima or email instead of using paper (= trees).

The final grade for the course will be based on class attendance and participation as well as on four pop quizzes and a final take-home examination composed of two essays.

SCHEDULE

August 27  PART I: INTRODUCTION

Orientation

LECTURE: Ecocide or Ecosanity? Why ecological anthropology? Why diversity?

VIDEO: Earth Days (DVD 11856, 102 minutes)

Recommended video: The 11th Hour (DVD 7974, 92 minutes).

Required Reading: Townsend – Preface & Chapter 1, Dove & Carpenter – Preface, and


Recommended reading:
September 3

**LECTURE: Biological Ecology - Overview of Principles**

*Why is everything interconnected and interdependent?*

Recommended Reading:


Gore, Albert 2011 (June 22), “Climate of Denial: Can science and the truth withstand the merchants of poison?  Rolling Stone [print copy July 7].


United Nations International Panel on Climate Change, 2011,
September 10  PART II: CULTURAL ECOLOGY

LECTURE:  How can humans be both a part of and apart from nature? Is a materialist approach more valid and useful than a mentalist one to understand human ecology and adaptation?

VIDEO: Ecology of Mind (VHS 6355, Part 4, 60 min.)

Required Reading: Dove and Carpenter – Introduction, Townsend – Chapter 2

Recommended Reading:


September 17

VIDEO: Yepi (11 min.)
Recommended Video: To Find the Baruya Story [Maurice Godelier fieldwork in PNG] (VHS 1677, 59 minutes)

Required Reading: Townsend – Chapters 3-5, Dove and Carpenter – Chapter 11

September 24

VIDEO: Amazon: Land of the Flooded Forest (VHS 8765, 50 min)

CASE STUDY: The Acid Test - Curripaco Subsistence Adaptations to an Oligotrophic Ecosystem in the Upper Rio Negro, Amazonas, Venezuela

Required Reading: Townsend – Chapters 6, 11, Dove & Carpenter – Chapters 1, 3-6, 14

Recommended reading:


October 1  PART III: HISTORICAL ECOLOGY

LECTURE:  Is human nature anti-nature? Can historical analyses be detrimental to indigenous rights? Can historical ecology be applied for advocacy anthropology?
VIDEO: Standing on Sacred Ground: Islands of Sanctuary [Kaho`olawe] (DVD 11919, 57 minutes)

Recommended videos:

Human Footprint (DVD 7889, 90 minutes)

Kaho`olawe Aloha `Aina (DVD 3185, 57 minutes)
Malama Halawa: The Caretaking of a Valley [O`ahu and H3 Highway](VHS 17411, 35 minutes).
Maoli No: Truly Native [Hawai`i] (DVD 2834, 45 minutes)
Mauna Kea: Temple Under Siege (Hawai`i, VHS 21514, 69 minutes).

Required Reading: Townsend – Chapter 12, Dove & Carpenter – Chapter 2, 12

Recommended reading:


October 8

VIDEOS: Population (DVD 3002, 7.5 min.), The Ecological Footprint (DVD 4723, 30 min.), Radically Simple (DVD 5963, 35 minutes)

Recommended video:

Human Impact on Biodiversity (2011, 10 minutes)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pe-O9Hfq8hs

Required Reading: Townsend – Chapter 10

CASE STUDY: Historical Ecology of Thailand

Recommended reading:

http://books.google.com/books?id=A5cUpbvNcH4C&printsec=frontcover&q=advances+in+historical+ecology&dq=advances+in+historical+ecology&hl=en&src=bnmt#v=onepage&q&f=false


October 15  Required Reading: Dove and Carpenter – Chapters 9-10, 15-16, Townsend – Chapter 8

October 22  PART IV: POLITICAL ECOLOGY

LECTURE: Could genuine justice restore ecosanity? Is research in political ecology itself political? If so, then does that lessen its scientific credibility and reliability?

