Wellesley College
ANTH 234

Cultural Ecology

Spring 2007
**Thursdays, 6:30-9:00 pm, PNE 351**

Gregory Ruf
Visiting Associate Professor
PNE 346
**Office Hours: Th 5:30-6:30** (and by appointment)
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**Course Description**
This course explores theoretical and methodological issues in the study of human culture and social activity in relation to ecological systems and the environment. Readings include both classic studies as well as contemporary research, with particular emphasis placed on the various dimensions and scales of social organization and activity, and on the role of cultural, religious, and political institutions in shaping ecological relationship as well as economic behavior.

**Evaluation and Grading**
Class sessions will entail a lecture component, combined with discussion of assigned readings. Regular attendance is expected of all participants; absences will be excused (or extensions granted) only in special circumstance, judged in conformity with College practice. Assigned readings must be completed prior to class-time, and each student should prepare notes for questions and discussion. Course grades will be based on the following criteria:
- **Participation** = 20%
- **3 Assigned Essays** (~5-7 pages each) = 20% each
- **Research-based Term Paper** (~10-12 pages) = 20%

Details regarding assessment exercises will be announced at appropriate junctures of the course.

**Required Texts:**
Schedule of Topics & Readings

Week 1 Thurs., Feb 1
Introduction & Conceptual Orientations
Recommended:
- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, chs. 1-2
- Redman, Human Impact, chs. 1-3

Week 2 Mon., Feb 8
Theoretical Foundations
Read:
- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, chs. 3-4
Recommended:

Week 3 Thurs., Feb 15
Environmental Footprints of Past Cultures
- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, ch. 6
- Redman, Human Impact, chs. 4-8
Recommended:

Week 4 Thurs., Feb 22 - Essay 1 DUE
Hunting-Gathering
- Sutton & Anderson, Cultural Ecology, ch. 5
Film Screening: “Nai: Story of a !Kung Woman”
**Week 5 Thurs., Mar 1**

**Nomadic Pastoralism**
- Sutton & Anderson, *Cultural Ecology*, ch. 8
- Vitebsky, *Reindeer People* (entire book)

Recommended:

**Week 6 Thurs., Mar 8**

**Horticulture**
- Marvin Harris, 1977, “Proteins and the Fierce People,” in *Cannibals & Kings* (ch.5), pp.67-80 [x]

Recommended:

**Week 7 Thurs., Mar 15**

**Agriculture**
- Sutton & Anderson, *Cultural Ecology*, ch. 9

Recommended:

[Mar 22 - No Class – Spring Break]

**Week 8 Thurs., Mar 29 - Essay 2 DUE**

**Development & Conservation**

Recommended:
Week 9 Thurs., Apr 5
**Hubris of Modernity**
Read:

Film Screening: “Priests and Programmers”

Week 10 Thurs., Apr 12
**Local Participation, State Mobilization, and International Intervention**

Recommended:

Week 11 Thurs., Apr 19
**Cultural Ecology of Modern American Society**
Read:
- Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (entire book)

Recommended:

Week 12 Thurs., Apr 26– Essay 3 DUE
**Challenges Ahead**
- Sutton & Anderson, *Cultural Ecology*, ch. 10

Film Screening: “An Inconvenient Truth”

Week 13 Thurs., May 3
**Student Presentations**

**Term Paper Due: 9 May**