

TOPICS IN GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING (ENVS 331): LAND USE AND MANAGEMENT

Semester: Spring 2014

Meeting place: Center for Natural Sciences (CNS) Rm. 202 and the field

Meeting time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:40 am – 12:05 pm

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Office hours:

Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:15-1:15pm; Wednesdays 12:45-1:45pm; by appointment via email

Course Description

Land, the terrestrial surface of the Earth is humanity's habitat. It is the resource base for most of society's productive activities, including agriculture, forestry, and industrial development. Land systems are integrally linked to ecological, freshwater, and atmospheric systems, so land-use change is a principal component of anthropogenic global environmental change. At the same time, land-use change is a local geographic phenomenon—occurring in particular ways in particular places.

Human-environment geographers, who combine natural- and social-scientific perspectives, are particularly well positioned to critically examine society's use of land and the way land use varies across space and time. This course takes a human-environment geographer's perspective, posing the following questions: What role does land play in particular cultures in particular places? How do biophysical processes shape landscapes? How do social processes determine land use? In addressing these questions we will engage diverse, interdisciplinary, perspectives on land and its use by society, paying attention to multi-scalar causes and consequences. In the geographic tradition, this course engages multiple dimensions of land use, including history, economics, policy, politics, ideology, ethics, culture, and, of course, science—all in pursuit of sustainability. (For a sneak preview of the course material, see the following Web page: http://www.eoearth.org/article/Land-use_and_land-cover_change.)

Experiential Learning and Real-World Application

This course is designed for experiential learning and practical application, but to achieve these things in an academically rigorous way this course must also involve conventional content delivery, including an upper-level treatment of the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the emerging field of "land change science," "land system science," or "land use science." Learning about the varied ways scholars approach the human-environment conundrum of land use will help you answer questions relevant to practical land management such as: How do we characterize landscapes? How do we explain land use? How do we come to understand how people value land? How do we promote best practices in land management?

To anchor this intellectual work on land use with a practical application in the real world we spend a lot of time planning and doing land management—particularly trail design, building, and maintenance. Every Thursday will be devoted to practical work in the classroom or (more often) in the field. We will focus primarily on the Ithaca College Natural Lands system, but also to a lesser degree Dotson Park in Danby and the Finger Lakes Trail.

Course Objectives

This course will enable you to:

- Understand land *conceptually*, as a resource, as a component of a functioning earth system, as a place of cultural significance, and as territory—an object of political struggle.
- Understand land *practically*, with an eye toward policy and management.
- Understand land *analytically*, using social-scientific, ecological, and geo-spatial techniques and tools.

Specific ENVS-departmental student learning outcomes addressed by this course are:

- Mastery of integrative and systems thinking approaches to human-environment interactions.
- Advanced political, economic, ethical, cultural, and historical literacy as it relates to the environment.
- Advanced scientific literacy as it relates to the environment.
- Competency in written, oral and visual communication, especially to a variety of audiences.
- Ability to lead others, as well as the ability to function effectively as part of a team.
- Ability to connect theory and practice through experiential and/or service learning.

Texts

Birkby, Robert, and Student Conservation Association (U.S.). 2005. *Lightly on the Land: The SCA Trail-Building and Maintenance Manual*. 2nd Ed. Seattle, WA.: Mountaineers.

Demrow, Carl, and Appalachian Mountain Club. 2008. *AMC's Complete Guide to Trail Building & Maintenance*. 4th Ed. Boston, MA: Appalachian Mountain Club Books.

Additional readings will be assigned and provided throughout the semester.

Assignments, Responsibilities, and Expectations

Your grade and the impact of this course on your life depend on the degree to which you engage with the activities, including lectures, discussions, readings, assignments, trips, and research-based work. A description of your responsibilities appears below, followed by a list of the assignments and their contributions to your grade. I expect you to treat your academic work like your full-time occupation. **Devote time, effort, and professionalism** to your studies just as you would to your job. **Read the material**—all of it—strategically to understand and critique the content and arguments. **Engage with the class** by asking questions and sharing your thoughts. Be aware that I might call on you at any time. (Sometimes I call on students at random; other times I am selective in order to broaden the discussion.) **Write carefully and academically**, with clarity and logic. **Visit me** for more information or assistance in any of these areas. I am very happy to have the opportunity to help you succeed.

Grading

A = 100-91%; B = 90-81%, C = 80-71%, D =70-61%, F = 60-0%

My general expectations of your performance in this course are high, and my evaluation will reflect those expectations. I believe that grade **A work** is truly excellent—impressive in originality, scope, or detail, impeccable in precision and accuracy, thoughtful in design and execution. Most of what I see in courses like this one is **B work**—complete, compliant with requirements, well designed and executed, good in many respects, usually a result of great effort, and work to take pride in, but not outstanding in the way that grade A work is. Grade **C work** may be complete and compliant with requirements, but it is mediocre in originality, accuracy, comprehensiveness, or the quality of execution. It might be a result of great effort, and it might even be excellent in some respects, but it is usually significantly flawed in others. Grade **D work** is seriously deficient in one way or another and it generally leaves little doubt in the student's mind or mine about what grade it deserves, because it reveals minimal effort, significant misunderstanding, or seriously flawed execution. **Failing grades** are rare in my courses—usually products of incomplete work or partial attendance. The upper end of the failing grade range (~50%) is for work attempted but failed. Missed assignments, on the other hand, are given a zero score, earning no credit.

