

## SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

**Voyage: Spring 2014**

**Discipline: Political Science**

**Course title: GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS**

**Course number: PLIR 3500**

**Upper Division**

**Sandy Hinchman**

**Prerequisite:** prior course work in political science, economics, or sociology.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, we will examine how political actions and decisions affect the natural environment, and vice versa. Issues to be addressed include the environmental impacts of different kinds of societies (developed vs. less-developed, capitalist vs. socialist, authoritarian vs. democratic), the roots of conflict in environmental degradation and resource distribution, the socio-economic causes and consequences of global climate change, the collective human impact on ecosystems and other species, the relationship between the domination of nature and the domination of people, and the requirements of environmental justice.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. to understand that the Earth's ecological systems and processes limit the political choices and economic transactions that we can make;
2. to appreciate the transnational character of looming environmental crises;
3. to recognize the demands that different kinds of societies and governments place on natural systems, and the degree to which these demands are sustainable;
4. to identify the actors involved in environmental politics at the local, national and global levels, and to learn what they are doing to address environmental problems, what obstacles they confront, and whether their efforts are succeeding;
5. to raise questions of justice between genders, classes, countries, generations, and species.

### **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

Lester Brown

*World on the Edge: How to Prevent Environmental and Economic Collapse*

W.W. Norton

ISBN#: 978-0-393-33949-9

2011

Helen Epstein

*The Invisible Cure: Why We Are Losing the Fight Against AIDS in Africa*

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

ISBN#: 978-0-312-42772-6

2007

Thomas Friedman

*Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution, and How*

*It Can Renew America*

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

ISBN#: 978-0-374-16685-4

2006

Richard Heinberg

*The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality*

New Society Publishers

ISBN#: 978-0-86571-695-7

2011

Fred Pearce

*When the Rivers Run Dry: Water—the Defining Crisis of the Twenty-First Century*

Beacon Press

ISBN#: 978-0-8070-8573-8

2006

Jeffrey Sachs

*Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet*

Penguin Books

ISBN # 978-0-14-311487-1

2009

Colin Woodard

*Ocean's End: Travels Through Endangered Seas*

Basic Books

ISBN#: 978-0-465-01571-9

2000

## **ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS (RESERVE READINGS)**

Chris Carroll

“High Tech Trash”

*National Geographic*

January, 2008

pp. 64-81

Pamela Chasek, David Donnie, and Janet Brown  
Chapter 2: “Actors in the Environmental Arena”  
*Global Environmental Politics*  
2014/ 6<sup>th</sup> Edition  
pp. 49-71, middle 76-middle 81, middle 85-middle 99

Jennifer Clapp and Peter Dauvergne  
Chapter 1: “Peril or Prosperity?”  
*Paths to a Green World*  
2005  
pp. 1-17

Richard Heinberg  
Chapter 4: “Non-Petroleum Energy Sources” (excerpt)  
*The Party’s Over*  
2005  
pp. 146-52

Richard Heinberg  
Chapter 6: “Energy Reality”  
*Snake Oil*  
2013  
pp. 109-124

Robert Kaplan  
“The Coming Anarchy”  
*The Atlantic Monthly*  
February, 1994  
available online: [www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/02/the-coming-anarchy/30470/](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/02/the-coming-anarchy/30470/)

Michael Klare  
Chapter 8: “Shaping the Course of History”  
*The Race for What’s Left*  
2012  
pp. 209-234

James Lovelock  
Chapter 5 (excerpt): “Sources of Energy”  
*The Revenge of Gaia*  
2006  
pp. 87-105

Charles C. Mann

“What if We Never Run Out of Oil?”

*The Atlantic Monthly*

May, 2013

available online: [www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/05/what-if-we-never-run-out-of-oil/309294](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/05/what-if-we-never-run-out-of-oil/309294)

## **GRADING RUBRIC**

20% attendance, preparation (expect quizzes!), and participation

20% field assignments (as detailed below)

30% midterm exam

30% final exam

## **TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE** (\* indicates electronic course materials)

### **1. Overview: An Abnormal Era**

### **2. Growth, Limits, and Sustainability (I)**

Friedman, chapter 2: “Today’s Date: 1 E.C.E.” (pp. 26-49)

Brown, chapter 1: “On the Edge” (pp. 3-18)

