

## SISU 250-001: Environmental Sustainability and Global Health Professor Malini Ranganathan

School of International Service  
American University  
Fall 2018  
Tues and Fri, 11:20am-12:35pm in TBD

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for one or two 20-min slot(s) on Tues 230-430pm and  
Fri 230-330pm, or email me for an appointment



Credit: Olaf Hajek for the New York Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/15/sunday-review/the-ecology-of-disease.html>

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This is a gateway course that bridges two central themes in international affairs: environmental sustainability and global health. While these two topics merit individual study, policy-makers and researchers are increasingly bringing them into conversation, and for good reason. Many global health problems—from chronic conditions such as asthma to global epidemics such as malaria—are related to human-environment relationships and “political ecologies”. Likewise, complex sustainability challenges, such as access to safe water and low-carbon pathways, have important human health implications. Increasingly, researchers are finding that stressing the human health dimensions of environmental crises elicits greater public and media interest and policy attention. The central objectives are to expose you to “big ideas” and debates in this crosscutting field, and to train you to assess the historical, political, and social underpinnings of environment and health challenges. Broadly speaking, we are interested in the multiple configurations of power that shape outcomes related to the environment and human health. As such, this course provides a complement to several other gateways, especially SISU-240 (International Development) and SISU-260 (Identity, Race, Gender, and Culture), and will prepare you for 300-level courses such as Political Ecology of Food and Agriculture; Global Health; Global Cities, Justice, and the Environment; Sustainable Urban Development; Human Rights; and International Environmental Policy, among others.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, those who have participated fully should be able to:

- Compare and contrast key scholarly perspectives in the study of environment, health, and the history of colonialism and international development, and debate their merits and shortcomings
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of the fields of environment, health, and their intersections, showing how these coevolve with each other and with race, class, gender, and other categories of social difference and power
- Assess the historical causes and potential courses of meaningful action (and their tradeoffs) related to sustainability and health challenges
- Write analytically and speak in public with greater confidence and sophistication

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I am a critical geographer who brings historical, social-theoretical, and social justice lenses to my teaching, research, and writing. This means that I encourage students to (a) think about history and its continued relevance (and the ways in which history is narrated or silenced); (b) problematize taken-for-granted discourses and paradigms; and (c) expose unequal power relations in their myriad forms. I strive to create a classroom that is inclusive, diverse, and committed to naming and fighting racial, gender, and other forms of discrimination.

## OFFICE HOURS

I strongly encourage you to visit me in my office hours at least once during the semester. My office hours are by sign-up only on Tuesdays 230-430 pm and Fridays 230-330 pm. To sign-up, go to: Office hours: Please sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/y86mnsun> and select one or two 20-minute slot(s). If you cannot make these times, please email me to find another time.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Requirement	%	Due Date
Attendance and participation	10	Throughout the semester
In-class reading quizzes	20	5 quizzes of which I will take the best 4 grades; each worth 5%: Sept 4, Sept 18, Oct 2, Oct 16, Nov 16
Team-led reading discussion	10	Varies based on sign up
Closed-book midterm exam	25	Oct 26 in class
Short research paper	10	Nov 20 by 11:59pm
Final take-home exam	25	Dec 7 by 11:59pm
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	

### Attendance and participation (10%)

- In most sessions I will take attendance. Attendance is mandatory and unexcused absences will lower your final grade. Absences for valid reasons such as medical or family emergencies will be excused, but you will still be responsible for material missed. Please contact me in advance if you know you will be late or absent, or as soon as possible following the missed class.
- We are here to learn from each other: active and meaningful participation in class is required and will improve your overall experience in the class. Class sessions will comprise a mixture of lecture and discussion in which you will be expected to make informed contributions. These contributions count in multiple ways. Your peers' questions and discussions of the readings, for instance, are fair game for exams, so take good notes. I will send you a note mid-semester to let you know how you are doing in terms of your participation grade. *You are encouraged to attend my office hours at least once during the semester as an opportunity for us to get better acquainted.*

**In-class reading quizzes—the best 4 grades of 5 quizzes (20%)**

- The reading quizzes are designed to make you do the readings. Reading quizzes will involve one question that you should be able to answer in one or two paragraphs in about 10 minutes. Quizzes will be handed out at the beginning of class on the days indicated below, except for the take-home quiz that will be handed out the day before and is due at the start of class. Quizzes will cover material *inclusive of that day*. So, for instance, if there's a quiz on Sept 4 (which there is), then the readings for Sept 4 are fair game. I will evaluate your responses on the basis of the grading scheme given below.