VIDEO: Mini-Dragons: Thailand (VHS 10571, 60 min).

Recommended videos:


Hans Rosling’s “200 Countries, 200 Years, 4 Minutes” (The Joy of Stats – BBC Four) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbkSRLYSojo.


Required Reading: Townsend – Chapters 7, 12-13

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October 29

Required Reading: Dove and Carpenter – Chapters 7-8, 17-20

Recommended Reading:


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November 5

CASE STUDY: Illegal Gold Mining, Mercury, and Yanomami in the Amazon

VIDEO: “Contact: Yanomami Indians of Brazil” (VHS 4962, 40 min.)

Recommended Reading:

November 12  

**PART V: SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY**

**LECTURE:** Is religion the ultimate answer to the ecocrisis? Is studying religion and spirituality unscientific? Is religion always merely irrational superstition?

**VIDEO:** The Goddess and the Computer (VHS 4047, 50 min.).

**Recommended Videos:**

Keeping the Faith (VHS 13215, 40 min.)
Spirit and Nature (VHS 5326, 88 min.)

**Required Reading:** Townsend – Chapter 9, Dove and Carpenter – Chapter 13

**Recommended reading:**


November 19

CASE STUDY: The Ecocidal Consequences of the Secularization of the Sacred in Tibet as a Result of the Chinese Invasion and Occupation

Recommended reading:

Hakkenberg, Christopher, 2008, “Biodiversity and Sacred Sites: Vernacular


November 26

CASE STUDY: Illuminating Darkness: The Monk-Cave-Bat-Ecosystem Complex in Thailand

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


December 3  \textbf{PART VI: CONCLUSION}

To be announced.

December 10

VIDEO: American Anthropological Association, 2006, “Anthropology: Real People, Real Careers” (DVD 42 min.) [segment on applied ecological anthropology]

Required Reading: Dove and Carpenter – Chapters 22-24

Recommended Reading:


December 15 - Exam Week

FINAL EXAMINATION

Your two essays for the final examination are due not later than 5:00 p.m. on December 19 as an email attachment to sponsel@hawaii.edu. Late papers cannot be accepted.

One or more letter grades will be subtracted from the final examination score for failure to follow the guidelines below.

Please answer both of these TWO questions:

1. Write a critical review essay on the Townsend textbook. (Be sure to check an issue of a journal like Human Ecology to see examples of book reviews, but avoid reading any published review on the book in question until after you have read the book and drafted your own review). However, as an example of a book review, see an essay in the Journal of Political Ecology (1999, v. 6) by Edward Liebow on the first edition of Townsend’s text at the following web site: http://jpe.library.arizona.edu/volume_6/liebowvol6.htm.

2. Write an essay focused on 3-5 substantial conclusions that you have
drawn from your own critical analysis of one of the four primary approaches to ecological anthropology covered in the class during this semester.

Each of these questions comprises 15% of your total course grade.

Around 4-5 pages (typed single-spaced) should be sufficient for each essay, although some students may need or prefer a little more space.

Be sure to start each essay with an introduction and end each with a conclusion. Include subheadings in the text of the essay. Cite sources in the text of your essay (for example, Townsend, pp. 25-26) and include full citations in the bibliography. (See the Townsend textbook for a standard format for citations).

Ultimately your final answers must be the product of your own individual scholarship and creativity. Any plagiarism will be rewarded with an automatic F for the final course grade and reported to the office of the Dean. However, you are welcome to consult with any individual as well as any print and internet resources, although covering the required readings for the course is by far the most important. Just be careful to properly acknowledge the source for very specific information, ideas, and the like, including personal communications (e.g., Charles Robert Darwin, personal communication). Be sure to include your own insights, comments, reactions, and criticisms.

The instructor is willing to comment on an outline, draft, or other initiative in developing your answers to these two essay questions. You can contact the instructor through email (sponsel@hawaii.edu) and he is readily available in person before or after class.