

Human Impact on the Environment: Anthropological Perspectives (ANTH/ ENST 4114)

Instructor: Dr. M. Boyd

Office: BB-2001-F

Phone: 343-8279

E-mail: matthew.boyd@lakeheadu.ca

Office hours: TBA

Course description:

In recent years, it has become increasingly apparent that human society is capable of profoundly altering natural ecosystems. Although there is little doubt that the scale of human impact on the environment has increased in the last 100 years, the present condition of the earth's ecosystems is the result of a long history of human-environmental interactions and not simply a product of recent activities. Archaeology and other historical sciences play a central role in understanding the long-term effects of our species on the earth. This course provides an opportunity to explore this topic through a discussion of the recent literature. Instruction is delivered in a lecture/ seminar format (depending on class size), with a case-study approach.

Readings:

Recommended text:

- Redman, Charles L. 1999. Human Impact on Ancient Environments. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press. 239 pp.

Required readings:

- Journal articles and chapters listed on course outline. These will be uploaded to the online site for this course.

Grading:

- **Short paper #1 (~5-7 pp): 20%**
The term paper will be on a topic of your choice (related to the subject of the course). Research must be based on peer-reviewed resources (i.e., journal articles and academic books).
- **Midterm exam: 20%**
- **Short paper #2 (~5-7 pp): 20%**
The term paper will be on a topic of your choice (related to the subject of the course). Research must be based on peer-reviewed resources (i.e., journal articles and academic books).
- **Class participation: 10%**
Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Some classes will also involve group-based debates on particular topics.
- **Final exam: 30%**

Students are responsible for ensuring that they are properly registered in this class.

See the LU Calendar for information on academic integrity, examinations, grade appeals, and other important regulations of which you should be aware.

Late term papers and other assignments will be deducted **10%** per day from the final grade for that assignment.

Module	Topics	Readings
1	Lessons from the past: introduction to course	
2	Western attitudes toward the environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominion over the Earth: Historical background • Impact of environment on culture • Modern environmental problems and responses 	Kempton (1993)
3	Conservation and sustainability in non-Western societies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition, outline of problem • Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)/ Cognitive Anthropology • Examples of conservation? Examples of non-conservation <p><u>DEBATE</u>: Is resource conservation ‘unnatural’ for humans?</p>	Smith & Wishnie (2000); Kempton (2001);
4	Theoretical and methodological orientation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Ecology, other recent theories • Identifying ancient human impacts: methods 	Balee (1998); Butzer (1982); Ch. 8
5	<p>CASE STUDIES: HUNTER-GATHERERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The earliest human impacts; • Over-hunting and extinction in the late Pleistocene: North America & Australia <p>Short paper #1 due (February 8)</p> <p><u>DEBATE</u>: what caused the extinction of Pleistocene megafauna in North America?</p>	Klein (1992); Haynes (2002); Grayson & Meltzer (2003); Frison (1998): optional
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “pristine myth”; • Anthropogenic burning; • Wild plant dispersal • Case study: wild rice 	Denevan (1992); Dods (2002); MacDougall (2003)
Feb. 13 (Thurs)	MIDTERM EXAM (75 MIN)	
7	<p>CASE STUDIES: AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origins of food production (review); • Early Asian food producing economies 	Legge & Rowley-Conwy (1987); Rollefson & Kohler-Rollefson (1992);
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North American agricultural societies: Southwest and Eastern Woodlands; • <i>Landnam</i> and related impacts in Europe 	Kohler (1992); Stinchcomb et al (2011); Smith (1995)

9	CASE STUDIES: COMPLEX SOCIETIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are complex societies, how do they originate, and how do they impact the environment? • Mesoamerica: the case of the Maya collapse 	Culbert (1988); Leyden (2002); Haug et al. (2003)
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa • Mediterranean DEBATE: Is the long history of soil erosion in the Mediterranean best explained by humans or climate?	Radimilahy (1996); Schmidt (1994) in Crumley; van Andel et al. (1990); Bintliff (2002);
11	CASE STUDIES: ISLANDS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pacific islands • Greenland and the Norse 	Kirch (1997); Steadman et al. (2002); Anderson (2002); Rainbird (2002); McGovern (1980);
12	Short paper #2 due (April 5)	
	Final exam (TBA)	

*** **CLASS CANCELLATIONS:**

March 6