ECOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Course Abstract:

This course examines the complex relationships between human beings and their environment from an anthropological perspective. We will address the particular set of theoretical and ethical concerns that surrounds contemporary environmental problems. In this, we will ask specific thematic questions, such as what is nature, how do we get to know about the environment, or how can humans delve in a permanently polluted world? By embracing the hallmark skills of anthropological research, the course underscores the different human experiences, beliefs, constructs, and behaviors that shape ecological matters. At the end of this class, students will have developed their own critical perspectives to analyze pressing environmental issues.

Course Materials

Required readings will be compiled into an electronic course reader available on myCourses.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Due to the ongoing effects of COVID-19 classes will be given online. Tuesday courses will be given live and recorded for the purpose of international students not based in the Eastern Standard Time zone. To prevent Zoom fatigue, Thursday courses will be made available as a podcast.

The course grade includes summaries of weekly thematic readings and two essays. There will be 6 weekly thematic readings to summarize (max. 500 words; each worth 5% for a total of 30%). These reading summaries count as a participation grade and will not be evaluated by the instructors. However, failure to summarize the readings in your own words will result in the failure of the participation grade for the given summary (5% each). For the two essays (max 1500 words; each worth 35% for a total of 70%), students will have to answer a series of short analytical questions (4 per essay) based on the course thematic issues. The above assignments will be due as follows, submitted through MyCourses by 11:59 pm of the dates indicated below:

- Summary for Thematic 1 – Feb. 2
- Summary for Thematic 2 – Feb. 11
- Summary for Thematic 3 – Feb. 23
- Summary for Thematic 4 – Mar. 16
Summary for Thematic 5 – Mar. 30
Summary for Thematic 6 – Apr. 13

First Essay – Mar. 9
Second Essay – Apr. 30

Beyond these deadlines, a penalty of one percentage point of your final grade per day late will apply. Students who provide a valid doctor's note in the case of illness, or similar evidence in case of a serious crisis such as a family death, will not be penalized.

**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). (approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)

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.” (approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see also the section in this document on Assignments and evaluation.)

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)."
Course Outline

Introduction to Ecological Anthropology

Introductory Session – Jan. 7


1. What is Nature


2. Environmental Knowledge


3. Political Ecology


4. Capitalism, Neoliberalism, and Ecological Empires


5. Delving in a Permanently Polluted World


Study break – Mar. 2

Study break – Mar. 4

Special Presentation by Vincent Ialenti on “Deep Time Reckoning” [No Readings] – Mar. 9


6. Environmental Suffering, Racism, and Inequality


7. Planetary Crises, Sustainability, and Energy


**Conclusion**

Concluding session – Apr. 15