

# Environmental Anthropology: 2019-2020



# Environmental Anthropology: the course

This course considers the cross-cultural study of relations between people and 'their environment' – broadly conceived. Environmental anthropology has been completely energised over the past decade or two as anthropologists engage in addressing the environmental challenges of our era, prompting many radical re-evaluations of what we study and how we study it. For example, whilst in the past anthropologist's interest in the animal world considered its importance for human social relations, but to what extent do our social relations actually extend to animals? To what extent are our affective relations of companionship and love, our economic relations of reciprocity and mutual interdependence not only with other people but with animals, too. Is the 'anthropo' of anthropology too limited, and should be instead conduct 'multispecies' ethnography. These boundaries are all the more blurred as our own relations with each other and with the natural world is increasingly mediated by media, new and old, and as animals and things hook up to the internet; to the 'internet of animals' and the 'internet of things'. And as more and more of nature becomes tradable – in carbon offsetting markets and in biodiversity offsetting markets, what happens when the natural world becomes 'natural capital'? The course aims to ground students in what I would dub as this 'new environmental anthropology'.

# Narrative

We begin with a discussion of What is 'the environment'? examining how earth, air, fire, water, soundscapes/words, and life itself is rooted in radically different ontologies. We look at how debates about this and its implications for 'sustainability' are locked into age old debates on the 'Noble Savage'. We then look at how nature has become a commodity (e.g. in carbon trading, biodiversity offsetting) and the implications of treating nature as natural capital, and a provider of 'ecosystem services'. We explore anthropologies relation to animal life, and the turn to Multi-Species ethnography. We then examine anthropologies of environmentalism and their links to politics, looking at ecosocialism, ecofascism, ecocentrism and, I hope, current environmental movements. We have a week looking at environmental imaginations looking at apocalyptic fiction and films. This is part of an interest in knowing and experiencing the environment, that we pursue through anthropological contributions to environmental art, perception of pollution, rewilding, tourism. We look at the anthropology of climate, climate change, the Anthropocene and geoengineering. And we consider anthropological contributions to Historical Ecology and to Political Ecology.

# Work Schedule and Assessment

- The course delivers very intensive content (2 sessions per week, lecture and 2 hour seminar - i.e. 14 sessions until week 10)
- In week 6 you write an analytical essay of 1-2000 words to help build Long Essay ideas and analysis [this will be handed in at the beginning of week 7 and given out in tutorials during week 9/10/11.
- During week 10 you will write and in week 12, present a dissertation outline
- You will have two 15-20 minute tutorials in Week 9 and Week 11 or 12
- In Week 12 we have a workshop when you present to the class your dissertation topic/outline.
- The tutorial in week 11/12 will provide feedback on dissertation outlines. I can read and comment on the introduction as well as on overall structure and argument.

# Some facts

- 30 Credits
- 4,000 words BUT:
- DOES NOT INCLUDE abstract, bibliography or appendices
- Can be a bit longer (e.g. to 4,400 words)

# Long Essay ('Short Dissertations')

Find your own topic that fascinates you. Do something original.

Does not have to relate directly to any element of the course so long as it addresses environmental questions (widely defined) and engages with the theoretical questions raised and debated in the course - and is approved by me.

They are a contribution to the discipline. Some are published!

It is evidence of what you can do, helpful to future study, to future employment and for job references etc. etc.

It should be fun

# People do WELL Last year.....

1<sup>st</sup> class grades (70+) 😊

2018/2019 – 48%

2017/2018 – 50%

2016/2017 – 54%

2015/2016 - 36%

2014/2015 - 42%,

2013/2014 - 42%.

2012-2013 - 50%

Usually 2 or 3 in 80s 😊 (2018: 3)

A good Long Essay can push you from a '2:1' to a '1<sup>st</sup>' ; from a 2:2 to a 2:1 **AND it is interesting!**

# Environmental Anthropology

## Structure of the Course

Built around a number of current debates (and ‘turns’)