**Team-led reading discussion (10%) NO POWERPOINT**

- At the beginning of semester, you will sign up to co-lead a discussion on one of the topics listed below. You are responsible for coordinating a discussion on the reading(s) marked (DISCUSSION) below. As a discussion co-facilitator, you are responsible for briefly (in about 10 minutes total) summarizing: (a) the author(s) main arguments, (b) what you took away from the reading(s), and (c) how it relates to themes discussed so far. Next, you are required to offer 3 questions or prompts for the class to try and answer. Discussions are expected to be informal and last a total of 15-20 minutes. Where useful, feel free to offer additional background and contextualization beyond the readings. *An on-line signup sheet will be posted the first week of classes.*

**Closed-book midterm exam (25%)**

- The in-class midterm exam will test your ability to recall concepts and definitions from the material through short-answer questions. The midterm will also require you to analyze a problem and argue a position through longer essays. The midterm will cover material covered to date from lectures, readings, reading quizzes, and in-class discussions. No late or make up exams will be given. *The midterm will be conducted in class on Oct 26.*

**Short research paper (10%)**

- The short paper assignment will assess your ability to do research outside of class and tie your analysis back to key themes covered to date. The prompt will be handed out 3 weeks in advance. *Your paper is due on Blackboard under the "Assignments" folder on Nov 20 by 11:59pm.*

**Final take-home exam (25%)**

- The final open-book take-home exam will test your comprehension and analysis of the material covered over the entire semester through longer essays. It will require you to draw connections between the "big ideas" covered in class and to discuss their applicability to contemporary sustainability and health challenges. *The final exam is due on Blackboard on Dec 7 by 11:59pm.*

**GRADING AND LATE POLICY**

- Late assignments will be penalized by one half grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B) for every additional day beyond the due date. Here is how I assign grades:

93-100: A	80-82: B-	Below a 70: D range
90-92: A-	77-79: C+	Below a 60: F
87-89: B+	73-76: C	
83-86: B	70-72: C-	

**GENERAL COURSE POLICIES**

- No laptops. Research has shown that laptops do not necessarily aid learning in the classroom. They can be a distraction. We are addicted to distractions. I will occasionally ask you to bring your laptop to class for exercises. Other than that, I expect you to take notes on paper the old-fashioned way. Cell phone use of any kind is not permitted.

- Social media. When used appropriately, social media can be a powerful tool to build your professional persona, learn about the world, and grow your intellectual and professional networks. I use Twitter (@maliniranga) to post items related to my teaching and research, as well as to current affairs and politics. I encourage you to maintain a clear separation between your professional and personal social media sites. In other words, do not use Twitter in the same way you might use Facebook or Instagram.
- Disability accommodations. The University has an extensive support system for various learning styles and needs, and I am committed to accommodating these needs in my class. Please bring a letter from the Disability Office and let me know if you need any classroom or learning accommodations.
- Ethics. Plagiarism, both intentional and unintentional, is unacceptable under any circumstance, and easy to discover in our Internet era. I will post instructions on the recommended citation style for assignments and go over them in class. Refer to AU's Code of Academic Integrity at <https://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm> for definitions of plagiarism and the University's policies.
- Emergency preparedness. In the event of an emergency, AU will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of an emergency, students should refer to the AU Student Portal, the AU Web site (<http://www.prepared.american.edu>) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/college-specific information.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

You will get the most from class if you do the readings carefully and on-time. You are expected to complete the readings before class. The following books are required and can be rented or purchased from the university bookstore:

- [**RHM**]: Robbins, P, J Hintz, and SA Moore. 2014. *Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.
- Packard, R. 2007. *The Making of a Tropical Disease: A Short History of Malaria*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

All other required readings will be posted under "Course reserves" on the course Blackboard site or are available via a web link.

