Texas A&M University
Departmental Request for a New Course
Undergraduate • Graduate • Professional
* Submit original form and attach a course syllabus.

1. This request is submitted by the Department of Geography

2. Course prefix, number and complete title of course: GEOG 629 - Cultural and Political Ecology

3. Catalog course description (not to exceed 50 words): History of ideas about humans and environment; political and social meanings of nature and culture; access and control of resources; theories of environmental change; geographic approaches to political ecology research; current debates and future directions.

4. Prerequisite(s): None
   Cross-listed with: None
   Cross-listed courses require the signature of both department heads.

5. Is this a variable credit course? □ Yes  □ No  If yes, from ____ to ____

6. Is this a repeatable course? □ Yes  □ No  If yes, this course may be taken ____ times.
   Will this course be repeated within the same semester? □ Yes  □ No

7. Has this course been taught as a 489/689? □ Yes  □ No  If yes, how many times? ___
   Indicate the number of students enrolled for each academic period it was taught. 5

8. This course will be:
   a. required for students enrolled in the following degree programs(s) (e.g., B.A. in history)

   b. an elective for students enrolled in the following degree program(s) (e.g., M.S., Ph.D. in geography)

   M.S. and Ph.D. in Geography

9. If other departments are teaching or are responsible for related subject matter, the course must be coordinated with these departments. Attach approval letters.

10. Prefix Course # Title (excluding punctuation) GEOG 629 CULTURAL Political ECOL
    Lect. Lab SCH CIP and Fund Code Admin. Unit Acad. Year FICE Code
    0 3 0 0 0 3 4 5 0 7 0 1 0 0 0 1 2 5 0 1 0 - 1 1 0 0 3 6 3 2
    Approval recommended by: Douglas Sherman 2/18/09
    Department Head - Type Name & Sign Date
    Department Head - Type Name & Sign Date
    (if cross-listed course)
    Submitted to Coordinating Board by:
    Associate Director, Curricular Services

Chair, College Review Committee 3/12/09
Dean of College Date
Dean of College 4/1

Effective Date

Questions regarding this form should be directed to Sandra Williams at 845-8201 or sandra.williams@tamu.edu
Curricular Services - 12/08
GEOG 629 Cultural and Political Ecology

Course Syllabus – Semester Spring 2010

Instructor: Kathleen O’Reilly, Ph.D.

Lectures: TBA

Office Hours: TBA and by appointment
201C CSA Building
Tel. 845-6519
E-mail koreilly@geog.tamu.edu
(E-mail hours will coincide with regular office hours)

Principle course texts:


Course description
This course is an exploration of ideas and themes within geography called ‘cultural ecology’ and ‘political ecology.’ These terms themselves are contentious, but for purposes of introduction we can define political ecology as the study of unequal control and access of natural resources. Cultural ecology focuses on human-environment interactions, with particular attention to the social meanings of resources in the context of sustainable development and conservation processes. During this course, we will explore many theoretical and methodological approaches to cultural and political ecology as geographers have sought to broaden the impact of the field. We also look to other disciplines whose work has influenced cultural and political ecology in geography. The course material covers a range of topics in order to give students breadth of knowledge about the foundations of current debates and potential future directions. The syllabus represents only a fraction of significant work in cultural and political ecology; further reading is imperative for serious students.

One important thread throughout this course will be a continuous interrogation of definitions of ‘nature’ and ‘culture,’ and interactions between nature and society. Debate continues to rage over ‘what is nature?’, ‘what is culture?’, and ‘how do they relate to each other?’ This course aims to guide students through critical debates surrounding the answers to these questions theoretically, methodologically, and empirically. It traverses the history of ideas about relationships between humans, nature and environmental change, while emphasizing the important geographic contributions to this body of thought. We also take time to read the work of two important thinkers on power and politics, namely Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci, because a study of unequal access to resources must be informed by theorizations of power.

