

Course Syllabus
Geography 208: Environment and Society
Instructor: Dr. Kurt Waldman
kbwaldma@iu.edu

Tues/Thurs 11:30am-12:45pm (GA 1100)
Fall 2022

I. Course Overview

In this course, we will explore the deeply interconnected biophysical and social forces that shape nature/society relations, from agriculture and biodiversity to flooding and climate change. What biophysical and social cycles shape our world, and how have they changed over time? How do we disrupt those cycles? What tools can we use to repair them? The central point of the course is that every environmental issue is simultaneously a social issue, so if we analyze them separately, we cannot address them well.

II. Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

1. Explain nutrient, solar, hydrological and atmospheric cycles, and their interconnections with colonialism, capitalism and inequality.
2. Think (and read) more critically about eco-social issues, including understanding the difference between expertise and opinion.
3. Understand a range of options for addressing those issues from social movements to regulation to multilateral agreements.

These course learning objectives correspond with the following learning objectives for Gen/Ed N&M courses, in which students should develop:

- o An understanding of scientific inquiry and the basis for technology;
- o The ability to model and understand the physical and natural world;
- o Analytical and/or quantitative skills.

III. Class Etiquette

You will find links to and explanations of all required work for each class meeting on the Module for that day. Modules can be found in the tool bar on the left side of the screen for our Canvas site.

All class meetings will take place in person (unless something changes at the university level). This course is almost entirely discussion based, so communicating respectfully is key. Ordinarily, that means using respectful language and avoiding distracting behaviors. Please avoid multi-tasking and focus your attention on our discussion. This means closing other browser windows and turn your phone off.

There are no correct answers to the questions we'll be discussing in this course. Thus, I expect and encourage you to disagree with me and your fellow students. To make that work, though, we all need to avoid personal attacks. Please keep your language respectful at all times.

Participation is part of your grade in this class, so it is crucial that everyone have time to speak in whole class discussions and in small group breakout sessions.

IV. Office Hours and Email

I have office hours times posted on the homepage of Canvas. The teaching assistant for this course, **Daniel Fobi**, will also hold office hours (posted on Canvas). We will block off these times to meet with you and be available in person or by Zoom. I encourage you to talk to us about the course content or related subjects.

Please be aware that we do not always check email in the evenings or on weekends. Also, please use respectful email practices, such as:

- Include the course number in the subject line of the email so that your message does not get lost in my inbox.
- If you are writing with a question about course organization, please double-check the syllabus first to be sure the answer isn't there already.

V. Required Work for this Class

There are three kinds of required work for this class: participation, reading responses, and quizzes at the end of each unit.

1. *Course participation (30% of grade)*

This course is almost entirely discussion based. Because of that you must come to class meetings prepared to discuss the day's assigned reading.

By prepared, I mean that you have:

- completed all of the assigned reading,
- thought about it in relation to the reading questions,
- answered the readings questions, and
- printed your copy of the assigned reading, or have it easily available in some way that still allows you to see the zoom meeting, as we will make reference to particular passages many times each class meeting.

There are two ways to participate in class discussions this term:

1. By far the best option is for you to attend course meetings and participate in both small group and full class discussions.
2. If you are too sick to participate, have technical difficulties that interrupt your presence at our Zoom calls, or your care responsibilities prevent you from attending course, please get in touch so that we can arrange an alternate way for you to receive participation credit.

2. *Responses to Reading Questions (30% of grade)*

To encourage preparedness for class, I will assign a set of 2 – 4 reading questions for each class. Answer the questions via Canvas **no later than one hour before class (10:30 am) before class begins** each [Tuesday/Thursday]. I will drop your two lowest grades.

The reading questions will ask you to summarize what the reading covered or the author argued, or to explain your perspective on the text: whether you found the information or argument to be persuasive, what types of questions it raised for you, and/or how you might connect it to other readings or themes within the course.