## OPTIONAL TEXTS

For those of you who want to take a deeper diver, I would recommend the following texts:

- Robbins, P. 2012. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. John-Wiley and Sons: West Sussex.
- Farmer, P. et al. (Eds) 2013. *Reimagining Global Health: An Introduction*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles [Note: we read 2 chapters from this book].
- Cooper, F and Packard, R. (Eds). 1997. *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles [Note: we read 1 chapter from this book].

- Dauvergne, P. and J Clapp. 2014. *Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment*. MIT Press: Cambridge [Note: we read 2 chapters from this book].

### OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND DUE DATES

	TUESDAY	FRIDAY
<b>PART I: BIG IDEAS IN SUSTAINABILITY</b>		
Aug 28 and Aug 31	Course Introduction	(Over)population?
Sept 4 and 7	Green Capitalism? <i>Closed book reading quiz 1 in class</i>	Tragedy of the Commons?
Sept 11 and 14	Environmental Ethics	Race, Class, and Environmental Justice
Sept 18 and 21	Political Ecology of Development <i>Closed book reading quiz 2 in class</i>	Political Ecology of Globalization
Sept 25 and Sept 28	Risk and Social Vulnerability	History and Foundations of Sustainability
<b>PART II: BIG IDEAS IN GLOBAL HEALTH</b>		
Oct 2 and Oct 5	History and Foundations of Global Health <i>Take home reading quiz 3 due at start of class (posted Mon)</i>	Health Disparities and Social Determinants of Health
Oct 9 and 12	<i>In class film: The Other City (2010) on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Washington, DC</i>	No class – Fall Break
Oct 16 and 19	Refugees and Global Health Crises <i>Closed book reading quiz 4 in class</i>	The Political Ecology of Disease – Focus on Malaria
Oct 23 and 26	Midterm Review	<i>Closed book midterm exam in class</i>
<b>PART III: CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTS OF CONCERN</b>		
Oct 30 and Nov 2	Fossil Fuels and Landscapes of Extraction <i>Short research paper prompt handed out in class</i>	Agriculture and the Food System
Nov 6 and 9	Hunger and Famine	<i>In-class film Food Inc (2008) on the problems with America's industrial food system</i>
Nov 13 and 16	Water, Justice, and Intersectional Feminism	Sanitation, Gender, and Informal Urbanism <i>Closed book reading quiz 5 in class</i>
Nov 20 and 23	Guest lecture by AU SIS alumnus currently employed at FEMA, Katherin Sibel <i>Short research paper due on Bb by 11.59pm</i>	No class—Thanksgiving Break
Nov 27 and Nov 30	A Working Class Movement for the Environment and Health?	The Ultimate Intersection: Climate Change and Human Health
Dec 4 and 7	Final Exam Review and Wrap-Up <i>Take-home final posted</i>	No class—Students are encouraged to use this time for the final exam <i>Take home final due on Bb by 11.59pm</i>

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

All readings are required unless marked otherwise. Articles and chapters not in the textbook are available on Bb under “Course reserves” or at the links given below (if the links don’t work, please Google the title). Remember that each set of readings must be done **before** the date indicated. The label (DISCUSSION) indicates that students will use the reading(s) for the team-led in-class discussion. Please note the following: at times, I’ve assigned a classic article from several years ago because it is worth reading something path-breaking in its original form. Remember that “new” is not necessarily “best”. That being said I’ve also incorporated new and recent themes where relevant.

