

## *LS 2 166 – Human interaction with the land*

**Spring 2005**

T and Th: 11:10 to 12:30

BO 281

Instructor: Kyle Nichols

Office: 178 Dana

Phone: x5194 (voice mail)

Email: [knichols@skidmore.edu](mailto:knichols@skidmore.edu)

Office hours: M, Th 1:00 to 2:20 p.m. and Tu, W 2:00 to 3:20 p.m.

### **About the course**

Human-landscape interactions date back to the earliest humans. In everyday life, most everything we use, consume, and discard was either grown or mined. These interactions with the land can have significant impacts, not only on the environment, but also on the economy, politics, scenery, and history of civilizations. In this course we will start with the human-land interactions of our earliest ancestors to the colonial period, but will focus on human activities in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. We will investigate a number of different human interactions with the landscape through different lenses (including but not limited to: political, economic, social, and scientific). We will discuss general topics but we will highlight each topic by focusing on different case studies that demonstrate a range of attitudes toward our land.

### **Class structure**

The classes are a mixture of lecture, debate sessions (of which you will participate), discussions, and small thinking groups. The lectures are only meant to give a background for the debates and discussions. You will be responsible to do the background reading for each class.

### **Debate sessions**

There will be four debates held throughout the semester. Everyone will participate in at least one debate each. You debate for or against different environmental/land issues that face today's society. In addition, some of you will also have the opportunity to moderate the debates.

To prepare for the debates you will have background reading. You will hand a list of questions and other supplementary background information into the moderator and me. These readings will allow for meaningful preparation for debates and for an informed audience.

### **Quizzes**

There will be many reading assignments during the semester, and several unannounced quizzes (only 5 minutes long) given at the beginning of class. There will be no make up quizzes for the latecomers.... so, please come to class on time. You must hand in your quiz by 11:25.

## Exams

There will be two exams during the semester as listed in the course schedule.

## Final Project and Presentation

You will be required to write a paper on a Human/Land interaction of your choice (subject to approval). This paper will follow an outline that will be presented to you at a later date. You will also be required to present your paper to the rest of the class during one of the last two class periods. **You are required to attend the last two classes, if you do not, you will receive a ZERO for the project and presentation...NO EXCEPTIONS!**

## Text Books and Readings:

Encounters with the Archdruid: by John McPhee

The Control of Nature: by John McPhee

Guns, Germs, and Steel: by Jared Diamond

I will hand other reading materials during class.

## Grading

Assignments are due at the BEGINNING of class. **Late assignments will be penalized a letter grade per day**, unless arrangements are made with me **prior to the due date**.

Grading percentages are as follows:

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Short quizzes: 20%

Debates: 15%

Debate materials: 5%

Final project: 10%

Final presentation: 5%

Class participation and attendance: 5%

Please notice that class participation can raise or lower your grade by half a letter grade. These points are not awarded automatically; you must participate in class discussions to receive the best grade possible. Obviously, if you are absent you cannot participate in class so, please come to every class.

## Attendance

Attendance is mandatory! I am stickler about attendance because full classes make for better class discussions. For every three classes missed, you will lose 10 points on an exam.

## Peer Evaluation

You will be responsible for many peer evaluations (debates and final presentation).

These are to be taken seriously and a portion of your grade will depend on the quality and

thoroughness of your peer evaluation. If you grade every one with “A” or “F” across the board (to be nice or inflate your grade) your grade will suffer. Peer evaluations are to be filled out with great thought and constructive criticism.

### **Email**

It is very important that you have, use, and check you email account frequently. I will use email for announcements about class activities (at least one day in advance).

### **Student objectives**

- Read all assignments before class so you can participate and ask questions.
- Think “outside the box” to understand different environmental perspectives other than your own.
- Use class knowledge to explore real world human-land interactions.
- Become an active and critical thinker about human-land interactions.
- Take an active role in helping to educate others about the importance and significance of human-land interactions.

### **End of course self-assessment (learning goals)**

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

1. Identify human/land interactions for any facet of your life.
2. Identify multiple layers (scientific, economic, political, social) that comprise human/land interactions.
3. Understand the pros and the cons for human/land debatable issues.
4. Think critically about environmental issues.
5. Provide constructive criticism to your peers.
6. Understand the importance of global population on our land, and the implications of future population trends.
7. Understand the importance of mining on both society and on the environment.
8. Have a basic understanding of where our energy comes from and what can be done to meet future energy needs.
9. Identify the impact of agriculture and forests on society and the land.
10. Begin to understand environmental justice and be able to analyze the environmental justice implications on human/land issues.
11. Understand “our” waste production and how to reduce waste - not just substitute waste products.
12. Understand global climate change in a context of past climate change, human induced climate change, and natural climate change.

***LS 2 166 – Human interaction with the land***  
 Meeting time: Tuesday and Thursday: 11:10 to 12:30  
 Room: BO 281

<b>TUESDAY</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b>
January 25	January 27
Introductions Campus exercise	The beginnings Read: Diamond Prologue and Chap. 1
February 1	February 3
Ancient to colonial times Read: Bierman handout	Population Explosion? Read: handout Receive – Alternative Energy readings
February 8	February 8
Mining for energy (oil, coal, nuclear)	Alternative Energy Alternative Energy Debate materials due
February 15	February 17
No Class	<b>Alternative Energy Debate</b> Receive – Nuclear waste readings
February 22	February 24
Mining for material goods (Metals) Read McPhee: A Mountain	Nuclear Waste Read: Handouts
March 1	March 3
No Class ( <i>Colorado</i> )	No Class ( <i>Colorado</i> )
March 8	March 10
<b>Nuclear Waste Debate</b> Introduce research paper and presentation	Exam #1
March 15	March 17
No Class ( <i>Spring Break</i> )	No Class ( <i>Spring Break</i> )

March 22	March 24
Floods Read: McPhee CN: Atchafalaya	Farming Read: Diamond Chapters 5, 6 and 10 Receive -Env. Racism readings
March 29	March 31
Dams Read: McPhee EA: A River	Environmental Justice Read: Handouts Environmental Racism materials due
April 5	April 7
<b>Environmental Racism Debate</b>	Land Stability Read: McPhee CN: LA Against the Mountains Receive - Global Warming readings
April 12	April 14
Volcanoes Read: McPhee CN: Cooling the Lava	Global Warming? Read: Handouts Global Warming materials due
April 19	April 21
<b>Global Warming Debate</b>	Wrap Up and Review
April 26	April 28
Exam #2	Class Presentations Papers are due
May 3	May 5
Class Presentations	Happy Summer!

Diamond: Guns, Germs, and Steel  
 McPhee EA: Encounters with the Archdruid  
 McPhee CN: The Control of Nature