

GEOGRAPHY 378 :
INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND POLICY
Dr. Zoltan Grossman, Assistant Professor of Geography, University of Wisconsin-
Eau Claire
SPRING 2005

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Hours and Room | Class participation |
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| Books and Reading | Exercises |
| Grading | COURSE SCHEDULE |
| Attendance | Baccalaureate degree |

HOURS AND ROOM

CLASS: Phillips 104,
11:00-11:50 MWF
258 Phillips Hall

COURSE GOALS

This course will look at global environmental concerns that cover the entire Earth, such as the controversy over global warming. It will also cover local and national environmental issues that lie outside the boundaries of the United States, and which have some different dynamics than environmental conflicts within our country. This course will look at environmental issues thematically, rather than regionally or by country, in order to [geographically](#) compare and contrast them.

The course will place a special emphasis on how communities mobilize to deal with environmental issues, to build movements, and to engage in conflict. Just as multinational corporations work to build networks around the world, the multinational environmental movement is working to transcend national boundaries. This course will build skills that are often used by all sides in the fields of international environmental policy and advocacy--such as websites, press releases, and human interest campaigns--and critically examine their impact. The course will emphasize [critical thinking skills](#) and sharpening communication skills.

BOOKS AND READING

Cunningham/Saigo: Cunningham, William P., Mary Ann Cunningham,

and Barbara Woodworth Saigo. *Environmental Science: A Global Concern*. New York: McGraw Hill. 8th edition (2005). You can rent the textbook from the [University Bookstore](#).

Gedicks: Gedicks, Al. *Resource Rebels: Native Challenges to Mining and Oil Corporations*. Boston: South End Press (2001). Foreword by [Winona LaDuke](#).

You are responsible for completing all the readings. The textbook offers general overviews, and the additional readings delve into the interesting aspects of an issue. The best way to read all the material is to [take notes](#) in your own handwriting. If any extra readings are added or subtracted, the class will be notified via the class e-mail list. Print out this syllabus for your use, but also please bookmark this syllabus page to consult it for any changes.

| GRADING | |
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| Class participation | 50 points |
| Exercise #1: Press release (due Feb. 21) | 50 points |
| Midterm I Exam (Mar. 14) | 200 points |
| Exercise #2: Human interest paper (due Apr. 13) | 150 points |
| Midterm II Exam (Apr. 18) | 200 points |
| Exercise #3: Class website (due May 2 ; final due May 13) | 150 points |
| Final Exam (May 19) | 200 points |
| Total | 1000 points |

ATTENDANCE

You will be more successful in this class only if you cover the full range of expectations: lectures, videos, readings, and exercises. Doing only the readings and exercises outside class are not a substitute for attending the lectures or videos, which will very often present different information. Similarly, only attending the lectures will not substitute for readings and exercises outside the class. It will help you to properly learn [how to take notes](#). If it is impossible for you to attend a lecture, you must get notes from another student--not from me--and also talk with the fellow student about the lecture. Some, but not all, of the lecture information may be on the W drive (geog/grossman/378). If you have special needs, please inform me when starting the course.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

In contrast to many larger courses, students in this course will have the ability to interact, discuss readings, videos, and lectures, and *learn from each other*. using [critical thinking skills](#). The instructor is not the only person in the classroom with knowledge or skills! Class participation (including debates) is worth 50 points. If you are shy to speak in a group, please raise your hand and you will be recognized. If you are enthusiastic and love to talk about environmental issues, please respectfully give others a chance to speak and offer their own ideas. Whether in or out of the classroom, we are not simply learning about international environmental issues; we are also designing the course for this semester and future semesters.

EXAMS

You will have three exams (200 points each), which will cover the readings, lectures, exercises, and videos, and will include short essays. Exam study guides will be on the syllabus and in the W Drive class folder (Geog/Grossman/378). The final exam emphasizes the last part of the course, but draws on the insights from the rest of the course. You can make up an exam *only* under extenuating and verifiable circumstances that I recognize, and only if you notify me *before* the scheduled exam at grossmzc@uwec.edu or 836-4471 (or the departmental secretary at 836-3244.). Unauthorized absences will result in a zero on the exam--no exceptions. A final exam cannot be rescheduled by the professor, only by the Dean!

