



ANTH 206: Environment and Culture

McGill University
Fall 2020



Instructor:

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Office hours: Wednesdays 3-4:30pm ET (Montréal time) on Zoom (link posted on MyCourses)

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TA Zoom office hours will be announced and posted on MyCourses once they begin.

Course description:

This course is an introduction to anthropological inquiry into human social and cultural relationships with the environment. Are humans part of the natural world or “more-than-merenature”? What is the relationship between ecology and culture/society? How do people around the world perceive and engage with the natural world and with “non-humans”? How do politics and power shape knowledge(s), perceptions and management of the environment? What is the role of science and the power of knowledge production surrounding the environment? This course will examine how anthropologists have approached these questions and more, while challenging established dichotomies between nature and culture, traditional and scientific, “us” and “them.” It covers topics that have long been debated and current events, from the other side of the world to our own backyards. This course will turn the anthropological lens onto human-caused global climate change, as well as environmental and indigenous movements, environmental law and conflict. Other topics include environmental management, conservation, ethnobotany and ethnobiology, agricultural systems, ecology and gender and consumerism. The class will inquire after these topics and questions, upending taken-for-granted assumptions about ourselves and faraway others. Can all this tell us something about what it is to be human in the Anthropocene?

Land Acknowledgement: McGill University is located on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange among Indigenous peoples, including Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and Inuit peoples. I would also like to acknowledge the aboriginal proprietors and stewards of the land where I grew up, the Anishinaabeg Nations of the Odawa, Ojibwe and Potawatomi and the Meskwaki (Fox) tribe of the so-called Great Lakes Region of the U.S. I encourage you to take a moment to learn about & reflect on the places where you come from, your relations there and, potentially, the first peoples of that land, their history, potential dispossession and resilience.

Grade distribution:

Reading responses (see below for due dates): 25%

Midterm (“take home” see below): 25%

Attunement Assignment (due October 29th): 20%

Final Paper (Due November 26th): 30%

Total: 100%

Learning format for these unusual times:

Given the challenging circumstances we are all facing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, lectures for this course will be given *synchronously*, with the option to learn *asynchronously* via lecture recordings and MyCourses discussions. This means that *students who are able to attend live classes twice a week are strongly encouraged to do so*, while those who cannot due to time zones, responsibilities of care, etc. can complete course activities on their own schedule. For each week of the course, a list of required learning tasks will appear on MyCourses. Most weeks, these will include attending or watching the two classes, completing assigned readings,



videos or podcasts (available on or linked through MyCourses), engaging with the course community on MyCourses. Some weeks assignments will be due. Sometimes there will be a self-assessment quiz or other activity to complete *before a student can access the next lecture*.

Requirements and evaluation:

Students are responsible for regular attendance to class on Zoom or regularly watching and engaging with lecture recordings. Assigned readings should be completed before the date and time indicated. Students are expected to have all relevant readings and reading notes with them while attending class or watching recordings. Students should come prepared to ask questions and share relevant experiences and observations, while being aware of who is making and taking space in the virtual classroom and on the MyCourses discussion boards.

Assignments:

There will be a “take home” midterm exam available for 48 hours to be completed in 90 minutes on MyCourses, starting on October 15 at 12am ET; regular reading responses due to MyCourses (see below); an ethnographic “attunement” assignment; and a final research essay paper of about 1600 words (about 6 pages double-spaced), due at the beginning of class time on November 26. You will be given prompts for the final essay and Ethnographic Attunement assignment in early October.

Reading responses: DUE by 5pm ET on MyCourses, on Tuesdays: September 22nd; October 6th, October 27th, November 10th, November 24th.

You are required to submit a brief (200-300 words) reading response about the previous weeks’ readings. These reading responses are to be submitted via MyCourses by 5pm ET on the above dates. The goal is for you to take a few minutes to synthesize your ideas and notes on the readings and offer your own questions and perspective on them. Responses that demonstrate engagement, thoughtfulness and critical thinking will receive 5 full points. Responses that neglect or ignore course lessons or fail to engage with the readings will receive fewer.

Extensions/Late Policy:

“Sh*t happens” clause: you invoke the clause on two (2) assignment and get a 3-day extension. No explanation required. You must let your TA and instructor know are invoking the clause before the deadline (adapted from Dr. Robin Mitchell, California State University, Channel Islands). Otherwise, your work will lose 1/3 of a grade for each day late (e.g. A becomes A-).

Accessibility Statement: This course is intended for all McGill students, including those with mental, physical or cognitive disabilities, illness, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that tends to negatively affect one’s equal access to education. If you are a student with a diagnosis, you are encouraged to meet with [the Office for Students with Disabilities](#). The OSD works with students with disabilities and faculty members to identify accommodations. If you have already been approved for accommodations through the OSD, please contact the instructor so we can develop an implementation plan together. I also encourage students to seek out assistance with a [counsellor or psychiatrist](#), as needed.