We begin by immersing ourselves in definitions of cultural and political ecology and discussions of the significance of ‘human ecology’ to geography. We then explore some initial questions of subject/object and nature/society relations. This is followed by readings reacting to Enlightenment thought, including Hegelian idealism and Marxist historical materialism. We will trace the intellectual history of cultural and political ecology through environmental determinism and hazards research. We will also cover the theoretical perspectives that structure current debates, including: ecomarxism, feminism, the Frankfurt School, poststructuralism, and First World political ecology perspectives. Included throughout are pieces linking theory and empirical data.

Course Format
This course will be conducted at an advanced level. This means that students are expected to come to class sessions prepared to discuss the readings in depth. There will be some lecturing, and I will be ready at any time to answer questions and/or define terms that are troubling anyone about the readings, their themes or their implications. Individual students will take responsibility for presenting a review of readings to the class and for facilitating group discussion with the instructor. Student facilitators will prepare both written and oral reviews of readings. (See details in course requirements.)
Course web site
This course will have an accompanying website that you can find by going to https://elearning.tamu.edu
Enter your User Name and Password, then click Okay.
WebCT will be used for class communications such as Reading Reviews (see below).

Course Requirements and Assessment
Readings
Because the discussion of readings forms the core of the course, assignments must be read before coming to class. Highlighted readings are key.

Reading reviews
Each student will be responsible for multiple reading reviews. Each review will include: i) a minimum of 2 paragraphs that summarize the article; ii) important quotes from the article (cited with page numbers); iii) a minimum one paragraph critique; iv) a list of questions to stimulate discussion. It is more important for the review to stimulate ideas and discussion than for it to be the correct interpretation of the work. It is also more important for it to be easily comprehended than to be jammed with complex details. If there is something that you do not understand, try to explain what that something is, and why you are not clear about it. Go beyond "I don't get it" and try to specify what is confusing you. Publish your review on WebCT by midnight the day before it will be discussed in class. Reviews do not stand as a substitute for in-depth readings by all class members.

Participation
All students are expected to be in class every day, prepared to participate and discuss. You will be graded on participation. Participation involves more than simply showing up. It entails contributing to discussion with thoughtful comments and questions about the material. You will be evaluated on your contributions to each class. For further information on the Texas A&M University attendance policy refer to http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm

Book Review

Research Paper
A 20-25 page research paper is required for students. The topic will be selected by you, but I strongly recommend that you discuss it with me in advance. The topic must be clearly related to the course, but I encourage you to use the opportunity to develop your own research interests.

The topic should be a critical evaluation of an issue that arises out of the literature (and its extensions) that we have discussed. Identify a theme early in the paper and then use the text of the paper to explore perspectives on the theme, come to judgments about the alternative perspectives, and present your own analysis of the issue. The tone should be critical; the style and language scholarly. The literature should be well reviewed and referenced. The bibliography should go well beyond the course readings.

Write this paper as you would the preliminary sections of a publishable paper, with an introduction to the problem, thorough literature review and critical discussion of theory. Use Chicago Style for your bibliography. (This is the Annals of the AAG format. Aim high!) The following website offers some basic guidance on writing a literature review should you need assistance: http://library.ucsc.edu/ref/howto/literaturereview.html. I am also available to help.

Grading
Final Paper 30%
Book review 20%
Reading Reviews 30%
Participation 20%
Total 100%

The grade breakdown is as follows:

A 90-100
B 80-89
C 70-79
D 60-69
F 59 and below

Note: Grades are not routinely rounded up. For example, an 89.9 is a B, not an A.
Classroom Policies
Graduate level discussion involves taking risks with ideas, questions, and insights. For this reason it is imperative that we all behave respectfully towards others. TA&M is committed to providing an educational and work climate that is conducive to the personal and professional development of each individual. See http://student-rules.tamu.edu

**Academic integrity and Plagiarism**
I will not tolerate any form of dishonesty, cheating or plagiarism. The Aggie Honor Code is:
"An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do."
Simply put, do not do it! In this course, you are expected to do your own, original work that has not been previously submitted for credit. If you have additional questions or concerns about academic integrity, please bring these to my attention.

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of that person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest issue of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, http://student-rules.tamu.edu/, under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty."