With these expectations in mind, pay careful attention to the components of your course grade below, particularly those involving experiential learning, such as participation in the classroom and field. These activities are evaluated differently in this course than in other courses.

Participation (30%)

Participation in the classroom and the field are very important in this course. Attendance is part of this grade. You should attend the full duration of every meeting in the classroom, lab, or field. You will be downgraded for arriving late. Even perfect attendance, however, cannot rescue lackluster interaction or mediocre performance.

In addition to attendance, participation includes engagement (defined as questions asked and comments made), and consistent demonstration that you have read and made every attempt to understand the assigned material. I will grade your participation every day with a system of dots and stars. Your starting point is a C grade for showing up to class. Thereafter you can earn dots for any contribution to the discussion (question, response, or unsolicited comment). Stars are for particularly strong contributions, such as a thoughtful opening question, a courageous response to a question everyone else was unable or afraid to respond to, or a comment that either synthesizes things others have said, or changes the direction of the discussion in a productive way, or pushes the discussion further. You can earn an A grade by building a daily record of lots of dots and at least a few stars. You can earn a D grade if your days show few or none. Feeling shy? Out of class participation (such as visiting during office hours or conversing by email) counts, too.

What you say in class should be informed by the course material. Your participation grade accounts for your completion and comprehension of the required readings. Exploit every opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of readings and other course material. Of course, opinions and insights from your own experiences are also welcome.

Literature review (10%)

Once during the semester you will acquire a relevant article (dated 2010 or later) from one of the following refereed journals: *Science*, *Nature*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, *Land, Landscape and Urban Planning*, *Land Use Policy*, the *Journal of Land Use Science, Conservation & Society*, or *Ecology & Society*. Read your article, take detailed notes, summarize the main points, and present those points orally to the class. Your presentation should last 5-10 minutes, with additional time for questions. Use the chalkboard, the screen, or other audio-visual aids to illustrate your points. Encourage participation from your colleagues.

Your presentation should be clear, professional, and well organized, demonstrating your mastery of the subject. (This means you can clearly answer questions about it.) Your presentation does not need to be lofty and intellectual. Become familiar with the article to a point where you can use plain language to address questions such as: What audience/s does the article speak to? What is original or important about this work? How is this work relevant to this course?

Homework assignments (30%)

Assignments are varied in purpose, scope, and execution. They will be announced in class and will be completed in class, in the field, and/or as homework. Objectives, expectations, and criteria for evaluation will vary for each assignment, and will be spelled out in a handout. One large assignment (or more) accounting for a large proportion of this credit will be the design and development of a trail segment for ICNL or Dotson Park.

Trail project (30%)

Toward the end of the semester you will lead our group into the field and serve as a guide on your trail segment. This is your opportunity to demonstrate the work you have put into your trail design and development. It is also your opportunity to teach your classmates what you learned through your experiences. Your final project submission will be a portfolio documenting your semester of trail work.

Policies

- **Advance notification by email is required for excused absences.** Attendance has implications for participation as well as other graded work taking place in the classroom (e.g., quizzes, presentations, etc.). I must receive any advance notification (preferably by email, for record-keeping) by 12:05 on the date of the absence. Legitimate excuses for the absence (there are none for failure to notify) include illness, family emergencies, and cultural, religious, or personal reasons recognized by Ithaca College or approved through consultation with me.
- **Prepare for the field.** Trips must start and end on time, so do not be late. Trips are scheduled, postponed, and canceled at my discretion. You are responsible for keeping yourself comfortable enough that you can perform in the field—including taking written notes. This might require some equipment (a clipboard, large plastic bags, a backpack, etc.).
- **Electronic devices** must be disabled in the classroom, including mobile phones, computers, personal digital assistants, iPods, GPS devices, boomboxes, spacecraft transponders, flux capacitors, avalanche beacons, etc. If you need to use a laptop computer for taking good classroom notes, be prepared to email me those notes after every meeting.
- You are responsible for understanding what constitutes **plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty**, as well as their consequences. For more information on the rules, please consult the Ithaca College Policy Manual (http://www.ithaca.edu/attorney/policies/vol7/Volume_7-70104.htm). For more guidance on how to follow the rules, please consult the Ithaca College Library (<http://www.ithacalibrary.com/research/index.php?widget=6>).
- I value a diverse classroom. Please see me in private to discuss any **personal concerns**, such as a first language other than English, accommodation for a disability. Please also consult the Office of Academic Support Services (telephone: 607-274-1005; Web: <http://www.ithaca.edu/sds/>). In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Students must register with Student Disability Services and provide appropriate documentation to Ithaca College before any academic adjustment will be provided.
- **Diminished mental health**, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of symptoms might be related to your course work; if so, please speak with me. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance. Ithaca College provides cost-free mental health services through the Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your personal or academic well-being. In the event I suspect you need additional support, expect that I will express to you my concerns and the reasons for them. It is not my intent to know the details of what might be troubling you, but simply to let you know I am concerned and that help (e.g., CAPS, Health Center, Chaplains, etc.), if needed, is available.

Notes:

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Notes:

Week One

Week Two

Week Three

Week Four

Week Five

Week Six

Week Seven

Week Eight

Week Nine

Week Ten

Week Eleven

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Notes:

Week Twelve

Week Thirteen

Week Fourteen

Week Fifteen

Week Sixteen