Basic Needs Statement: Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the [Dean of Students](#) for support. Furthermore, please notify the instructor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources that they may possess.

Student Parent Statement: All breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is needed. I ask that all students work with the course community to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status.

Sexual Violence Statement: This instructor is committed to fostering a safe learning environment for all. [McGill University policy](#) prohibits sexual violence, including (and not limited to) sexual harassment, sexual assault, and stalking. Sexual violence can undermine students' health, well-being and academic success, therefore students who have experienced some form of sexual violence are encouraged to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need. Confidential support and advocacy can be found at the [Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support, and Education \(OSVRSE\)](#) and/or the [Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Student Society \(SACOMSS\)](#). Reports of sexual assault made to McGill should be directed to [the university's Special Investigator](#).

Electronic Devices (AKA “in-class” distractions in a time of pandemic):

Students are expected to actively engage with the course, including while “in” class. For many, this means putting away distractions when attending class or watching recordings, and taking course notes by hand. However, if you need or choose to take notes on your laptop or tablet, please use these devices responsibly and in a way that does not distract you or your colleagues.

Language:

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.”

« Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue). »

Academic Integrity:

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures” (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information)

« L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/). »



Class schedule: ANTH 206 Environment and culture.			
Week	Date	Theme	Assignment
1	Thurs Sept 3	Introduction	
	Tues Sept. 8	"Western" perceptions of the environment	
2	Thurs Sept 10	Environment? Culture? Anthropology?	
	Tues Sept 15	Ecology and social organization Pt. 1	
3	Thurs Sept 17	Ecology and social organization Pt. 2	
	Tues Sept 22	Ecosystem approach in anthropology	READING RESPONSE DUE 5pm ET on MyCourses
4	Thurs Sept 24	Ethnobiology	
	Tues Sept 29	Human-nonhuman relations Pt. 1	(Attunement prompt distributed this week)
5	Thurs Oct 1	Human-nonhuman relations Pt. 2	
	Tues Oct 6	Traditional & scientific environmental knowledge (Guest lecture: Carmen Umana)	READING RESPONSE DUE (Final Paper prompts distributed this week)
6	Thurs Oct 8	Librarian Research Paper Presentation (Guest lecture: Nikki Tummon)	
	Tues Oct 13	Attunement and midterm review	
7	Thurs Oct 15	MIDTERM (no class)	"Take home" MIDTERM
	Tues Oct 20	Environmental knowledge and power	
8	Thurs Oct 22	Climate change Pt. 1	
	Tues Oct 27	Climate change Pt. 2	READING RESPONSE DUE
9	Thurs Oct 29	Climate change Pt. 3	ATTUNEMENT IS DUE
	Tues Nov 3	Environmental management: property rights	
10	Thurs Nov 5	Environmental management: Conservation, people and parks	
	Tues Nov 10	Indigenous Environmental Law in Canada & the US	READING RESPONSE DUE
11	Thurs Nov 12	Ecofeminism and Intersectional Environmentalism (Guest lecture by Alejandra Melian-Morse)	
	Tues Nov 17	Environmental & Indigenous Movements Pt.1	
12	Thurs Nov 19	Environmental & Indigenous Movements Pt.2	
	Tues Nov 24	Agriculture & Food—Art & Anthropology (Guest lecture by Federico De Musso)	READING RESPONSE DUE
13	Thurs Nov 26	Environment: in our own backyard!	FINAL PAPER DUE
	Tues Dec 1	Recycling, course synthesis and class reflection	

(continues)



LECTURES AND READINGS

"Further readings" are sometimes listed for students who develop an interest in exploring a topic more deeply.

Thursday, September 3: Introduction to course (inclusivity, learning goals, community)

NO READINGS ON THIS DAY (start Thursday's readings)!

Tuesday, September 8: "Western" perceptions of the environment

Cronon, W. 1995. "The trouble with wilderness, or getting back to the wrong nature." In Uncommon ground: toward reinventing nature, edited by W. Cronon. Pp. 69-90. New York: Norton and Co.

Mann, Charles C. 2005. Ch. 10 "The Artificial Wilderness" in 1491: new revelations of the Americas before Columbus. Pp. 312-326. New York : Knopf.

Thursday, September 10: Environment? Culture? Anthropology?

Menand, L. (2019, August 19). *How Cultural Anthropologists Redefined Humanity*. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/08/26/how-cultural-anthropologists-redefined-humanity>

Whittaker, Guy. (2016). *What is social anthropology?*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k99ZWnQ-o4U>. [Note: this is a 10-minute YouTube video. Please watch before class as if it were a reading]

Tuesday, September 15: Ecology and social organization pt. 1

Steward, J. (1955). Multilinear evolution: evolution and process. The theory of cultural change: the methodology of multilinear evolution. Urbana, University of Illinois Press: chapter 1 pp. 11-29.

