

Cultural Ecology: Nature, Society and Adaptation

GRG 331K / ANT 324L - 17

(37790 and 31685)

Class Meets TuTh 12:30-1:45, CLA 1.102

Professor Gregory Knapp, gwk@utexas.edu

Office hours Tu 11:00 am in CLA 3.712 or by appt.

Last syllabus update: December 28, 2013. Replaces previous drafts.

This course examines the long-term human trajectory in gaining control over resources, impacting the environment, and transforming planet earth into a meaningful human home. This trajectory has been related to long-term changes in human integration (reciprocity, trade, and redistribution) at a variety of scales, culminating in recent globalization. These changes have been associated with great achievements in quality of life for some, but with attendant problems of violence, impoverishment, and environmental impacts including, in some extreme cases, collapse. These challenges implicate both culture (learned habitual behavior, concepts, and associated objects and landscapes) and ethics (socially oriented decisions) as they promote or fail to promote resilience and adaptation with respect for human rights.

The course will discuss major transformations: the origins of the human species, the domestication of plants and animals, the rise of agricultural societies and urban civilizations, global mercantile colonialism, and modernization and urbanization. Attention will be paid to the theories and works of geographers, ecological anthropologists, environmental historians, and others. Lectures and student-proctored discussions examine selected strategies employed by humans to cope with the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented by different natural environments, with special attention to foraging, food, and farming. The course will also provide an introduction to ethical and policy issues surrounding sustainable development and alternative futures. Grading is based on attendance and participation, numerous writing assignments, oral presentations, and proctoring.

The course has a Writing Flag and an Ethics and Leadership Flag. It can be used to meet the core requirements for the Sustainability (Environmental Resource Management) and Cultural Geography tracks in the Geography major, and the upper division course requirements in the Anthropology major. It also can be used for the International Relations and Global Studies Major.

Prerequisites: Upper Division Standing

Course Website: Canvas

Students are required to use Canvas to access the syllabus, calendar, lecture presentations, readings, and assignments for the course; this site must also be used to submit all assignments:

<https://utexas.instructure.com/>

Required readings:

All course readings will be on Canvas, provided as links from each discussion paper assignment. Readings for this course include scholars such as Jared Diamond, Robert Carneiro, Robert Netting, Michael Pollan, Ian Cook, selections from textbooks in cultural adaptation and biogeography, and timely articles from news sources and the Internet.

Summary of Grading:

Grading will be based on 10 short commentary papers (3 points each, 30%), two longer essays (50%), 2 presentations (5%), co-proctoring (5%), and quizzes (10%).

COMMENTARY PAPERS. The ten short (150-250 word) commentary papers should be sent to the professor via Canvas. Papers may be entered onto Canvas directly or attached as a file. Students should also print out and bring papers to the class the next day if they are not bringing their laptop or computer. Students' commentaries will be read by other students and used in classroom discussions, including peer groups proctored by students. Failure to attend, participate, and/or submit papers on time will result in deductions from the 3 points given for each essay, as will significant problems in the essays themselves.

PROCTORING. Students will be assigned as co-proctors for 10 sessions of the class. Proctors will help design class activities, including peer discussions and debates. Proctoring will provide 5 per cent of your course grade. As a proctor, you will be responsible for designing course activities for the day (other than the professor's lecturing). You will share proctoring duties in teams of 2 to 3 students; each person must lead at least one activity during class.

PAPERS. There will be two short course papers. Detailed instructions will be provided on Canvas. For both papers you will provide oral presentations (worth 2.5 points each). The first paper is 1000 words and is worth 20 points; you may revise and resubmit this paper, with the final score being the average between your first and second scores. The second paper is 1500 words and worth 30 points. Papers should be submitted on Canvas.

There will also be 11 short attendance quizzes, worth 1 point each. Your lowest score will be dropped.

Grading will be on the plus minus system, as follows. Scores and totals will not be rounded up or down.

93-100 A
90-92.99 A-
87-89.99 B+
83-86.99 B
80-82.99 B-
77-79.99 C+
73-76.99 C
70-72.99 C-

67-69.99 D+
63-66.99 D
60-62.99 D-
Below 60 F

Writing Flag

Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you will be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Ethics and Leadership Flag

Ethics and Leadership courses are designed to equip you with skills that are necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments involving ethical issues and the process of applying ethical reasoning to real-life situations

Writing Center

I strongly encourage you to use the Undergraduate Writing Center, FAC 211, 471-6222: <http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/>). The UWC offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. These services are not just for writing that has "problems": Getting feedback from an informed audience is a normal part of a successful writing project. Using methods that preserve the integrity of your work, they help you develop strategies to improve your writing and become a more independent writer.

