Geography 673: Political Ecology
(August 27, 2017 -- subject to updates)

Dr. Brewer
T Th 9:40-11:00 am
Murkland G18

-Course Objectives-

This course examines human-environment relations through the geographic subfield of political ecology. It presents a series of cases for conceptual analysis, emphasizing social science approaches but also integrating biophysical sciences. It emphasizes cross-scalar relationships in resource decisions and community development, with substantial coverage of rural, non-US contexts. As a seminar-style, writing intensive course, it relies on weekly reading selections and brief writing assignments, as well as active class discussion, longer essays and research papers, 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 of 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.
- Integrate diverse sources of information, including social theory, case studies, peer-reviewed journal articles, popular media, and film/video.
- Deliver substantive oral contributions to collegial discussion.
- Hone skills in expository writing, including editing and revision.

-Readings-

I will assign readings for most class meetings. Most will be available online with perhaps a few on reserve. Sources include:


Selected journal articles TBD.
-Course Topics-

See assignments list for details. Topics may include:

- Geographic perspectives on human-environment relationships
- Evolution of cultural and political ecology
- Mineral resources
- Human population
- Resource conservation & social marginalization
- Agricultural systems
- Fisheries
- Forests
- Indigenous knowledge and sovereignty
- Urban and suburban environments
- Environmental justice and social change

-Class Policies-

My office hours and contacts:

I am often available to meet with students immediately following our class, if that happens to fit your schedule. I am often (but not always!) available in my office between 11:15 and 1:45 on T/Th and I can also meet other times. It is always best to schedule an appointment, especially if your issue is time-sensitive. I am also generally available to meet by phone. I may or may not be available on campus during the time period between our last class and our exam, but I will be available by phone or skype.

My e-mail is jennifer.brewer@unh.edu. Like many people, my inbox is often very full. If you want me to notice your message promptly, you might begin your message subject line with “GEOG 572.” I often answer within a few hours, but if you don’t hear back within 48 hours, feel free to re-send.

My office is at 102B Hudderston Hall in the Geography suite, located on the east end of the building. You can find Hudderston on any campus map, near downtown, between Holloway Commons and a few dormitories.

Attendance:

In this class, as in most others, there is a clear correlation between attendance and grades. I may take attendance, conduct in-class assignments or pop quizzes, or verbally announce changes to the course schedule, assignments, or tests. If you miss any part of 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 make-ups of missed tests, exams, or missed in-class or homework assignments, unless you have a letter from a UNH Dean, DSS, or SHARP. UNH club activities, conferences, job interviews, or field trips for other classes do not necessarily qualify
for an excused absence, and I make no promises to arrange make-ups for brief illnesses. On the other hand, if you have a serious family or health emergency, especially one that extends over some period of time, I would hope to accommodate, because I realize that such issues are sometimes more important than school, so feel free to let me know of such issues as far in advance as possible, and I will probably suggest you get a letter from the Dean.

**Religious holidays are an exception.** If I inadvertently schedule a test, in-class assignment, or due date on a holiday, or a test or due date on the day immediately following a holiday, please don’t hesitate to point it out immediately so I can reschedule or make alternate arrangements.

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, particularly if there seem to be no extenuating circumstances, you can certainly refuse.

**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. To ensure a climate of learning for all, disruptive or inappropriate behavior may result in exclusion (removal) from this class. Arriving late or leaving early without suitable explanation and/or apology are rude and are unacceptable; such behavior can be distracting to the instructor and students. Congruent with campus policy, 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 online if you wish to sign it and e-mail it to me. Research shows that the presence of a smart phone inhibits learning, even if you are not using it (Ward et al. 2017). Any of your neighbors may be easily distracted as well. It is only fair that you keep your phones out of sight with all sound and vibration functions off. If you do not comply, I may tell you to leave class. In the rare event that you need to keep your phone on for some emergency purpose (such as an urgent family health matter), let me know and we can agree that you put it in silent mode.

I do not allow audio or video recording or taking pictures of class without the permission of everyone in the room, including me. Violating this policy is immediate grounds for course failure. My tolerance for non-compliance is extremely low.