Sachs, chapter 2: “Our Crowded Planet” (pp. 17-53)

### **3. Growth, Limits, and Sustainability (II)**

\*Clapp and Dauvergne, *Paths to a Green World* (pp. 1-17)

Friedman, chapter 3: “Our Carbon Copies” (pp. 53-76)

Heinberg, “Introduction: The New Normal” (pp. 1- top p. 22 *only*; can skip all Boxes)

### **4. The Political Environment (I)**

\*Chasek *et al.*, *Global Environmental Politics* (pp. 49-71, middle 76-middle 81, middle 85-middle 99, middle 284-top 306)

Sachs, chapter 14: “The Power of One” (bottom p. 314-bottom 335 *only*)

### **5. The Political Environment (II)**

\*Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy”

Brown, chapter 6: “Environmental Refugees” (pp. 72-83)

Brown, chapter 7: “Mounting Stresses, Failing States” (pp. 84-97)

### **6. Climate Change (I)**

Friedman, chapter 5: “Global Weirding” (pp. 111-139)  
Sachs, chapter 3: “The Anthropocene” (middle p. 77- p. 81 *only*)  
Sachs, chapter 4 (“Global Solutions to Climate Change”), pp. 83-114

### **7. Japan. Focus: Nuclear weapons and energy**

Woodard, chapter 6: “Paradise Lost” (pp. 163-190)  
\*Lovelock, *Revenge of Gaia*, pp. 87-105  
\*Heinberg, *The Party’s Over*, pp. 146-152

### **8. China. Focus: Rivers, dams, and hydropower**

Pearce, chapter 13: “China: The Hanging River” (pp 107-122)  
Pearce, chapter 24: “Taking the Water to the People” (pp. 219-222 *only*)  
Friedman, chapter 15: “Can Red China Become Green?” (pp. 343-367)  
Friedman, chapter 17: “A Democratic China...” (bottom p. 402-409 *only*)  
Sachs, chapter 3: “The Anthropocene” (bottom p 75-middle p. 77 *only*)  
Heinberg, chapter 5: “Shrinking Pie” (middle p. 190-middle p. 201 *only*)

### **9. Viet Nam. Focus: Fisheries**

Pearce, chapter 12: “Mekong: Feel the Pulse” (pp. 93-104)  
Woodard, chapter 3: “Run on the Banks” (pp. 57-96)

### **10. Energy (I): Fossil fuels**

Friedman, chapter 3: “Our Carbon Copies” (pp. 53-77)  
Friedman, chapter 4: “Fill ‘Er Up With Dictators” (pp. 77-110)  
Heinberg, chapter 3: “Earth’s Limits” (pp. 105- top 118 *only*; can skip all Boxes)

### **11. Burma. Focus: Forests**

Brown, chapter 10: “Restoring the Economy’s Natural Support Systems” (pp. 136-150)  
Brown, chapter 11: “Eradicating Poverty, Stabilizing Population, and Rescuing Failing States” (pp. 151-164)

### **12. MIDTERM EXAM**

5 out of 8 terms (50%): *define and explain; write about a page on each!*  
1 out of 2 essays (50%)

### **13. India. Focus: Drought and famine**

- Pearce, chapter 5: “India: A Colossal Anarchy” (pp. 35-44)
- Pearce, chapter 7: “The world’s Largest Mass Poisoning” (pp. 49-55)
- Pearce, chapter 25: “Sewage on Tap” (pp. 231-235)
- Brown, chapter 12: “Feeding Eight Billion” (pp. 165-180)
- Sachs, chapter 10: “Ending Poverty Traps” (pp. 227-253)

### **14. Water**

- Sachs, chapter 5: “Securing Our Water Needs” (pp. 117-137)
- Heinberg, chapter 3: “Earth’s Limits” (bottom p. 124-bottom p. 129 *only*)
- Pearce, chapter 1: “The Human Sponge” (pp. 3-7)
- Pearce, chapter 3: “Riding the Water Cycle” (pp. 19-25)
- Pearce, chapter 8: “Mirages” (pp. 57-63)
- Pearce, chapter 9: “The Common Wealth” (pp. 67-75)
- Pearce, chapter 15: “Wonders of the World” (pp. 131-139)
- Pearce, chapter 16: “Sun, Silt, and Stagnant Ponds” (pp. 141-145)
- Pearce, chapter 17: “Dams that Cause Floods” (pp. 147-152)
- Pearce, chapter 20: “Swords of Damocles” (pp. 175-181)

