Geography 673
Issues in Environmental Geography
(subject to updates after August 11, 2015)

Dr. Jennifer Brewer
T Th 3:40-5:00 pm
Murkland G18

-Course Objectives-

This course integrates social and biophysical dimensions of environmental case analysis. It provides students with the opportunity to explore a range of issues in geographic context, focusing particularly on political ecology, but also urban sustainability and environmental justice. As a seminar-style course, it relies on weekly reading selections and brief writing assignments, as well as active class discussion, occasional longer essays, and limited lecture material. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning, by developing and sharing evidence-based personal viewpoints.

Upon completion of this course, students should:

- Analyze a range of issues through the lenses of human-environment geography, political ecology and environmental justice. These may include food systems, resource conservation and management, urban development, water, fisheries, mineral resources, pollution, and environmental movements.
- Demonstrate how a geographic perspective can illuminate environmental debates and inform analysis.
- Trace the history of geographic scholarship on human-environment relations.
- Integrate diverse sources of information, including social theory, case studies, peer-reviewed journal articles, popular media, and film and video.
- Deliver substantive oral contributions to collegial discussion.
- Hone skills in expository writing, including editing and revision.

-Readings-

I will assign (mostly short) readings on a daily basis. Most will be available on Blackboard with perhaps a few on reserve. Sources include:
-Course Topics-

See assignments list for details. Topics include:

- Geographic perspectives on human-environment relationships
- Mineral resources
- Human population
- Historical evolution of human-environment geography
- Cultural and political ecology
- Resource conservation
- Land degradation & social marginalization
- Agricultural systems
- Water resources
- Fisheries
- Urban sustainability & sprawl
- Environmental justice
- Activism & social change

Case studies will likely be set in:

- North America
- Central America
- Africa
- Europe

-Class Policies-

My office hours and contacts:
My office is 102B Huddleston Hall. Enter through the Geography office on the east end of the building. Office hours TBD. If your issue is time-sensitive, don’t hesitate to make an appointment, during office hours or not. I am also generally available to talk by phone.

My e-mail is jennifer.brewer@unh.edu. Please begin your message subject line with “GEOG 673.” I get many e-mails, many of which are important, many of which are not. You want me to notice yours as class-related so I open it promptly. I often answer within a few hours, but if you don’t hear back within 48 hours, feel free to re-send.

Attendance:
In this class, as in most others, there is a clear correlation between attendance and grades. I may occasionally take attendance, conduct in-class assignments or pop quizzes, or verbally announce changes to the course schedule, assignments, or tests. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to check with other students to find out what you missed, and ask to borrow notes. If you do not attend class, you should not expect a good grade, or expect me to make you aware of any changes in content or scheduling.
I rarely allow extensions or make-ups for missed in-class or homework assignments. Don’t ask unless you have a major conflict or problem, and have documentation/evidence (such as a doctor’s note) to support your request. I expect to receive any such requests as far in advance as possible.

I strongly recommend that in the first few days of class, you get to know a few people in class, and exchange contact information, in case you need to borrow notes, ask for missed information, or help each other to study. This may require talking to people you don’t know, which may feel intimidating, but is among the skill set of most successful working professionals. On the other hand, if someone asks you for more than a couple days of notes, you can certainly refuse, unless there seem to be extenuating circumstances.

**Courtesy:**
If you do not intend to participate fully and actively in your own learning, and help create a supportive learning atmosphere for other students, you do not belong in this class. Arriving late and getting up to leave early without prior explanation and apology are rude and are unacceptable; such behavior can be distracting to the instructor and students. The following distracting activities are not appropriate during in this class and will not be tolerated: sleeping, inappropriate talking/socializing, reading non-class materials, voice or text use of digital devices such as cell phones, music players, laptops, or other distractions.

It is my job to provide you with college level educational content, not to talk aloud to myself while you check messages or surf the internet. Old fashioned pen or pencil and paper are less distracting to yourself, to me, and to others. For these reasons, I do not allow use of laptops or other electronic devices during class, not even silently for note taking -- unless you sign a release that commits to sitting in the front row and using it only for taking notes. That release is available on Blackboard if you wish to sign it and e-mail it to me.

**I do not allow audio/video recording or taking pictures of class without my permission.** In the rare event that you need to keep your cell on for some emergency purpose (such as a family health matter), let me know and put it in silent mode.

**Grading:**
I reserve the right to fail students who do not complete all assignments satisfactorily. I also reserve the right to require students to resubmit assignments that evidence a lack of investment. Provided that all assignments are acceptable, final grades will be calculated as follows:

Class participation - 25%

This means active participation, not just passive attendance. This includes both daily discussion and more formal presentations. You should be speaking up at least a couple times in each class. Your participation should demonstrate respectful engagement with the readings, and with comments from other students and the instructor. It should not
become overbearing or inhibit others from speaking. If you are a quieter student, you need to find ways to speak up. If you are a more talkative student, you need to allow speaking opportunities for quieter students. I reserve the right to schedule unannounced in-class exercises that may count toward participation or weekly readings/notes.