**Students with Disabilities**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room B118 of Cain Hall. The phone number is 845-1637. http://studentlife.tamu.edu/

**Copyrights**
All course materials are copyrighted. These materials include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless permission is expressly granted. Taping and reproducing of course material for other than personal use will be regarded as copyright infringement and referred to University lawyers for action. Before tape recording, ask me first. Professional note-takers must be enrolled in this course (university policy) and receive my permission prior to any commercial transaction involving course notes (state law).

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| 5 | Hazards and Landscapes, and Bears, oh my! | Kates and Burton, eds. 1986. *Geography, resources, and environment. Vol I: Selected writings of Gilbert F. White*. Chapters 6 and 22 entitled “Strategic aspects of urban floodplain occupancy” and “Natural hazards research”.  
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From: Kathleen O’Reilly <koreilly@geog.tamu.edu>
Subject: [Fwd: Re: proposed new seminar]
Date: February 23, 2009 2:27:54 PM CST
To: Sarah Bednarz <s-bednarz@tamu.edu>

sarah,

fyi, we have Cynthia Werner’s support for the CAPE seminar. See attached. She is, you know, the rep to the univ
curriculum committee for Liberal Arts.

best,
kathleen

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This e-mail was typed with voice recognition software, which may introduce spelling and grammatical errors into
the message.

Kathleen O’Reilly, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University
Department of Geography
810 O&M Building
3147 TAMU
College Station, TX 77840-3147
Office: 979-845-6519
koreilly@geog.tamu.edu http://geography.tamu.edu/index.php?
pid=78&option=com_content&task=view&id=250&Itemid=192

From: "Werner, Cynthia A" <werner@neo.tamu.edu>
Date: February 22, 2009 9:57:03 AM CST
To: Kathleen O’Reilly <koreilly@geog.tamu.edu>
Subject: Re: proposed new seminar

Hi Kathleen,

Thanks for sharing this. As you know, political ecology and cultural ecology are also subfields of anthropology;
however, nobody in the Anthro Dept at Texas A&M offers such a class, and I don’t think it is likely to be added by
any of existing faculty members. Whenever issues like this come up, I never quite understand the "territorial"
approach. So, I would be happy to support the class, and even to recommend it to my graduate students.

Cynthia

----- Original Message ----- 
From: "Kathleen O'Reilly" <koreilly@geog.tamu.edu>
To: werner@tamu.edu
Sent: Friday, February 20, 2009 2:42:00 PM GMT -06:00 US/Canada Central
Subject: proposed new seminar

Dear Cynthia,
I'm currently seeking approval for a new graduate level seminar in geography called "cultural and political ecology." Please find the syllabus attached.

The course has been approved by the GEOS Grad Curriculum Committee, and Doug Biggs thought that I should speak to you about the course before my course reaches the university-level committee, where you represent Liberal Arts. The specific concern is that the course content may overlap with current graduate courses in the College of Liberal Arts. I have checked offerings in various departments and I have found no obvious overlap.

As you know geography is a very diverse discipline. Cultural and political ecology is a recognized subfield of the discipline, and there is a specialty group of that name, CAPE, that is recognized by the Association of American Geographers. The mission of CAPE is:

To promote scholarly activities on the cultural, economic, demographic and political dimensions of resource use and environmental change, focusing on these issues and their linkages at and across multiple spatial and temporal scales. [http://www2.stetson.edu/cape/](http://www2.stetson.edu/cape/)

My proposed seminar is meant to broadly train students in the theory and practice of cultural and political ecology within geography. Students will be reading and discussing a field of literature that is well-grounded in the geographic tradition and formally accepted by geography as a sub-discipline.

best,
kathleen

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This e-mail was typed with voice recognition software, which may introduce spelling and grammatical errors into the message.

Kathleen O'Reilly, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University
Department of Geography
810 O&M Building
3147 TAMU
College Station, TX 77840–3147

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Cynthia Werner
Associate Professor & Director of Graduate Studies
Department of Anthropology
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas 77843–4352
(979) 847–9254