EXERCISES

The course will have three skills exercises, in addition to class discussions and debates. The three exercises all reflect the "real world" of international environmental policy and advocacy, and will help you develop skills that can be transferred to other courses and future work.

1. The first exercise will be to write a 2-3 page press release (50 points) on an international environmental issue (you can get some ideas from [How to Write a Press Release](#) and an [example](#)).

2. The second exercise will be to write a 8-10 pg. human interest article (150 pts.) for a national or international magazine, using the human angle to bring out and illustrate an international environmental issue, relating it to the interaction between people and the environment ([An example](#)).

This will involve communicating with people in another country via e-mail; *start thinking about it early in the course!*

3. The third exercise will be done partially by the entire class, and partially by each student (150 pts).

The class will together identify an international environmental issue, and create a [public website](#) on the issue. ([Fall 2002 site](#)) ([Spring 2003 site](#)) ([Spring 2004 site](#)).

Each student will create a page for the website on a particular thematic angle, including differing perspectives. These exercises will focus class attention not only on environmental issues, but the means in which they are communicated in our globalizing world.

For the website project, you are **REQUIRED** to be trained in Dreamweaver by Week 8 (March 18).

We have a customized Dreamweaver Basics training on Thursday, February 10 at 6-7 pm in Phillips 186.

Dreamweaver [training workshops](#) are scheduled in CITI in the Old Library. If you absolutely

cannot make a training workshop, you are responsible to set up an individual training through [BITS](#).

Call for a one-on-one or small group training at 836-5157 (bits.training@uwec.edu) (Hours 10-3 Mon. , 10-4 Tu./Wed./Th, and 12-3 Fri.). I'd encourage you to go in small groups

so you can help each other along later. BITS staff are extremely helpful no matter what level

you are at.

Start working on these exercises as soon as you receive them! Don't wait until the last minute

to do these exercises, because you may not be able to overcome unforeseen difficulties. *No excuses* will be accepted for problems that could have been solved by starting the exercise

earlier (such as a computer crash). For this reason, exercises handed in late will automatically

be knocked down 2 points in the maximum grade for every class day they are overdue.

No exceptions.

Help with writing can be easily gained by visiting the [Writing Center](#). Review some common

[grammatical errors](#). Never rely only on your [spell checker](#) !

PLAGIARISM WARNING: For all projects you **MUST NOT** simply lift your textual material

from the Web (or plagiarize any other source), and you must have a variety of *printed* and digital sources.

Graphics should also be cited with a tiny source citation hyperlink or a textual link to the page of origin.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

If changes are made to the syllabus, the class will be informed via the class e-mail list.

| Week | Class dates | Weekly theme | Cunningham/Saigo pages | Gedicks pages | Other reading | Assignment / guest / exam |
|--------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|--|--|
| Week 1 | Jan. 26, 28 | <u>INTRODUCTION</u> | 17-31 | 1-14 | None | <u>Tsunami</u> case study |
| Week 2 | Jan. 31, Feb. 2, 4 | <u>FOSSIL FUELS</u> | 408-416 | 41-84 | <u>Drowning Freedom in Oil</u> (NY Times) | Choose press release topic by Fri., Feb. 4 |
| Week 3 | Feb. 7, 9, 11 | <u>NUCLEAR</u> | 416-426 | None | Video, testimony on 1986 <u>Chernobyl disaster</u> and <u>aftermath</u> | <u>Philippines</u> case study Dreamweaver training, Thurs. Feb. 10 (6-7 pm) Phillips 186 |
| Week 4 | Feb. 14, 16, 18 | <u>DAMS</u> | 368-371, 446-447 | 150-54 | Feb. 21 class discussion articles on <u>India</u> or <u>China</u> or <u>Slovakia</u> | Claire Schmidt on <u>Manitoba dams</u> , Feb. 16 |
| Week 5 | Feb. 21, 23, 25 | <u>WARFARE</u> | None | 181-97 | | Press release due on Mon., Feb. 21 Class chooses <u>website</u> . Previous sites: <u>2002</u> <u>2003</u> <u>2004</u> |