Aug 28 – **Course Introduction**

**PART I: BIG IDEAS IN SUSTAINABILITY**

Aug 31 – **(Over)population?**

**(Key concepts: IPAT, Neo-Malthusianism, Race and representation)**

Environmental problems are often blamed on “overpopulation”. But this seemingly straightforward critique is political and power-laden. First, what is meant by “over” and *who* is said to be “over”? Second, many argue that it is not population *per se* that explains environmental destruction, but rather per capita consumption. Third, what are the root causes of high fertility rates in poorer countries? These lie in gender relations and the history and politics of development—factors seldom acknowledged by anti-population warriors. Finally, the language of overpopulation can sometimes be racialized and discriminatory. At the same time, it is undeniable that family planning, choice, and lower fertility rates enable women to lead more productive, healthier, and emancipated lives. So how should we steer this debate?

RHM. Chapter 2, “Population and Scarcity” *and* the beginning of Chapter 3, “The Bet”

Sasser, J. 2013. From Darkness into Light: Race, Population, and Environmental Advocacy. *Antipode* 46 (5): 1240-1257.

Sept 4 – **Green Capitalism? *Closed-book reading quiz 1 in class***

**(Key concepts: Cap and trade, Coase Theorem, Market environmentalism, Green capitalism)**

From the pessimism of “over-population” we now move to the optimism of “green capitalism”...or should we be optimistic? Apart from learning basic theories in environmental economics laid out in RHM, we will also consider the debate on “green capitalism” or the idea that capitalism and environmentalism are friends. In the camp that believes yes, the “pro-capitalism” camp, are “market liberals” like Lester Brown who founded the World Watch Institute and organizations like The Nature Conservancy. In the camp that believes no, the “anti-capitalism” camp, is a “social green” like Naomi Klein, who, in her latest (2016) book, warns against the nefarious marriage between “big business” and “big green”. So, where do you come down?

RHM. Chapter 3, “Markets and Commodities”

Dauvergne, P. and J Clapp 2014. “Peril or Prosperity? Mapping Worldviews of Global Environmental Change”, Chapter 1 in *Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment*.

(DISCUSSION): Clift, E. 2015. “Only Capitalism Can Save the Planet” (an interview with Lester Brown), *The Daily Beast* <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/05/23/only-capitalism-can-save-the-planet.html>

(DISCUSSION): Klein, N. 2016. Fruits, Not Roots: The Disastrous Merger of Big Business and Big Green, Chapter 6 in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*. Haymarket Books.

(OPTIONAL): If you would like a history of capitalism and its relationship to nature, see the Intro of Patel, R and J Moore. 2017. *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet*. Oakland: University of California Press.

### Sept 7 – **Tragedy of the Commons?**

#### **(Key concepts: Private property, Game theory, Collective action, Institutions)**

We now move to a third area of debate—that of the “tragedy of the commons”, a thesis put forth by Garrett Hardin in a seminal essay in the journal *Science* in the late 1960s. Hardin was pessimistic about the future of the environment because of what he saw as fundamental human flaws: selfishness and greed. Given the choice, Hardin lamented, people will take advantage of the earth’s finite resources. He proposed two drastic measures: authoritarianism and privatization. Along came an economist by the name of Elinor Ostrom several decades later who argued that Hardin forgot about the role of cooperation, institutions, and, quite simply, dialog. Humans are not selfish if given the chance to work out rules and institutions governing natural resources, the study of which came to be known as “common property resource management”. For Ostrom (who went on to win the Nobel Prize, one of the only women in economics) and followers, institutions can save the day! Or can they?

RHM. Chapter 4, “Institutions and “The Commons”

(DISCUSSION): Ostrom, E., J Burger, CB Field, RB Norgaard, and D Policansky. 1999. Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges. *Science* 284 (5412): 278-282

### Sept 11 – **Environmental Ethics**

#### **(Key concepts: Preservation, Conservation, Utilitarianism, Morality)**

To the “market liberal”, “institutionalist”, and “social green” perspectives on the environment can be added a fourth perspective: the “bioenvironmentalist” perspective, or what RHM calls the “preservationists”. Who are these folks? They can be summed up as die-hard environmentalists (“bioneers”) who want to preserve “nature” from human destruction at all costs, preferring a tactic of blocking off large swaths of natural resources via privatization *or* state authoritarianism. There’s a long history behind the struggle between preservationists and conservationists as exemplified by the Hetch Hetchy Dam in California. But environmental historian, William Cronon, warns that seeing wilderness as pristine and untouched neglects a violent history whereby Native Americans were removed from land set aside for America’s national parks. Moreover, indigenous and minority scholars, as well as scholars from the Global South like Ramachandra Guha, argue that this perspective doesn’t account for environmental destruction caused by wealthy residents of the Global North.

