

Anthropology 4302/5311 - Human Ecology

Fall 2026, Wednesdays 2:00 – 4:50

Instructor: Dr. Devin Pettigrew, Office: Ferguson 114B

Welcome to Human Ecology, a course designed to address current theories and paradigms around human/environmental relationships and the historical trajectory of those theories/paradigms. This is an anthropology course, meaning that our emphasis is on how anthropologists approach this topic, however, it is also a field of interest to geographers, sociologists, biologists, and even architects. Throughout the class we will look at the following theoretical paradigms: neo-functionalism, systems ecology, evolutionary ecology, political ecology, humanistic ecology, complex adaptive systems and globalization. Readings for this course will consist of articles that present the paradigms, followed in some cases by books representing the use those paradigms as theoretical underpinnings. To do well in this course you must keep up with the readings and come prepared to discuss weekly readings in seminar. You will also be required to write a final paper taking one or more theoretical perspectives discussed in class and examining how it has been used either topically or ethnographically. Alternatively, you may write about the application of one of the paradigms to a specific research problem of your interest. Reading and writing loads will be reduced for the undergraduate cross-listed course.

Student learning outcomes (slos):

- 1) The students will acquire a basic understanding of the interplay of human lives and the environment, and how this topic has been studied through different theoretical lenses.
- 2) The students will demonstrate a basic understanding of the trajectory of changes in the theory over time and the association of those changes within broader social contexts.
- 4) The students will be able to demonstrate ability to apply one or more specific paradigms to problems in human environmental interactions.
- 3) Students will develop principles of environmental responsibility for living in a rapidly changing world, where anthropogenic impacts are having increasing effects.

Goals and objectives: This course aims to familiarize students with perspectives on humans and the environment, regarding the influences our species has on the environment and vice versa, as well develop the ability to question our presumed separation from “natural” processes. The student will develop an understanding of how different theoretical positions relating to human ecology have changed over time contingent with broader social changes as well as changes within the sciences, and will understand the impacts that theoretical positions have on interpretation through ethnographic examples.

Ethnographies:

Rappaport, Roy (1968). *Pigs for the Ancestors: Ritual in the Ecology of a New Guinea People*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

McCabe, J. Terrence (2004). *Cattle Bring Us to Our Enemies: Turkana Ecology, Politics and Raiding in a Disequilibrium System*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press. (Julian Steward award winner)

Smith, Eric (1991) Inujjamiut Foraging Strategies: Evolutionary Ecology of an Arctic Hunting Economy. Aldine Transaction

West, Paige (2006). Conservation is our Government Now: The Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea. Durham: Duke Univ. Press

Cruikshank, Julie (2010). Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press (Julian Steward Award Winner)

Lansing, J. Steven (2006). Perfect Order: Recognizing Complexity in Bali. Princeton University Press (Julian Steward Award Winner)

Dove, Michael (2011). The Banana Tree at the Gate: A History of Marginal Peoples and Global Markets in Borneo. New Haven: Yale University Press. (Julian Steward Award Winner)

Grading: Attendance and participation are mandatory and accounts for 60% of grade. The final 40% of the grade will be based on a final seminar paper – see above. Each student will also give a 15-20 minute presentation on their paper in the final class session.

CLASS POLICIES AND RESOURCES

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartz Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartz@sulross.edu or contact Alejandra Valdez, at 830-758-5006 or email alejandra.valdez@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine. Texas, 79832.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize him/herself with the requirements of such laws.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website.

Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires a secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross

are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

SRSU LIBRARY SERVICES

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu/. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or by phone (432-837-8123).

No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu. Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff. Utilize free services such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL), ScanIt, and Direct Mail to get materials delivered to you at home or via email.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Students should also avoid using AI sources unless permission is expressly given for an assignment or course. Using AI generated text on papers and assignments is a form of plagiarism. Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of your college degree and higher education overall.

CLASSROOM RESPECT

Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

Tentative Class Schedule:

Aug. 26 - Introduction to the course

Sept 2 – Early approaches and overview

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of Emilio Moran's book: Human Adaptability: An Introduction of Ecological Anthropology. 2000. Boulder: Westview.

