

# Anthropology of the Environment

Fall 2016 Syllabus  
Dr. Matthew Walls  
matthew.walls@ucalgary.ca  
ANTH 313  
ST 131 MWF 10- 10:50  
Office Hours: Wednesday 13:00-14:00 ES 602D



---

We face a world which is threatened not only with disorganization of many kinds, but also with the destruction of its environment, and we, today, are still unable to think clearly about the relations between an organism and its environment. What sort of thing is this, which we call 'organism *plus* environment'?

—Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*

---

Overview: This course examines the complexity of human-environment relationships from an anthropological perspective. As discussions of degradation, global change and loss of biodiversity grow urgent, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the connections between humans and the environment. What do we mean by "nature", and how do we come to perceive and respond as communities in the world around us? This course addresses these questions in three sections: 1) Nature & Culture, 2) Post-human Environments, and 3) Political Ecology. The first part of this course examines the history of anthropological thought on the role the environment plays in human life processes and the making of communities. We will trace a development of thinking, which began with a deeply held assumption that nature and culture are separate domains, and will come to see how this dichotomy was challenged through cross-cultural ethnographic cases. In the second part of the course, we will explore how contemporary science and technology is reordering human-environment relationships. What is a post-human environment? And how might genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, or virtual reality change our relationships with the world? In the final section, we will focus on anthropological contributions to the political ecology of contemporary environmental concerns. Applying skills developed in the first part of the course, we will examine concepts like "sustainability", and will scrutinize power relations embedded in certain manifestations of contemporary environmentalism and policy making. Themes we will address include biodiversity conservation, overpopulation, urban ecology and the position of Indigenous communities in environmental politics.

Skills & Learning Objectives: Through this course, students will learn think anthropologically about environmental issues, and will develop:

- A firm understanding of the discipline's foundational theory on how humans perceive and respond in dynamic environments.
- The ability to identify recurring themes in how nature and culture are construed in environmental theory and policymaking.
- A strong ethnographic knowledge of the diversity and patterns in relationships in how communities relate to their environments.

**Format:** The course will follow a lecture format, which will follow a suite of assigned readings and other materials, including films. The schedule of readings and their corresponding lectures will be posted on Desire2Learn (D2L).

**Readings & Texts:**

Many of the readings will come from the following two texts:

Haenn, N, R. R. Wild. (2016). *The environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living*. New York: NYU Press

Ingold, T. (2000). *The Perception of the Environment*. London: Routledge

\*Both texts are available online through the U of C library, and Haenn & Wild (2016) can be bought at the Bookstore.

There will also be additional readings and other materials which will be posted on D2L, under the Content > Readings. Students should do the assigned reading before attending the lecture, and will keep an annotated bibliography, which will form a part of the course requirements.

**Course Requirements/Marks:**

Final grades will be based on marks in the following categories:

Midterm Exam	25% (Oct. 21)
Post-Human Futures Assignment	15% (Nov. 4)
Annotated Bibliography	20% -
D2L Discussion Participation	10% TBD
Final Paper	30% (Dec. 9)

Midterm exam questions will be drawn from the lecture, course and text readings, and from the films. We will have an in-class review of course materials before the Midterm on October 19. The format of the exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer. The exam will also include a long answer question which will be completed as a take-home assignment and uploaded to D2L by 6:00pm on October 21.

Post-human Futures Assignment: This will be a short 5-page creative assignment in which students will apply concepts developed in the first part of the course to an imagined near future where human-environment relationships are reordered through catastrophic environmental episodes, genetic engineering, virtual reality, or artificial intelligence. Details and rubrics for the assignment will be presented in class, and will coincide with readings on post-humanism in Part 2.

Annotated Bibliography: Students must produce a half-page, single spaced, annotation for at least 10 of the assigned readings. Each annotation will be worth 2% (up to 20% of the total course mark). To receive full marks, each annotation must include a brief summary of the article's argument, it's evidence, and broader implications. The annotation must also be uploaded to the

appropriate D2L drobox before the relevant lecture starts. Annotations that are late, or do not fulfil the above specifications will be worth 1%.

D2L Discussion Participation: During the political ecology section of the course, we will use the D2L discussion forwn to generate discussion on topics, and support research in developing the final papers. Participation will be worth 10% and will be graded according to rubrics presented in class.

Final Paper: The final papers (10-15 pages) will be based on a case study in Political Ecology surrounding one of the themes that we address in class. The final paper due on Dec. 9 at 6:00 pm, and will be uploaded to D2L. Details and grading rubrics for the final paper will presented in class on November 7.

\*We will try and keep the course as paperless as possible, and most course materials will be submitted electronically through D2L.

Grading Scheme: We will be following the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology's standard scheme.

A+	100-94.9%	A	94.8-89.9%	A-	89.8-84.9%
B+	84.8-79.9%	B	79.8-74.9%	B-	74.8-70.9%
C+	70.8-66.9%	C	66.8-62.9%	C-	62.8-58.9%
D+	58.8-54.9%	D	54.8-49.9%	F	49.8% and below

Course Schedule: The readings list, key dates, and lecture schedule will be posted on D2L.

Email Policy: PLEASE include the word ANTH 313 in the title of any email messages. Please keep messages as concise as possible, and I will try to respond within 2 workings days. Ifyou are unable to attend the scheduled office hours, but would still like to see me in person, we can schedule an appointment.

Academic Accommodations:

The academic accommodations policy can be found at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy>.

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodations and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact them at 403-220-6019. Students that have not registered with the SAS are not eligible for formal academic accommodations. More information about the academic accommodations can be found at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access>.

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

Plagiarism: "to steal and pass off the ideas or words of another as one's own" (Webster's). Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will automatically result in a failing grade for the submission. Any student caught plagiarizing July also be subject to additional University sanctions. Students are expected to be familiar with the Arts Faculty's policy on intellectual honesty available at: <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/plagiarismcheating>

## **EMERGENCY EVACUATION**

In the event that we need to evacuate the classroom due to an emergency, please note that the primary assembly point shall be Food Court in the Professional Faculties (PF) Bldg. FYI: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/emergency/plan/home/evacuation-assembly-points/assembly-points>.

## **USRI:**

At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses ([www.ucalgary.ca/usri](http://www.ucalgary.ca/usri)). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys.

*The Department of Anthropology and Archaeology's FOIP (Freedom of Information and Privacy) policy requires all reports/examinations to be returned to students during class time or the instructor's office hours. Any term work not picked up will be placed in the Anthropology and Archaeology Office (ES620) for distribution. Any student not wishing to have their work placed in the office must make alternate arrangements with the course instructor early in the term.*