RHM. Chapter 5, “Environmental Ethics”

Cronon, W. “The Trouble with Wilderness”  
[http://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Trouble\\_with\\_Wilderness\\_Main.html](http://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Trouble_with_Wilderness_Main.html)

(DISCUSSION) Guha. R. 1989. Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique. *Environmental Ethics*, 11 (1): 71-83.

### Sept 14 – **Race, Class, and Environmental Justice**

**(Key concepts: Environmental racism, White supremacy, Red lining, Racial disparities, Intentional vs. Structural Racism)**

Following on from the debate around environmental ethics, African American and other minority activists and scholars have long argued that the field of environmental conservation is far too dominated by the interests of wealthy whites. Minority scholars argue that the problems of, say, food deserts in cities, waste dumps in African American neighborhoods, and childhood asthma from highways cutting through minority neighborhoods, etc. do not register as “environmental” challenges for many elite white NGOs. In this week, we will delve into the environmental justice and environmental racism literature. For a longer history on how racism has been core, and not just incidental, to US federal policy, watch the PBS documentary “Race—The Power of an Illusion”. For further optional reading, see Ta-Nehisi Coates’ landmark essay (note there is a wealth of reading on US racial history that is especially pertinent at the current juncture, but I am suggesting this article for its popularity and currency. Please see me if you would like additional reading on this topic).

Brulle, RJ and DN Pellow. 2006. Environmental Justice: Human Health and Environmental Inequalities. *Annual Review of Public Health* 27: 103-124.

(DISCUSSION) “Race—The Power of an Illusion”, Excerpts from a PBS documentary series: <https://vimeo.com/133506632>

(DISCUSSION): Pulido, L. 2017. Geographies of race and ethnicity II: Environmental racism, racial capitalism and state-sanctioned violence. *Progress in Human Geography*, 39 (6): 809-817.

(DISCUSSION) Petrella, C. 2016. Standing Rock, Flint, and the Color of Water. *Black Perspectives*. <http://www.aaihs.org/standing-rock-flint-and-the-color-of-water/>

(OPTIONAL): Ta-Nehisi Coates, 2014. The Case for Reparations in *The Atlantic* <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

(OPTIONAL): Check out the excellent 2017 series by the Social Science Research Council “Just Environments”: <https://items.ssrc.org/category/just-environments/>

### Sept 18 – **Political Ecology of Development** *Closed-book reading quiz 2 in class*

**(Key concepts: Discourse and power; Colonialism and postcolonial history; Interventionism; Neoliberalism)**

We are now building up to a point in the class where *power* has taken a central stage in discussions on health and the environment. The previous class on environmental justice was very much focused on race, power, and the history of the environmental movement in the US. We now move to an examination, albeit sweeping, of the history of colonialism and development in the non-western world. We will learn that “development” did not just start with the end of World War II and the birth of international development institutions. It has long been a project to “civilize” and subjugate colonized people and their resources. Rooted in this more critical approach to development history and power, we will discuss the contributions of the scholarly field of political ecology to environmental research.

Cooper, F and Packard, R. 1997. "Introduction" in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*. University of California Press: Berkeley and LA.

(DISCUSSION): Bryant, R. 1997. Beyond the Impasse: The Power of Political Ecology in Third World Environmental Research. *Area* 29 (1): 5-19.