### **15. Agriculture**

- Pearce, chapter 27: “Out of thin Air” (middle p. 253-p. 255 *only*)
- Pearce, chapter 29: “On the Grapevine” (pp. 267-272)
- Pearce, chapter 33: “More Crop Per Drop” (pp. 299-304)
- Heinberg, chapter 3: “Earth’s Limits” (bottom p. 129-middle p. 138 *only*)
- Brown, chapter 2: “Falling Water Tables” (pp. 21-33)
- Brown, chapter 3: “Eroding Soils” (pp. 34-44)
- Brown, chapter 4: “Rising Temperatures” (pp. 45-55)
- Brown, chapter 5: “Politics of Food Security” (pp. 59-71)

### **16. Wilderness and Biodiversity**

- Friedman, chapter 6: “The Age of Noah” (pp. 140-153)
- Friedman, chapter 13: “A Million Noahs” (pp. 297-304, 312-316 *only*)
- Sachs, chapter 3: “The Anthropocene” (bottom p. 66-middle p. 75 *only*)
- Sachs, chapter 6: “A Home for All Species” (pp 139-155)

### **17. The Exponential Function**

- Epstein, “Preface,” pp. xi-xix
- Epstein, chapter 1: “The Outsiders” (pp. 3-38)
- Epstein, chapter 3: “Why Are HIV Rates So High in Africa?” (pp. 49-65)

## **18. South Africa. Focus: Infectious disease**

Epstein, chapter 4: “The African Earthquake” (pp. 66-85)  
Epstein, chapter 6: “A President, a Crisis, a Tragedy” (pp. 105-125)  
Epstein, chapter 7: “AIDS, Inc.” (pp. 126-140)  
Epstein, chapter 9: “The Invisible Cure” (pp. 155-171)  
Epstein, Epilogue: “Traditional Medicine” (pp. 253-261)

## **19. The Oceans**

Woodard, chapter 1: “Dead Seas” (pp. 1-28)  
Woodard, chapter 2: “Ocean Blues” (pp 29-56)  
\*Mann, “What If We Never Run Out of Oil?”

## **20. Climate Change (II)**

Woodard, chapter 4: “Muddied Waters” (pp. 97-top 125 *only*)  
Woodard, chapter 6: “Paradise Lost” (middle p. 172-bottom p. 177 and 184-189 *only*)  
Woodard, chapter 8: “Sea Change” (pp. 227-244 *only*)  
Heinberg, chapter 3: “Earth’s Limits” (pp. 145-153 *only*; can skip all Boxes)

## **21. Ghana. Focus: Poverty and overpopulation**

\*Carroll, “High Tech Trash”  
Sachs, chapter 7: “Global Population Dynamics” (pp 159-182)  
Sachs, chapter 8: “Completing the Demographic Transition” (pp 183-202)  
Friedman, chapter 7: “Energy Poverty” (pp. 154-169)  
Heinberg, chapter 5: “Shrinking Pie” (middle p. 212-top p. 228 *only*; can skip all Boxes)

## **22. Energy (II): Alternatives to fossil fuels**

Brown, chapter 8: “Building an Energy-Efficient Global Economy” (pp. 99-115)  
Brown, chapter 9: “Harnessing Wind” (pp. 116-135)  
Friedman, chapter 8: “Green is the New Red, White and Blue” (pp. 170-199)  
Friedman, chapter 11: “The Stone Age Didn’t End...” (pp. 259-266 *only*)  
\*Heinberg, *Snake Oil* (pp. 109-124)

## **23. Morocco. Focus: Natural resources**

Heinberg, chapter 3: “Earth’s Limits” (bottom p. 138-143 *only*)  
\*Klare, *The Race for What’s Left*, pp. 209-23

## 24. Environmental Justice

Sachs, chapter 13: "Achieving Global Goals" (pp 291-311)

Brown, chapter 13: "Saving Civilization" (pp. 183-202)

Heinberg, chapter 6: "Managing Contraction" (middle p. 246- top p. 259 *only*)

## 25. FINAL EXAM

5 out of 8 terms (50%): *define and explain; write about a page on each!*

1 out of 2 essays (50%)