Your responses should be clearly written, free of errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, and succinct. Brevity is useful and often demonstrates a stronger grasp of the material than a lot of “filler” language. Typically, one or two paragraphs will be sufficient response to each question.

It is never appropriate to copy and paste from the reading. Always use your own words. Please use evidence to support your points by referring to class readings and ideas in your response, and strive for clarity (e.g. avoid vague phrasing that allows multiple interpretations of what you mean). Because responses are due before we have discussed the readings, I do not expect you to have a perfect grasp of the authors’ points. Do your best. You are always welcome to say something along the lines of, “I’m not sure I understood this, but here’s what I think X was saying....”

If you were unable to do the reading for that day’s class meeting, please be honest rather than trying to fool me. To encourage this, if you write “I was not able to do the reading for today” as your answer to the reading response, you will get half credit. Please do not abuse this option. If you find you are still getting low grades on reading responses after the first week of classes, I strongly encourage you to talk to me after class or during office hours (listed above) about how to do better.

3. *Quizzes at the end of each unit (40% of grade)*

As you will see in the syllabus, there will be four short online quizzes via Canvas during the semester, one at the end of each unit of the course. These quizzes will be short, typically 3-5 questions long, and you will be allocated 20 minutes to complete them. The quizzes are not cumulative. They will focus on the key ideas from the unit just completed. The two tools of change assignments at the end of the semester are 5% of the quizzes grade.

VI. Grading

I grade generously and thus **I will not discuss grades**. The one exception is if you find an arithmetic error in adding up points on your exams.

I grade using a point scale, and I do not impose a curve.

A+ = 99-100%

A = 94 - 98%

A- = 90 – 93%

B+ = 87 – 89%

B = 83-86%

B- = 80 – 82%

C+ = 77 – 79%

C = 73 – 76%

C- = 70 – 72%

D+ = 67 – 69%

D = 63 – 66%

D- = 60 – 62%

F = 59% or less

Grades in this course will be based on:

1. Course participation: 30%
2. Responses to reading questions for each class meeting: 35%
3. Quizzes at the end of each course unit: 35%

VII. Other Policies

Academic Misconduct

To avoid academic misconduct, use the same rules you use to behave well in the rest of your life: don't cheat and don't lie. If you want to follow up, either come talk to me or see:

<http://www.iu.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/index.shtml> (Links to an external site.). I expect that any work you do in this course, from reading questions to presentations, will be your own.

Students with Learning Disabilities

Students with a learning disability, hearing impairment, speech impairment, or any other disability that may affect their ability to fulfill a requirement of the College should contact the Disability Services for Students in Franklin Hall 096, (812) 855-7578, prior to registering. Requirements will not be waived for students with disabilities; however, some modifications may be made within specific courses.

Sexual Harassment

As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. Title IX and our own Sexual Misconduct policy prohibit sexual misconduct. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help.

If you are seeking help and would like to speak to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with:

The Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) at 812-855-8900

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 812-855-5711

Confidential Victim Advocates (CVA) at 812-856-2469

IU Health Center at 812-855-4011.

More information about available resources can be found

here: <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/help/index.html> (Links to an external site.).

It is also important that you know that federal regulations and University policy require me to promptly convey any information about potential sexual misconduct known to me to our campus' Deputy Title IX Coordinator or IU's Title IX Coordinator. In that event, they will work with a small number of others on campus to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available to the student who may have been harmed. Protecting a student's privacy is of utmost concern, and all involved will only share information with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist.

I encourage you to visit stopsexualviolence.iu.edu to learn more.

Intellectual Property

I hold the exclusive right to distribute, modify, post, and reproduce course materials, including all written materials, study guides, lectures, assignments, exercises, and exams. While you are permitted to take notes on the online materials and discussions for this course for your personal use, you are not permitted to re-post in another forum, distribute, or reproduce content from this course without the express written permission of the faculty member. Any violation of this course rule will be reported to the appropriate university offices and officials, including to the Dean of Students as academic misconduct.