### Sept 21 – Political Ecology of Globalization

**(Key concepts: Capitalism, Means of production, Enclosure, Primitive accumulation, Spatial fix)**

We will now get into the nitty gritty of how power works in *political-economic* terms—both locally and globally. This means returning to certain questions we asked in the "Green Capitalism" lecture such as: How do political lobbyists advance economic interests over/along with environmental concerns? What is the nature of the relationship between politics and the (green) business community? We will also explore theories related to the workings of capitalism in global context by drawing on Karl Marx, including his ideas of primitive accumulation, enclosure, and crisis. A Marxist political economy reading of the environment is core to the field of *political ecology*.

RHM. Chapter 7, "Political Economy"

(DISCUSSION): Newell, Peter. 2012. "The Political Ecology of Globalization", Chapter 2 in *Globalization and the Environment: Capitalism, Ecology and Power*. Polity, Cambridge University Press.

### Sept 25 – Risk and Social Vulnerability

**(Key concepts: Probability, Impact, Social Vulnerability, Causality, Entitlements)**

Why is it that when a natural disaster of the same magnitude strikes two different places, one place experiences a far higher death toll than another? The answer to this question lies in the concept of social vulnerability, or the underlying conditions and what Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen "human capabilities or entitlements" that predispose a certain area to a high death toll or high rate of damage. The idea of social vulnerability suggests that "disaster" does not just fall from the sky but is constructed by deep-seated human conditions and the lack of entitlements. In 2017-2018, we saw a spate of disasters around the world, from Hurricanes Maria and Irma in the Caribbean; to Hurricane Harvey in Texas; to the western US wildfires; to mud slides and massive flooding in Sierra Leone and South Asia respectively. While these disasters have had significant impacts in terms of loss of life, property, and resources, how can we explain the underlying causes of these disasters and the geography of social vulnerability?

Ribot. 2009. "Vulnerability does not fall from the sky" in *Social Dimensions of Climate Change: Equity and Vulnerability in a Warming World*, p 47-67, Mearns, R and A Norton (Eds), Washington, DC: The World Bank.

(DISCUSSION): Rodriguez-Dias, C. 2018. "Maria in Puerto Rico: Natural Disaster in a Colonial Archipelago", *American Journal of Public Health* 108 (1): 30-32.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5719712/>

(DISCUSSION): Reading task for everyone: Identify and read news media items on at least one of recent disaster and come prepared to contribute to the class discussion.

(OPTIONAL): Klein, N. 2018. “Puerto Ricans and Ultrarich ‘Puertopians’ are Locked in a Pitched Struggle Over How to Make Their Island” <https://theintercept.com/2018/03/20/puerto-rico-hurricane-maria-recovery/>. Don’t miss the video summarizing her article.

(OPTIONAL): NYT’s resources on teaching about Puerto Rico, including John Oliver’s segment: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/04/learning/lesson-plans/island-in-crisis-teaching-about-puerto-rico-after-hurricane-maria.html>

### Sept 28 – **History and Foundations of Sustainability**

The global policy community has come together periodically in high-profile events to discuss the state of the environment, and, more recently the climate. Landmark meetings include the Rio Earth Summit and the Johannesburg Summit at which major policy statements were drafted and reports released. We will review the history and foundations of global sustainability policy and rhetoric as to familiarize ourselves with some of these documents and the impact (or not) that they have had on the world.

Brundtland, Gro Harlem, 1987. *Our Common Future* (aka “The Brundtland Report”) <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>

(DISCUSSION): Sneddon, C et al. 2006. Sustainable Development in a Post-Brundtland World. *Ecological Economics* 57 (2): 253-268.

## PART II: BIG IDEAS IN HEALTH

### Oct 2 – **History and Foundations of Global Health** *Take-home reading quiz 3 due in class (posted on Mon)*

We will next move to tracing a similar history in the global health field. From “tropical health” in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which, in many places, stemmed from colonial and industrial-era medicine, to “public health”, which included a focus on hygiene, disease, and the behavior of the poor, the health community has moved to a framework of “global health” which takes into account structural poverty, unequal power relations, and other underlying social and political conditions (e.g. similar to social vulnerability) that burden communities differentially with poor health. While the “public health” framework still very much exists in the scientific and policy community, the “global health” framework is increasingly embraced in the social science community.