Weekly readings/notes - 35%
Longer writing assignments - including essays, papers, exams - 40%

At present, I anticipate assigning five essays. Two are a midterm and final, each counting for a relatively large amount of your total essays grade, while three are shorter, counting for less of your total essays grade. It is possible that the number of essays could change, however, and if so, the amount each one counts would also change somewhat. Tentative grading percentages are:

Essay 1 – 5%
Essay 2 – 10%
Midterm (essay 3) – 35%
Essay 4 – 10%
Final (essay 5) – 40%

Among these, essays that include peer-review/revision will be graded as follows:

70% original submission
15% peer-review (of partner)
15% revision

Late submissions:
This is a seminar class, which requires class discussion, so all students need to do the assigned readings/writings. I therefore have a relatively strict policy on late submissions. Papers submitted after class on the due date will be penalized 2/3 of a letter grade (such as A- to B). Papers submitted the day after the due date will be penalized a full letter grade. Papers submitted after that will be penalized two letter grades. Students coming to class on the day an occasional essay is due, but not having an essay in hand, will accrue additional penalties for their essay and participation grades, since they won’t be able to participate in peer-review.

Investing in your own learning:
If you aren’t quite getting the grades you’d like, you are not alone! Many of us struggle at some point with test anxiety, note taking, organizing our time/thoughts/priorities, or just feeling overwhelmed. Do NOT hesitate to ask for help at the Center for Academic Resources www.cfar.unh.edu. They offer free academic support via one-on-one mentoring, small group workshops and resources for subject area tutoring. Stop by Smith Hall, room 201, during drop-in hours, Monday-Thursday, 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. or call 603-862-3698 to schedule an appointment.

Similarly, EVERYONE can improve his or her writing with help from a skilled editor. The Writing Center in Dimond Library, accepts walk-ins or appointments, and can be reached at (603) 862-3272 writing.center@unh.edu. Hours are Mon-Thurs 10am-6pm plus evenings Weds
6-8pm and Sun 5-8pm. The website offers some great resources, including handouts and links [http://www.unh.edu/writing/cwc/](http://www.unh.edu/writing/cwc/).

If you encounter words in lecture that you don’t understand, I strongly suggest that you ask what they mean and/or jot them down to look up in a dictionary. If you encounter words in assigned reading that you don’t understand, look them up in a dictionary. Sometimes unfamiliar words are used just to sound smart (which is generally unhelpful), but I more often use them because they carry more precise or nuanced meaning than other possible word options. Building your vocabulary is a lifelong skill and asset that will serve you well as a student, on the job market, and in the workplace. If you use a hard copy dictionary for this purpose, especially a large one, you can also see other words related to the one you are looking up, and other new words. This provides more context for the word you are looking up, and helps grow your vocabulary more quickly, compared to using online sources.

**Note taking:**
Taking notes is a basic skill for life and learning. Research shows that taking notes by hand instead of electronically improves learning outcomes. The following websites have some tips for notetaking, but most people find they have to develop their own individualized approach and style: [http://education.exeter.ac.uk/dll/studyskills/note_taking_skills.htm](http://education.exeter.ac.uk/dll/studyskills/note_taking_skills.htm)
[http://academic.cuesta.edu/acasupp/as/208.HTM](http://academic.cuesta.edu/acasupp/as/208.HTM)

**Blackboard:**
I use Blackboard to post additional readings, assignments, and grades, and to collect some out-of-class assignments. If you encounter difficulties with Blackboard, it is best to contact the IT Service Desk [http://it.unh.edu/index.cfm?ID=AF65A729-D567-BF1C-C7B097B99B4D357A](http://it.unh.edu/index.cfm?ID=AF65A729-D567-BF1C-C7B097B99B4D357A). They answer phones M-F 7:30am to 5:00pm at 603-862-4242. There are also online Blackboard help resources at [http://it.unh.edu/index.cfm?ID=BC300798-FF56-F6B6-938B3F5D83A03E89](http://it.unh.edu/index.cfm?ID=BC300798-FF56-F6B6-938B3F5D83A03E89). These folks are more familiar with the intricacies and glitches of Blackboard software than I am, and may be more immediately available.

**Academic integrity:**
Students in this class are bound to the university policy on academic honesty [http://www.unh.edu/vpsas/handbook/academic-honesty](http://www.unh.edu/vpsas/handbook/academic-honesty). Violation of this policy may result in course failure. The policy applies to all assignments, including any extra credit options. I take these issues seriously and will take action when warranted. Students who have cheated, plagiarized, lied, or misrepresented the truth in my classes later wished they hadn’t.

If you have ANY questions about whether something constitutes an academic integrity violation, ASK. I view such issues through the lens of fairness and respect, considering the considerable effort put forth by most instructors and students. If you violate this policy, you lower the value of
all our academic diplomas, of this university as a commons for social learning, and the larger civic
merit of higher education. That is a long term social cost, not just an individual character flaw.

**Equity and accessibility:**
If you have a special need or disability, even a minor one, and if you desire appropriate
accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services to provide me with the
necessary documentation [http://www.unh.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.unh.edu/disabilityservices/)

Students in this class are expected to conform with university policies on discrimination and

**Unforeseen emergencies:**
If some unforeseen emergency conflicts with our class meeting or exams, such as a weather
event or public health or safety issue, you can expect general information to be provided by the
university. In such an event, you may also receive an e-mail from me with follow-up
information about any necessary rescheduling, so you’ll want to be attentive for any such e-mail
communications.