Concision

This course may require shorter essays than you are used to. The two term papers are comparable in length to typical newspaper articles, blog entries, or presentations at professional meetings. Concision is a virtue; you should strive to be able to make a point in a limited space.

Classroom Policy on Electronic Devices and Behavior

Electronic Devices. Cell phones must be turned off and stowed during class. Laptops and tablets should be brought to enable sharing papers with other students and consult readings from Canvas. **If you cannot bring your laptop or tablet, you must print out and bring your discussion paper to class.**

Lectures and other class activities may not be recorded in any way without prior permission. Online materials may not be copied or distributed without prior permission.

Students will arrive on time, minimize unscheduled personal breaks, and stay until the class ends.

Discussion will often include controversial issues. Expression of differing opinions and debate will be encouraged. Do not be afraid to express your real opinion, but also please respect the right of persons to disagree with you, and avoid ridicule, or ad hominem attacks. You often will learn more from those who disagree with you than from those who agree with you.

Accommodations for Special Needs

Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual's behavior. Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation

Students requiring assistance in evacuation must inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

Sanger Learning Center

You may find assistance with specific strategies to help you study effectively at the Sanger Learning Center. The Center for Learning offers a range of services to become a better student through assistance in one-on-one tutoring, academic counseling, and other classes. For more information see <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

If you use words or ideas that are not your own you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University.

Schedule

The schedule is subject to revision as the semester proceeds. See the assignments pages on Canvas for details on the paper assignments, and links to required downloadable readings and to upload assigned papers. The lecture pages on Canvas will contain links to lecture presentations (pdf files of Power Points) after each lecture.

Jan 14 Introduction to Course

Jan 16 Lecture: Visions of Human Nature, Goals, and Efficiency

Jan 21 Assignment 1 (due on Canvas 5 pm previous day), Conflict of Visions, GK proctor; proctoring ideas

Jan 23 Lecture, Studying Culture and Environment, Attendance Quiz 1

Jan 28 Assignment 2 (due 5 pm previous day), Activism and Science, Proctors 1

Jan 30 Lecture, Terminology, Collapse, Attendance Quiz 2

Feb 4 Assignment 3 (due 5 pm previous day), Collapse, Proctors 2

Feb 6 Lecture, Time Line, Attendance Quiz 3

Feb 11 Assignment 4 (due 5 pm previous day), Human Origins, Proctors 3

Feb 13 Lecture, Foragers, Attendance Quiz 4

Feb 18 Assignment 5 (due 5 pm previous day), Foraging, Proctors 4

Feb 20 Lecture, Foraging in Long term context, Attendance Quiz 5

Feb 25 Assignment 6 (due 5 pm previous day), Foragers Impacts, Proctors 5

Feb 27 Paper 1-student presentations in class

Mar 4 Term **Paper 1 due 5 pm previous day (March 3)**, Student presentations (conclusion), Lecture, Agriculture, Civilization, and Violence

Mar 6 Assignment 7 (due 5 pm previous day), Violence and Efficiency, Proctors 6

March 8-16 Spring Break

Mar 18 Lecture, Intensive Agriculture, and Attendance Quiz 6

Mar 20 Assignment 8 (due 5 pm previous day), Smallholders, Proctors 7

Mar 25 Lecture, Background to Modernization, Attendance Quiz 7

Mar 27 Assignment 9 (due 5 pm previous day), Modernization, Proctors 8

Apr 1 Lecture, Modernization's Impacts, Attendance Quiz 8

Apr 3 **Term Paper 1 revision due, Term Paper 2 Topics due 5 pm previous day** for discussion

Apr 8 TBA

Apr 10 Term paper work session

Apr 15 Lecture, Research Examples

Apr 17 Assignment 10 (due 5 pm previous day), Futures, Proctors 9

Apr 22 Oral Presentations for Paper 2, Attendance Quiz 9, Group Discussions of Papers

Apr 24 Oral Presentations for Paper 2, Attendance Quiz 10, Skillshare

Apr 29 Term **Paper 2 due 5 pm previous day**, Open Discussion, Proctors 10

May 1 Attendance Quiz 11, course evaluations