

ECONOMICS 308
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Fall 2009

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SYNOPSIS:

This course examines the political economy of environmental degradation and environmental protection. Environmental degradation includes both pollution and natural resource depletion. In addition to the neoclassical economic question of how scarce resources are allocated among competing ends (for example, a cleaner environment versus more consumer goods), the course explores the political economy question of how resources are allocated among competing individuals, groups, and classes. The first part of the course deals primarily with environmental issues in the United States; the second part mainly with international environmental issues.

BOOKS:

There are four course books, available for purchase at Amherst Books (8 Main St., Amherst). The books are also on reserve at the W.E.B. DuBois Library:

James K. Boyce, *The Political Economy of the Environment*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2002.

Eban S. Goodstein, *Economics and the Environment*. 5th edn. New York: John Wiley, 2007.

James K. Boyce and Barry G. Shelley, eds., *Natural Assets: Democratizing Environmental Ownership*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2003. [Abbreviated in schedule as *NA*.]

James K. Boyce, Sunita Narain, and Elizabeth A. Stanton, eds., *Reclaiming Nature: Ecological Restoration and Environmental Justice*. London & New York: Anthem Press, 2007. [Abbreviated in schedule as *RN*.]

OTHER READINGS:

The following readings are available on e-reserve at: <http://ereserves.library.umass.edu/>. Password = 308f09.

Boyce, James K. (2008) 'Is Inequality Bad for the Environment?' in R.C. Wilkinson and W.R. Freudenberg, eds., *Research in Social Problems and Public Policy, Vol. 15: Equity and the Environment* (Amsterdam: Elsevier).

Grudgings, Stuart (2009) 'Greenpeace Says Global Beef Trade Destroying the Amazon,' *Scientific American*,
June.

Kaimowitz, David (2004) 'Clearing the Amazon: More Steaks, Less Rain Forest,' *International Herald Tribune*, April 15, p. 6.

Kay, Jane Holtz (1997) *Asphalt Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press), Chs. 6 & 18.

Summers, Lawrence (1992) 'Let Them Eat Pollution', *The Economist*, February 8, p. 66.

Mann, Charles (2004) *Diversity on the Farm* (New York: Ford Foundation, and Amherst: Political Economy Research Institute). Available at: <http://www.peri.umass.edu/fileadmin/pdf/Mann.pdf>.

Mann, Charles (2008) 'Our Good Earth,' *National Geographic*, September 2008.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There are four requirements for this course: (1) a term paper (12-15 pages), for which a preliminary term paper proposal, consisting of a 1-2 page summary of the topic plus a list of sources to be consulted, is also required; (2) a midterm exam; (3) a final exam; and (4) class participation in your discussion section.

The midterm counts for 25% of the course grade; final exam for 35%; the term paper for 35%; and class participation for 5%.

DUE DATES:

Term paper proposal due: Thursday, October 1.

Midterm exam: Friday, October 30.

Term paper due: Friday, December 4.

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Note: Readings are to be done before each class. This schedule is subject to change; please adjust your reading accordingly.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
Sept. 8	Introduction	---

Sept. 10	Political Economy and the Environment	Boyce 2008; Goodstein Chs. 2-3
Sept. 15	Efficiency & Safety	Boyce Ch. 2; Goodstein Chs. 4-5
Sept. 17, 22	Case Study: Tropical Deforestation <i>Film (Sept. 17): Murder on the Amazon</i>	Hall in <i>RN</i> ; Kaimowitz; Grudgings
Sept. 24	Sustainability	Goodstein Chs. 6-7
Sept. 29, Oct. 1	Benefit-Cost Analysis	Boyce Ch 4; Goodstein Chs. 8-10
Oct. 6, 8	Environmental Justice	Pastor in <i>NA</i> ; Harper & Rajan in <i>RN</i>
Oct. 15	Regulation in Principle	Goodstein Chs. 12-13
Oct. 20, 22	Regulation in Practice	Boyce Ch. 6; Goodstein Chs. 14-15
Oct. 27, 29	Taxes & Tradable Permits	Goodstein Chs. 16-17
OCT. 30	MIDTERM EXAM	*****
Nov. 3	Case Study: Ground Transportation <i>Film: Taken for a Ride</i>	Kay
Nov. 5, 10	Environment and Development in 'Poor Countries'	Boyce Chs. 3 & 5; Summers; Goodstein Ch. 20
Nov. 12	Building Natural Assets	Intro in <i>RN</i> ; Kurien in <i>RN</i>
Nov. 17	Land Stewardship	Mann 2008; Peña in <i>NA</i> ; Rosa <i>et al.</i> in <i>RN</i>
Nov. 19	Agricultural Sustainability	Mann 2004; Boyce <i>et al.</i> in <i>RN</i>
Nov. 24, Dec. 1	Environmental Certification <i>Film (Dec. 1): Buyer be Fair</i>	Conroy in <i>RN</i>
Dec. 3, 8	Global Warming: The international political economy of climate accords	Goodstein Ch. 22; Barnes & Breslow in <i>NA</i> ; Narain and Riddle in <i>RN</i>
Dec. 10	Review	---

TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT:

Your term paper should be about the political economy of a local environmental issue in a place with which you are personally familiar, generally either your home town or here in the Pioneer Valley.

Interviews with individuals who are engaged with this issue – including local officials, environmental activists, concerned citizens, and private-sector businesses – should constitute the primary source of information for your paper. Quotations and data obtained from interviews should be properly referenced, citing the interviewee's name (unless anonymity has been requested), institutional affiliation, and the date and location of the interview.

Secondary sources may include newspaper and magazine articles, documents produced by governmental agencies and non-governmental entities, television and radio reports, etc. All such sources should be properly referenced, following the footnote and bibliography formats to be provided in class. All direct quotations (including any quotes obtained from web-based materials) should appear within quotation marks with the source fully cited, following the avoidance-of-plagiarism guidelines to be distributed in class.

Your paper should be roughly 12-15 pages in length, double-spaced (in 12-point font). It should be organized as follows:

- 1. Introduction:** Briefly describe the environmental issue that your paper will analyze, and how you became aware of it.
- 2. Benefits:** Describe the individuals, groups, or classes who benefit (or benefited in the past), as producers or consumers, from the economic activity that has created this environmental problem. What forms do these benefits take (e.g., higher profits, lower prices for consumers)? Attempt to assess the economic magnitude of the benefits received (i.e., in dollar terms).
- 3. Costs:** Describe the individuals, groups, or classes who bear the resulting environmental costs. What forms do these costs take (e.g., effects on health, property values, quality of life)? Attempt to assess the economic magnitude of these costs (again in dollar terms), based on the techniques discussed in class.
- 4. Political economy:** Why are the beneficiaries able to impose environmental costs on others? Has their ability to do so changed over time (for example, as a result of community pressures or government policies)? How and why?
- 5. What is to be done?** In light of your research, what (if anything) do you think can and should be done differently to address this environmental issue?