Steward, Julian, 2016. "The Concept and Method of Cultural Ecology" in The Environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living, Nora Haenn and Richard Wils (Eds), New York University Press. pp. 5-9

Thursday, September 17: Ecology and social organization Pt. 2

Barth, F. (1956). "Ecological relationships of ethnic groups in Swat, North Pakistan." American Anthropologist 58: 1079-1089.

Geertz, Clifford. 1972. "The wet and the dry: traditional irrigation in Bali and Morocco." Human Ecology 1 (1): pp. 23-39.

Tuesday, September 22: Ecosystem approach in Anthropology



Rappaport, R. (1979). On cognized models. Ecology, meaning and religion. Richmond, North Atlantic Books: pp. 97-121.

Tuesday, September 24: Ethnobiology

Baker, Janelle Marie. 2019. Cranberries are Medicine: Monitoring, Sharing, and Consuming Cranberries in Fort McKay. Wisdom Engaged: Traditional Knowledge for Northern Community Well-Being, edited by Leslie Main Johnson. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press. Pp. 1-19

Tuesday, September 29: Human-nonhuman relations Pt. 1

Kimmerer, R. W. 2017. Orion Magazine | Speaking of Nature. Retrieved August 2019, from Orion Magazine website: <https://orionmagazine.org/article/speaking-of-nature/>

Tippett, K. 2016. Robin Wall Kimmerer—*The Intelligence in All Kinds of Life*. In *On Being with Krista Tippett*. Retrieved from <https://onbeing.org/programs/robin-wall-kimmerer-the-intelligence-in-all-kinds-of-life-jul2018/> (Note: this is a podcast episode with attached transcript. Please listen or read before class. It can also be found on podcast platforms like Apple's Podcasts app)

Further readings (not required):

Cattellino, Jessica R. 2017. "Loving the Native: Invasive Species and the Cultural Politics of Flourishing." In *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, edited by Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann. pp. 129–37. New York: Routledge.

Thursday, October 1: Human-nonhuman relations Pt. 2

Berkes, F. (1999). Cree Worldview "from the Inside." In Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management. Taylor & Francis. Chapter 5. pp. 79–93.

Further readings (not required):

Fienup-Riordan, Ann. 2001. "A guest at the table: ecology from the Yup'ik Eskimo point of view." In Indigenous traditions and ecology: the interbeing of cosmology and community, edited by John A. Grim, 541-58. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University press.

Tuesday, October 6: Traditional and scientific environmental knowledge

**Guest lecture by Carmen Umana, PhD student, McGill University

Agrawal, Arun. 1995. "Dismantling the divide between indigenous and scientific knowledge." Development and Change 26 (3):413-39.

Thursday, October 8: Special Presentation by Nikki Tummon, McGill Library



Note that this presentation is specially designed to support your final research papers for this course, but it will also be useful for the rest of your McGill career. (NO READINGS ON THIS DAY!)

Tuesday, October 13: Attunement (observation assignment) and Midterm Review

Stewart, K. (2011). Atmospheric Attunements. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29(3), pp. 445–453. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d9109>

Further readings (not required):

Tsing, A. (2010). Arts of Inclusion, or How to Love a Mushroom. *Manoa*, 22(2), 191–203.
Retrieved from JSTOR.

Thursday October 15: “TAKE HOME” MIDTERM

(NO CLASS ON THIS DAY! Study for and take your exam online)

Tuesday, October 20: Environmental knowledge and power

Forsyth, Timothy, and Andrew Walker. 2008. “Forest guardians, forest destroyers: the politics of environmental knowledge in northern Thailand.” Seattle: University of Washington Press. pp. 4-26

Further readings (not required):

Fairhead, James, and Melissa Leach. 1995. "False forest history, complicit social analysis: rethinking some West African environmental narratives." *World Development* 23 (6):1023-35.

Thursday, October 22: Climate change Pt. 1

Crate, S. A. (2008). "Gone the bull of winter? Grappling with the cultural implications of and anthropology's role(s) in global climate change." *Current Anthropology* 48(4): pp. 569-591

Tuesday, October 26: Climate change Pt. 2

Nuttall, M. (2009). Living in a world of movement: human resilience to environmental instability in Greenland. *Anthropology and climate change: From encounters to actions*. S. A. Crate and M. Nuttall. Walnut Creek, California, Left Coast Press: 292-310

Further readings (not required):

Hughes, David McDermott. "Climate change and the victim slot: from oil to innocence." *American Anthropologist* 115 (4):570-81.

Thursday, October 29: Climate Change Pt. 3

(ETHNOGRAPHIC ATTUNEMENT ASSIGNMENT DUE!)