Steward, Julian (1955). Chapter 2: The Concept and Method of Cultural Ecology. In: The Theory of Cultural Change: the methodology of multilineal evolution. Urbana: Univ. Of Illinois Press. Pp. 30-42

Conklin, Harold, C. (1954). An Ethnological Approach to Shifting Agriculture. Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences. 2nd series, Vol 17. Pp. 133-142

Orlove, Benjamin (1980), Ecological Anthropology: Annual Review of Anthropology. Pp. 225-273

Sept 9 - Neofunctionalism

Rappaport, Roy (1968). Pigs for the Ancestors: Ritual in the Ecology of a New Guinea People.

Moore, O.K. (1965), Divination - a new perspective. American Anthropologist. Pp- 69-74

Harris, M. (1966), The Cultural Ecology of India's Sacred Cattle. Current Anthropology. Vol 7, #1

Sept 16 - Human Behavioral Ecology

Cronk, Lee (1991). Human Behavioral Ecology. Annual Review of Anthropology

Winterhalder, Bruce and Smith, Eric (1992) Evolutionary Ecology and the Social Sciences. In: Evolutionary Ecology and Human Behavior. New York: Aldine de Gruyter. 3-23

Cronk, Lee (1995). Is there a role for Culture in Human Behavioral Ecology. Ethology and Sociobiology. 181-205.

K. Hawkes, J. F. O'Connell, N. G. Blurton Jones, H. Alvarez, and E. L. Charnov (1998) Grandmothering, menopause, and the evolution of human life histories *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*
Vol. 95, pp. 1336–1339,

Shenk, Mary K (2007). Dowry and Public Policy in Contemporary India: The Behavioral Ecology of a "Social Evil" Human Nature.:18:242–263

Sept 23 – Human Behavioral Ecology

Smith, Eric (1991) Inujjuamiut Foraging Strategies: Evolutionary Ecology of an Arctic Hunting Economy.

Sept 30 – Later Ecosystem Studies

Little M. et al. 1990. "Ecosystem Approaches in Human Biology: Their History and a Case Study of the South Turkana Ecosystem Project." In: The Ecosystem Approach in Anthropology: From Concept to Practice. E. Moran ed. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press.

Moran E. (1993), Ecosystem Ecology in Biology and Anthropology: A Critical Assessment. In: The Ecosystem Approach in Anthropology: From Concept to Practice. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Scoones, Ian (1999). New Ecology and the Social Sciences: What Prospects for a Fruitful Engagement. Annual Review of Anthropology

Stefan Wuchty, Benjamin F. Jones, Brian Uzzi1,(2007). The Increasing Dominance of Teams in Production of Knowledge. Science. Vol 318: 1036-1039

Oct. 7 – Later Ecosystem Studies

McCabe, J. Terrence (2004). Cattle Bring Us to Our Enemies: Turkana Ecology, Politics and Raiding in a Disequilibrium System. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press.

Oct 14 – Political Ecology

Bryant, Raymond (1998). Power, knowledge and political ecology in the third world. A review. Progress in Physical Geography 22, 1.

Vayda, Andrew and Walters, Bradley (1999). Against Political Ecology. Human Ecology, Vol 27, No 1. pp. 167-179

Escobar, Arturo (1999). Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology. Current Anthropology, vol4, #1: 1-30

Oct 21 – Political Ecology

West, Paige (2006). Conservation is our Government Now: the Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea. Durham: Duke Univ. Press

Oct 28 - Humanistic/Symbolic Approaches

Cruikshank, Julie (2010). Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination.

Nov 4 – Complexity and Resilience

Chapters: 1, 2, 3, and 4 from Walker and Salt (2006) Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World. Island Press

Lansing, Stephen (2003). Complex Adaptive Systems. Annual Review of Anthropology. Vol 32: 183-204
Leslie, P.W. and McCabe J. T. (2013). Response Diversity and Resilience in Social-Ecological Systems: Current Anthropology. Vol. 54, # 2: 114-143

Quandt, Amy (2018) Measuring Livelihood Resilience: The Household Livelihood Resilience Approach. World Development pp: 253-263

Nov 11 – Complexity and Resilience

Lansing, J. Steven (2006) Perfect Order: Recognizing Complexity in Bali. Princeton University Press

Nov. 18 – Globalization and small holder farming

Dove, Michael (2011) The Banana Tree at the Gate: A History of Marginal Peoples and Global Markets in Borneo

Nov. 25 – Thanksgiving holiday, no class

Dec. 2 – Class presentations