Week	
Week 1	Lecture: Introduction; Class: What is ‘the environment’ (earth, air, fire, water, music, words, virtual?)
Week 2	Human Animal Relations & the turn to Multi-species ethnography
Week 3	‘Noble savage’, Indigeneity and the ontological and persepectivist turn.
Week 4	Nature™ Inc. and the turn to commodification: What of ‘natural capital’?
Week 5	Experiencing the environment: ‘reconnecting’
Week 6	READING WEEK – ESSAY PREPARATION
Week 7	Environmental Conservation: social justice or eco-centrist turns?
Week 8	Anthropology of climate and turning anthropology to address Climate Change
Week 9	The temporal turn: Environmental history, environmental future: the place of catastrophe in science and science fiction
Week 10	Lecture: Geoengineering; Class: Environment in politics
Week 11	Essay Tutorials
Week 12	Workshop presenting long essay ideas



# Last year's topics

Extinction Rebellion, Crisis narratives and civil disobedience

Multispecies ethnography and Lemurs in Madagascar

Ecology of a garden wall & more than human anthropology

Digital Endurance Systems and death

Japanese Satoyama communities and conservation

Experience of Wind power in Mexico

“Half Earth” for nature?

Biophilia & Google Trecker

Snakes & multispecies relations: an innate fear?

Self-responsibility and the state in environmental subjectivities

Neoliberalism and Lyme disease

Evangelism and climate change ontologies in Fiji

The Ganges and Pollution

Whiteness, decolonisation and the environment movement

The commodification of nature and fractal mathematics

Humanism, imperialism and the environment?

Some of earlier topics:

**Permaculture, Ontology and modern environmentalism**

**Queers in Nature: Queer navigation in rural environments**

**Green violence and African Wildlife Conservation**

**Anthropocentrism, and captive animals**

**'Anthropomorphism' and commodification in Western Conservation**

**Rewilding in a post colonial landscape**

**Diet and Climate Change**

# more

Transhumanism, mind body and Food Packaging

Virtual worlds and refugee experience

The social world of Geoengineering policy

Green Washing and Nuclear Power

Warring for biodiversity

Minorities and climate change

Animals on social media platforms

Population offsetting

Ecovillages: Utopian or mainstream?

Horse drawn travellers

Media(tion) of nature in Conservation International

Animal love: multi-species romantic and sexual encounters

Wonky vegetables

Captive elephants

Moss in Japanese Temple Gardens

REDD+ in Cambodia

Green burials and bereavement

**more**

**Green Wall of the Sahel**

**Walking in Centre Parks**

**Greek Gold mining**

**Public toilets in the UK**

**Bees, bee language and society**

**Anthropocene and aesthetics**

**Anthropology, Primatology and animal 'culture'**

**Palm oil and Green Grabbing in Colombia**

**Dogs, Dog walking and Brighton society**

**Indian rivers and 'pollution'**

**Small islands and climate change**

# Ecotourism

Flex crops and Oil Palm

Digital Battlefields in Wildlife Conservation

Agency in the 'animal turn': What of structure

Aboriginal Whaling

Swidden farming among the Karen (Myanmar)

Experiencing the city: underground and over-ground travel

Cranes, Human Dialogue and the Korean demilitarized zone

Snail Grazes and Charred Wooden Sculptures: Art, Imagination and Alternative Futures

Intimate Moments and the Digital Panopticon – snapchat

The human animal in Western Nature /Culture

National Parks and 'Idyllic' Landscapes – UK and Africa

Veganism as a social movement

Perfection narratives and food waste: aesthetics, desire and consumption

The real Westeros: film tourism and the experience of fictional landscapes

North Plan development: Ontological violence in Inuit Communities

- Urban Cultivation
- Intercultural universities and biodiversity
- Finnish sauna
- Bottled water
- The 'nature' of belonging
- The elemental destruction of the Tibet cosmological order
- Have we lost sight of the moon?
- Trip advisor: internet and environmental appreciation
- Selling shamanism
- Animal agency
- Rethinking 'The Whale'
- Human Gull Relations
- Wind Turbines

# Past dissertation topics

Phenomenology of capitalism in **Canary Wharf**

Inhabiting **virtual worlds**

The '**Environmental apocalypse**' in modern fiction

Experiencing the sea, fish and policy – **Scottish Isles**

**Cemetery**, space and nature in South London

Tourism and environment in **Chernobyl**

**Classification of grass in Kew Gardens**

**Fox** Hunting

**Lithium mining in Bolivia**

Environment & Palestinian politics

**Bull fighting and environmental representation** in Spain

Factory farming

Building in Italy

Community gardens and **Ecocities**

**Biodiversity offsetting**

**Incommensurable ontologies**

Informal **waste pickers**

'Anthropomorphism' and the **whale**