Human Dimensions of Environmental Change: Nature/Society Theory
Tues 10:55-1:55, Cook Bldg Rm 226

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is the key seminar for the Human Dimensions of Environmental Change graduate certificate program. The seminar is designed to provide students with a survey of theories and concepts in human-environment studies. We will examine how perspectives and arguments of oft-cited theorists (e.g. Foucault, Latour, Haraway) have been taken up in nature-society scholarship in geography, anthropology, development studies, environmental studies, and other disciplines. To do so, we will read selected writings from social theorists as well as contemporary nature-society scholars, making sense of writing and concepts through collective discussion and debate.

Learning Objectives of the Course
• Analyze various approaches to nature/society theory, from different disciplinary perspectives, with a critical eye and examine their viewpoints, methodologies, and positions.
• Synthesize class readings and discussions into the broader context of the student’s own graduate work.
• Evaluate the merits of various theoretical approaches to nature/society scholarship and their application in contemporary book-length works through writing of weekly reflections papers.

ASSIGNMENTS
Reading reflections: You are expected to write one short reflections paper every week during the semester (with the exception of our introductory class). Each week by the Monday morning before class (that is, 24 hours in advance of our meeting time), students will submit a brief (no more than 2-3 page) review and reflection on the assigned readings for that day in which they will highlight the key points, and analyze the message of the readings for their relationship to class themes. Please upload papers to the appropriate folder (by week) in Sakai under “Resources” by 11am each Monday. Also bring a hardcopy to class so that you may draw on it in discussion. These will be graded pass/fail. Each student is also expected to read all the other submitted reflections from other students in advance of coming to class to facilitate discussions.

The short response papers allow you to explore an aspect or component of the material under discussion and consider its implications for your own work. You are not being asked to regurgitate what you read; you are being asked to process what you read. The pedagogic aim of the weekly response papers is to encourage the practice of careful, critical reading. This approach enables you to concentrate your time and energy in sustained weekly attention to the texts. In other words, the attention you would otherwise bring to writing a term paper should be expended throughout the semester in reading, writing weekly responses, and discussion preparation.
Class discussion: All participants are expected to contribute to weekly discussion based on the assigned readings. Because this is a small seminar, success depends on the active involvement of all participants. I will expect everyone in class each week and prepared to discuss the assigned readings, unless you have cleared absences with me ahead of time.

Each student will also lead one seminar discussion in the second half of the class (when we read full texts). Leadership dates will be determined at our first meeting. Seminar leadership involves presenting a brief—no more than 15 minute—summary and critique of the book, including identification of main themes, linkages to theory, use of disciplinary perspectives, methodological aspects, etc. In addition, the leader is expected to provide critical discussion questions to the group, and should be prepared to facilitate discussion among participants for that class session.

SAKAI SITE
This course will have a Sakai site that will contain the syllabus, website announcements, and all available online readings. Please use Sakai to upload your weekly assignments (e.g. don’t email them to me.) The website is only a supplemental aid, and not a replacement for being in class.

Outline and Schedule of Class Periods
* Indicates reading will be available online at Sakai site

Part 1: KEYWORDS

Week 1, Jan 19: “Theory”, ”Nature”, “Culture”, “Society”


Week 2, Jan 26: “Economy”, ”Marxism”, ”Accumulation”, “Neoliberalism”


**Week 4, Feb 9:** “STS”, “Co-production”, ”Actor-Network”, “Objectivity”


**Week 5, Feb 16:** “Ontologies”, “Indigeneities”, “Feminisms”, “Anthropocene”


Week 6, Feb 23: “Posthumanism”, “Assemblages”, "Materialisms”, “Multispecies”


Part II: TEXTS
Copies of books are available on reserve at Chang Science Library, Cook Campus