Fleischmann, Adam. 2020. "How to Make Climate Change Feel Real." SAPIENS. April 21, 2020. <https://www.sapiens.org/technology/climate-interactive/>.

Tuesday, November 3: Environmental management: property rights

Hardin, G. (1968). "The tragedy of the commons." *Science* 162: 1243-1248.

Feeny, David, Fikret Berkes, Bonnie J. McCay, and James Acheson. 1990. "The tragedy of the commons: twenty-two years later." *Human Ecology* 18 (1): pp.1-19.

Agar, Jesse. n.d. *Tragedy of the Commons | The Problem with Open Access*. Accessed August 27, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYA1y405JW0>. [Note: this is a short video. Please watch before class as if it were a reading. We will certainly be referencing it.]

Thursday, November 5: Environmental management: Conservation, people and parks

Turner, R. L. (2004). COMMUNITIES, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION, AND TOURISM-BASED DEVELOPMENT: CAN COMMUNITY-BASED NATURE TOURISM LIVE UP TO ITS PROMISE? *Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy*, 7(3-4), pp.161-182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13880290490883232>

Tuesday, November 10: Indigenous Environmental Law in Canada and the US

Todd, Z. (2016, February 1). From fish lives to fish law: Learning to see Indigenous legal orders in Canada. Retrieved August 2019, from Somatosphere website: <http://somatosphere.net/2016/from-fish-lives-to-fish-law-learning-to-see-indigenous-legal-orders-in-canada.html/>

Simpson, Leanne. 2008. "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg diplomatic and treaty relationships." *Wicazo SA Review* Fall 2008. Pp. 29-42.

Thursday, November 12: Ecofeminism and Intersectional Environmentalism

**Guest lecture by Alejandra Melian-Morse, PhD Student, McGill University

Finney, Carolyn. 2014. INTRODUCTION. *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. Pp. 1-19

Strong, Amanda. 2018. *Biidaaban (The Dawn Comes) | Full Film*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWjnYKyjUB8>. [Note: this is a (very cool) 19-minute animated short film. Please watch before class as if it were a reading]

Tuesday, November 17: Environmental and Indigenous Movements Pt. 1

Brosius, J. P. (1999). "Green dots, pink hearts: displacing politics from the Malaysian rainforest." *American Anthropologist* 101(1): pp. 36-57.

Other readings of interest on this topic (not required):



Brosius, J. P. (1997). "Endangered forest, endangered people: environmentalist representations of indigenous knowledge." *Human Ecology* 25(1): 47-69.

Thursday, November 19: Environmental and Indigenous Movements Pt. 2

Content warning: animal death, hunting, racialized + symbolic violence. (FILM: *Angry Inuk*)

Holland, E. (2015, February 26). #Sealfie vs. #Selfie, One Year Later. Retrieved August 29, 2019, from Pacific Standard website: <https://psmag.com/environment/sealfie-vs-selfie-one-year-later-ellen-degeneres-and-the-clubbing-of-seals>

Tuesday, November 24: Agriculture and Food (Anthropology and Art)

**Guest lecture by Federico De Musso, postdoctoral fellow, Leiden University, Netherlands

De Musso, Federico. (2020). *Between Responsibility and Response-ability: Distribution of Subsidies and Ecology in the Catalan Pyrenees*. <https://vimeo.com/394709851>. [Note: this is a (very cool) 9-minute short academic film presentation. Please watch before class as if it were a reading]

De Musso, Federico. (2020). *Voyage to Corona*. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@federico.demusso/voyage-to-corona-a3d8a137115d> [Note: a (short) graphic short story!]

Tanis, J., Annelise Brandeis-Tanis, Karina Faulstich, Lana Buckner, Jim Veteto, Marc Williams, ... Turtle Turlington. (2017). *Margaret's Mead – a zine by Culture & Agriculture & friends*. Retrieved from <http://cultureandagriculture.americananthro.org/meadzine/> [Note: a short zine with lots of art]

Thursday, November 26: Environment: in our own backyard!

(F I N A L E S S A Y D U E)

Robbins, P. and J. Sharp (2003). "Producing and consuming chemicals: the moral economy of the American lawn." *Economic Geography* 79(4): pp. 425-451.

Further readings (not required):

Vivanco, L. A. (2013). The mundane bicycle and the environmental virtues of sustainable urban mobility. *Environmental anthropology: future directions*. H. Kopnina and E. Shoreman-Quimet. New York, Routledge: pp. 25-45.

Tuesday, December 1: Consumerism and Course Synthesis

Liboiron, M. (2009). Recycling as a Crisis of Meaning. *Etopia*, 0(0). Retrieved from <https://etopia.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/etopia/article/view/36718>

Note: this syllabus is a living learning document and is subject to change as such

Acknowledgements:

Accessibility, Basic Needs, Sexual Violence and Parenting Statements adapted from Rine Vieth, McGill University.