VIII. Course Structure

Always come to class having:

- completed all of the assigned reading,
- thought about it in relation to the reading preparation questions,
- answered the reading questions, and
- printed your copy of the assigned reading (or have it easily to hand on another device).

IX. Course Readings (note that reading list and questions are on Canvas under modules)

Week 1. Course Introduction

- Day 1 (8/23): Introduction
- Day 2 (8/25): The Great Dying, the Anthropocene, and the Practice of Science

Week 2. Unit 1 – Agriculture: Introduction & Disruptions

- Day 3 (8/30): Introduction to agriculture
- Day 4 (9/1): Disruptions at multiple scales

Week 3. Unit 1 – Agriculture (cont'd): Farming Practices and Food Insecurity

- Day 5 (9/6): Hunger and famine in the 1800s
- Day 6 (9/8): Creating our crops

Week 4. Unit 1 – Agriculture (cont'd): Food Insecurity (cont'd) and Agroecology

- Day 7 (9/13): Food insecurity today
 - Day 8 (9/15): Solutions: agroecology and sustainable farming
- ** Quiz on unit 1 (online): available 9/16 at 10:00am, due 9/20 by 11:00pm**

Week 5. Unit 2 – Ecology: Introduction and disruptions

- Day 9 (9/20): Introduction to ecology & biomes
- Day 10 (9/22): Ecological disruptions

Week 6. Unit 2 – Ecology (cont'd): Evolution

- Day 11 (9/27): Evolution basics
- Day 12 (9/29): Evolution and natural selection

Week 7. Unit 2 – Ecology (cont'd): Social Darwinism and Environmental Racism

- Day 13 (10/4): Social Darwinism and its legacies
- Day 14 (10/6): Environmental racism

Week 8. Unit 2 – Ecology (cont'd): Biogeography and Solutions

- Day 15 (10/11): Biogeography and ecological imperialism
- Day 16 (10/13): Ecology solutions: Protected areas?

****Quiz on unit 2** (online): available 10/14 at 10:00am, due 10/18 by 11:00pm

Week 9. Unit 3 – Hydrology: Introduction and Disruptions

- Day 17 (10/18): Introduction to hydrology
- Day 18 (10/20): Hydrology disruptions

Week 10. Unit 3 – Hydrology (cont'd): Disasters and Access

- Day 19 (10/25): There is no such thing as a natural disaster
- Day 20 (10/27): Drinking water access and water privatization

Week 11. Unit 3 – Hydrology (cont'd): Solutions and Unit 4 – Climate Change: Intro

- Day 21 (11/1): Solutions to water issues

****Quiz on unit 3** (online): available 11/2 at 10:00am, due 11/6 by 11:00pm

- Day 22 (11/3): Introduction to climate change

Week 12. Unit 4 – Climate Change: Disruptions and impacts

- Day 23 (11/8): Disruptions: sources and longevity of greenhouse gases
- Day 24 (11/10): Ecological impacts of climate change

Week 13. Unit 4 – Climate Change (cont'd): Impacts (cont'd) and social psychology

- Day 25 (11/15): Ecological impacts of climate change
- Day 26 (11/17): Social impacts of climate change & climate change adaptation

Thanksgiving break (11/21-11/25)

Week 14. Unit 4 – Climate Change (cont'd): Solutions

- Day 26 (11/29): Climate denial and environmental psychology
- Day 27 (12/1): Solutions: multilateral governance and the IPCC

****Quiz on unit 4** (online): available 12/2 at 10:00am, due 12/6 by 11:00pm

Week 15. Course Wrap-Up

- Day 28 (12/6): Solutions for the Anthropocene: Tools for change (part 1)
- Day 29 (12/8): Solutions for the Anthropocene: Tools for change (part 2)

Reminder: there is no final exam.