### POSTSCRIPT: "Hymn to Man" (choral ode from Sophocles' *Antigone*)

Many are the wonders, none  
is more wonderful than what is man.  
This it is that crosses the sea  
with the south winds storming and the waves swelling,  
breaking around him in roaring surf.  
He it is again who wears away  
the earth, oldest of the gods, immortal, unwearied,  
as the ploughs wind across her from year to year  
when he works her with the breed that comes from horses.  
The tribe of the lighthearted birds he snares  
and takes prisoner the races of savage beasts  
and the brood of fish of the sea,  
with the close-spun web of nests.  
A cunning fellow is man. His contrivances  
make him master of beasts of the field  
and those that move in the mountains.  
So he brings the horse with the shaggy neck  
to bend underneath the yoke;  
and also the untamed mountain bull;  
and speech and windswift thought  
and the tempers that go with city living  
he has taught himself, and how to avoid  
the sharp frost, when lodging is cold  
under the open sky  
and pelting strokes of the rain.  
He has a way against everything,  
and he faces nothing that is to come  
without contrivance.  
Only against death  
can he call on no means of escape;  
but escape from hopeless diseases



he has found in the depths of his mind.  
With some sort of cunning, inventive  
beyond all expectation  
he reaches sometimes evil,  
and sometimes good.

If he honors the laws of earth,  
and the justice of the gods he has confirmed by his oaths,  
high is his city; no city  
has he who dwells dishonor  
prompted by recklessness.  
He who is so, may he never  
share my hearth!  
may he never think my thoughts!

## **FIELD WORK**

Field work conducted in our various ports of call is collectively worth 20% of your final grade. There will be a required field lab and a field assignment.

**FIELD LAB.** The following field lab, scheduled for our last day in Ho Chi Minh City (February 19), is required for this course:

### **Environment and Development in Viet Nam**

Like many developing countries, Viet Nam is experiencing conflicts between economic development and environmental protection. One such conflict concerns wetlands: should they be legally protected, in recognition of the ecosystem services that they provide, or should they be opened up to commercial activity? In the company of a researcher from the College of Environmental Science, we will travel by motorcoach to an ecotourist venue, Can Gio Biosphere. Counted among Viet Nam's most diverse natural habitats, the Biosphere is under threat from the country's lucrative shrimp farming industry. Current methods of shrimp farming compete with agricultural and other uses of the watershed, and impose substantial externalities on other parties. After lunch we will visit a working shrimp farm and assess the degree to which this form of aquaculture represents a beneficial and sustainable use of the wetland ecosystem.

A 3 to 4 page essay describing and evaluating your experience in light of what you have learned in the course is due at the beginning of class on day A13. This report will be worth 10% of your final grade. In preparing your report, you should think about the following issues: How, and to what extent, did the field lab advance your understanding of the themes of this course? How can you connect it to the assigned readings? To what extent did it help you establish links between this course and the others you are taking? Did you experience things that puzzled or surprised you, or led you to alter your views?

## **Academic Objectives:**

1. To learn about the challenges of environmental protection in low-income countries
2. To visit wetlands and find out
  - why they are ecologically important and
  - what the government of Viet Nam is doing to preserve them
3. To gain a deeper understanding of the apparent conflict between development and environmental protection
4. To investigate current shrimp farming practices and discuss how they can be made more sustainable

**FIELD ASSIGNMENT.** You are required to obtain and read English-language newspapers in two of our host countries, excluding Viet Nam, with the goal of identifying and analyzing pressing environmental problems and how these are, or are not, being addressed politically. For each of the countries you choose, you will submit a 1-2 page essay describing your findings. The essays, due two weeks after leaving port, are worth 5% each.

## **HONOR CODE**

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University's honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult "The Voyager's Handbook" for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: "On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment." The pledge must be signed, or, in case of an electronic file, signed "[signed]."

## **RECOMMENDED FILMS**

The following films, which may be televised during the evening hours, have special relevance to the themes of this course. Watch them if you have the time and interest.

A Fierce Green Fire  
Arithmetic, Population and Energy  
Bidder 70  
Blind Spot  
Blood Diamonds

China Blue  
The Corporation  
The Cove  
Earth Days  
Food, Inc.  
Gasland  
Hotel Rwanda  
Six Degrees  
The Tipping Point  
Thirst  
Tropic of Chaos  
When the Water Ends