**Grading:**
I reserve the right to fail students who do not complete all major assignments satisfactorily. I also reserve the right to require students to resubmit assignments that evidence a lack of investment. I expect that my editorial comments on your papers will be read, considered, and acted upon in any revisions. Otherwise I reserve the right to fail you on that assignment, or require you to redo it until it passes.

Provided that all assignments are acceptable, final grades will be calculated as follows:

Class participation - 15%
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 period of substantive discussion. (Recognizing that lectures are less interactive.) 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 reading notes - 15%
Midterm essay – 10%
Research paper first draft – 5%
Research paper near-final draft – 15%
Research paper peer-reviews (written and in class) – 10%
Presentation – 5%
Research paper final submission – 15%
Final essay – 10%

Per the registrar’s schedule, our final exam is on Tuesday December 12 at 10:30-12:30
http://www.unh.edu/registrar/general-information/exams.html. We will have presentations on this day unless we finish them by the last day of class.

I reserve the right to curve grading scales up, but not down. If there is no curve, the standard grade distribution is as follows.

93 and up A
90-92 A-
87-89 B+
83-86 B
80-82 B-
77-79 C+
73-76 C
70-72 C-
67-69 D+
63-66 D
60-62 D-
Below 60 F
**Late submissions:**
This is a seminar class, which requires class discussion, so all students need to do the assigned readings/writings **on time**. I therefore have a relatively strict policy on late submissions. Papers submitted after class on the due date may be penalized 2/3 of a letter grade (such as A- to B). Papers submitted the day after the due date may be penalized a full letter grade. Papers submitted after that may be penalized two letter grades. Students coming to class on the day an occasional essay is due, but not having an essay in hand, may accrue additional penalties for their essay and participation grades, such as if they are unable to participate in related discussion or 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 UNH Center for Academic Resources [www.cfar.unh.edu](http://www.cfar.unh.edu). They offer free academic support via one-on-one mentoring, small group workshops and resources for subject area tutoring.

If you encounter words in lecture or reading that you don’t understand, I strongly suggest that you jot them down to look up later. Building your vocabulary is a lifelong skill and asset.

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. The website offers lots of great resources, including handouts and links [http://www.unh.edu/writing/cwc/](http://www.unh.edu/writing/cwc/). You can also get help remotely via [http://owl.unh.edu](http://owl.unh.edu).

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. If you encounter words in assigned reading that you don’t understand, look them up. 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. In some courses, I find that many students find it helpful to draw diagrams. The following website has 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)

**Course website:**
I use Canvas MyCourses to post additional readings, assignments, and grades, and to collect out-of-class assignments. If you encounter difficulties with the website, it is best to contact IT help https://itsupport.unh.edu/ (though they are not necessarily available evenings or weekends). There are also online website help resources at https://www.unh.edu/it/kb/. These folks are more familiar than I with the intricacies and glitches of the software, and may be more immediately available.

**Academic integrity:**

Students in this class are bound to the university policy on academic honesty linked here: 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.

You may find this college tutorial on plagiarism to be helpful: http://Cola.unh.edu/plagiarism-tutorial-0. 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 students and instructors. 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 ethical breach.

**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 in advance of any anticipated need http://www.unh.edu/disabilityservices/

Students in this class are expected to conform with university policies on discrimination and harassment http://unh.edu/vpsas/handbook/affirmative-action-and-equity-policies

**Personal issues:**

Most people encounter some kind of mental health issue over the course of our lives, particularly during college or other periods of transition. Your tuition and fees already pay for campus counseling resources, so please don’t hesitate to contact them for any reason, even just for help managing your time or the inevitable stress of school https://www.unh.edu/counseling-center/homepage. You can also contact them if you are concerned about another student.

Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program (SHARPP) provides free and confidential advocacy and direct services to survivors https://www.unh.edu/sharpp. (Note that per federal law, UNH faculty are understood to be mandatory reporters any incidents of sexual violence or harassment.)

**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.

Work cited