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| Week 6 | Feb. 28, Mar. 2, 4 | <u>WATER USE</u> | 361-367, 372-374, 389-391 | None | <u>Blue Gold</u> by Maude Barlow | Choose human interest topic by Mon., Feb. 28; begin making contacts |
| Week 7 | Mar. 7, 9, 11 | <u>SUSTAINABILITY</u> | 428-452 | None | <u>Time magazine, New York Times</u> article series | <u>Dreamweaver website trainings</u> Review Fri., Mar. 11 |
| Week 8 | Mar. 14, 16, 18 | | None | None | MIDTERM I, Mon. Mar. 14 <u>STUDY GUIDE</u> | Work on human interest topic and <u>class website</u> |
| Week 9 | Mar. 30, Apr. 1 | <u>GLOBAL WARMING/ AIR POLLUTION</u> | 316-325, 337-340 | None | <u>Gelbspan and Singer et al</u> for class debate, Mon., Apr. 4 | Work on human interest topic and <u>class website</u> |
| Week 10 | Apr. 4, 6, 8 | <u>MINING</u> | 295-300 | 15-37; 91-122 | | Work on human interest topic and <u>class website</u> Choropampa-Peru mine video, Wed., Apr. 6 Al Gedicks on <u>Colombia</u> , Fri., Apr. 8 |

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| Week 11 | Apr. 11, 13, 15 | <u>TOXICS</u> | 153-166, 455-473 | None | Exercise on <u>1984 Bhopal disaster</u> | Work on human interest topic and <u>class website</u> Human interest paper due on Wed., April 13 Review Fri., April 15. |
| Week 12 | Apr. 18, 20, 22 | <u>FORESTRY</u> | 240-254 | None | MIDTERM II, Mon. April 18 <u>STUDY GUIDE</u> | Work on <u>class website</u> |
| Week 13 | Apr. 25, 27, 29 | <u>PARKLANDS</u> | 264-281 | None | Rubber Jungle video on <u>Chico Mendes</u> / Amazon rubber tappers | Work on <u>class website</u> |
| Week 14 | May 2, 4, 6 | <u>AGRICULTURE AND FOOD</u> | 170-193 | None | "Beef Inc." video on cattle industry | Class website done Mon., May 2. Put on W drive and hand in printout. |
| Week 15 | May 9, 11, 13 | <u>POPULATION & ENVIRONMENT</u> | 124-142 | None | <u>The Limits of Carrying Capacity</u> by Ben Wisner | Final website corrections due Fri., May 13., 4:00 pm on W drive; hand in both old & new printouts in class! Final Exam review Fri., May 13 |

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| Week 16 | MOVEMENTS (optional) | 543-564 | 145-48, 197-99 | FINAL EXAM STUDY GUIDE Thursday, May 19, 1:00-2:50 pm in the classroom | Final revised class webpage due; print-out attached to marked-up first draft. |
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Class Websites Contribute to Global Environmental Awareness

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published in the U.W. System's [Teaching with Technology Today](#) (Feb. 2004)

U.W.-Eau Claire students who take the Geography 378 course on International Environmental Problems and Policy have not only learned about global warming and hydroelectric dams. They have also learned about how environmental issues are communicated and discussed in our globalizing world.

The World Wide Web is integral to contemporary environmental issues, since it has become a clearinghouse for information, a forum for debate, and a tool for education and mobilization for governments, companies, and environmental groups. Knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the Web is indispensable in studying global environmental policy.

Instead of writing the usual undergrad papers, Geography 378 students wrote a press release on an environmental issue outside the U.S., and a "human interest" article on another environmental conflict (using e-mail contacts with affected individuals in other countries). Instead of a final term paper, the students together compiled a class website on an environmental issue in another country or world region. These assignments not only helped develop students' technical knowledge, but gave them tools and skills that they can one day use to research and publicize global environmental issues.

The class websites were developed partly by the entire class, and partly by each individual student. The class together identified an international environmental issue, and each student contributed a page about a particular thematic angle, or "subtopic" on the issue. In Fall 2002, the

class website "Caspian Basin Alert" focused on the upsurge in oil and natural gas drilling around the Caspian Sea. In Spring 2003, the class website "Iraq and Our Energy Future" examined the environmental effects of wars in Iraq, and also looked at renewable energy options for the United States.

The democratic process of selecting a website topic has been a balancing act for the class. The website topic needed to be broad enough that it had enough material for each student's webpage, yet not so broad that it was too diffuse or "placeless." A topic that covered the entire globe (such as global warming) would have been abstract and impersonal because it lacked an immediate local scale. Because the course was centered on the geographical aspects of environmental issues, the students needed to analyze how a particular country or region was affected by an existing or proposed project.

Students nominated possible topics in e-mails to the instructor, and narrowed the possible subjects in class. They then voted in an e-mail poll, choosing between 4-5 finalists, with ties broken by the professor. In Fall 2002, nominated topics included transboundary pollution, hydroelectric dams in Laos, oil drilling off Norway, and garbage power. Student discussion, however, turned toward Caspian Basin oil drilling, in the context of post-Soviet pipeline politics and the on-going war in Afghanistan. In Spring 2003, the class was divided between the negative environmental effects of the wars in Iraq, and a more positive spin on renewable energies that might make future "oil wars" less likely. A student suggested covering both topics in a way that interwove the negative and positive messages, and her idea prevailed.

The professor and the class together subdivided the main topic into subtopics, so students could conduct in-depth research on one aspect of the larger issue. "Caspian Basin Alert" included subtopic pages on the countries and physical environment of the Caspian region, the oil industry and oil economics, environmental and human impacts of oil development in the region, corporations and contending pipeline routes. (The professor added an external links page and map gallery.) In a class of 18, two students took each page, but the "free rider" phenomenon later rendered this decision less than desirable.

The Spring 2003 class had 36 students, each of whom developed their own webpage. The Iraq War section covered issues such as the war's oil connections and consumption of resources, Iraqi ecosystems and water shortages, Depleted Uranium and other munitions, Gulf War Syndrome, biochemical weapons, tactical nuclear weapons, Saddam's oil fires and marsh draining, and more. The Renewable Energies section examined the alternatives to a centralized oil-based economy: solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, tidal, hydrogen, *etc.* and the costs of these technologies, new transportation methods, energy conservation measures, and more.

After the subtopics were chosen, the professor developed a template webpage, with a column of links to each subtopic along the left side of the template page. From any of the subtopic pages, a reader could therefore jump to any of the other pages. The template and font package also offered a consistent look to the website. Each student renamed the template page, using their e-mail usernames. The files were kept in student folders within the course folder on the campus 'W' Drive.

When it came time to "publish" the class website, the professor dropped the final versions into the campus web drive. Nothing was more terrifying to students than the realization that their Final Project would be read not only by the professor, but would be available to all computer users on Earth. That constructive fear helped to improve the quality and readability of their submissions. An editing process also tried to make the text tone relatively consistent between printed drafts.

With 36 students and one inexperienced professor participating in the class website project, certain technical problems were bound to arise. Students had to be careful to give unique names to their files, so they did not accidentally replace another student's file when the files were put in the campus web drive. The students generally used PCs, whereas the professor used a Mac, creating some interface problems. A few fonts were also not available on all project computers.

The Fall class used FrontPage, whereas the Spring class used Dreamweaver. Both programs had the problem of identifying graphics with their particular drive of origin, necessitating a massive clean-up effort of graphic files at the end of semester. The Spring 2004 class will be given more detailed instructions on linking graphics to their student folders, to avoid the previous problems. The students will also be given more standardized instructions on citing information and graphics, with links to their sources or pages of origin.

Despite the inevitable technical difficulties, Geography 378 students gained skills in Internet research (including the reliability of data), assembling a webpage, and choosing language and graphics to communicate complex ideas to a general audience. One student was so proud of her page that she put a copy on her refrigerator, and sent another copy home. Other students received messages sent from e-mail links on their pages, complimenting the pages or challenging the information they presented.

After "Iraq and Our Energy Future" was designated a "Website of the Day" on Counterpunch.org, Geography 378 students began receiving e-mails from around North America and the world. One message from Australia said simply "Your class gives me hope for the future of America and our planet." Not only had students reported on their topics, but in the process they had actually contributed to public knowledge and debate around environmental issues of global consequence.

[Caspian Basin Alert](#) (Fall 2002)

[Iraq and Our Energy Future](#) (Spring 2003)

[Water is Life](#) (Spring 2004)

[Tsunami: Waves of Destruction](#) (Spring 2005)