Greene, J et al. 2013. “Colonial Medicine and its Legacies”, Chapter 3 in *Reimagining Global Health*, Farmer, P, JY Kim, A Kleinman and M Basilio (Eds). University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles.

(DISCUSSION) Drobac, P. et al. 2013. “Building an Effective Rural Health Delivery Model in Haiti and Rwanda”, Chapter 6 in *Reimagining Global Health* in Farmer, P, JY Kim, A Kleinman and M Basilio (Eds). University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles.

### Oct 5 – **Health Disparities and the Social Determinants of Health**

No readings. We will do an in-class exercise on health disparities and social determinants of health drawing from federal and state data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). In recent years, there has been increasing focus on the “social determinants of health” (SDOH), the idea that underlying factors like income, race, gender, education, neighborhood, rate of incarceration, rate of crime, etc. determine health outcomes and that we should study and attempt to address

these underlying drivers and not simply the disease per se. In many ways, this approach lies in the belief of “prevention before cure”. Browse the US government’s data and definitions on the SDOH: <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>

Oct 9 – \*\*\***In-class film: The Other City (about the HIV/AIDS epidemic in DC)**\*\*\*

Oct 12 – **No class – Fall Break – Please take the time to read the assigned chapters of “The Making of a Tropical Disease: A Short History of Malaria”**

Oct 16 – **Refugees and Global Health Crises** *Closed-book reading quiz 4 in class*

Given our times, it is imperative that we understand the specific and grave health and environmental challenges faced by refugees. This week will also give us an opportunity to discuss a health topic of concern that has had remarkably little global policy attention: mental health. It will also allow us to apply a political-ecological framework to understanding refugee crises in sub-Saharan Africa with explanations rooted in the history of colonialism, environmental exploitation, and development.

(DISCUSSION): Kalipeni, E, and Opong, J. 1998 The refugee crisis in Africa and implications for health and disease: A political ecology approach. *Social Science and Medicine*.

(DISCUSSION): McNeely, CA, L Morland. 2016. The Health of the Newest Americans: How US Public Health Systems Can Support Syrian Refugees. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106 (1): 13-15.

Oct 19 – **The Political Ecology of Disease: Focus on Malaria**

A political ecology approach to disease posits the origins of disease in historical human-environmental relations forged through colonialism and development, among other histories. Packard is a well-known anthropologist of development who has written an in-depth book on the historical origins of malaria and its evolution into a so-called “tropical” disease.

(DISCUSSION – 2 TEAMS WILL SPLIT UP THE DISCUSSION OF THIS BOOK): Packard, R. 2007. *The Making of a Tropical Disease: A Short History of Malaria*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (chapters to TBD).

Oct 23 – \*\*\***Midterm Review**\*\*\*

*No readings – come prepared for the review and use this time to study for the midterm*

Oct 26 – \*\*\***Closed-Book Midterm Exam in Class**\*\*\*

### **PART III: CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTS OF CONCERN**

Oct 30 – **Fossil Fuels and Landscapes of Extraction**

We now shift to the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of our class in which we address “objects of concern” and read these through the big ideas and debates we have encountered in the class so far. We start with a new frontier of

environmental degradation and health endangerment in America: hydraulic fracking. Many of you will likely come from states (e.g. Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, etc.) where fracking has become an issue that affects everything from rural property rights to human health. We'll read two pieces—one Intro and one in-depth study—by anthropologist and political ecologist Anna Willow on how fracking impacts communities in myriad socio-cultural, health, economic, and environmental ways.

(DISCUSSION): Willow, A. 2014. Politics, ecology, and the new anthropology of energy: exploring the emerging frontiers of hydraulic fracking. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 21: 222-236.

(DISCUSSION): Willow, A. 2014. The new politics of environmental degradation: un/expected landscapes of disempowerment and vulnerability. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 21: 237-257.

## Nov 2 – **Agriculture and the Food System** *Short research paper prompt handed out in class*

Next we turn to food, one of the most visible areas of environmental policy-making and activist struggle, which we examine both systemically and in the next class through the event of the famine. McMichael gives a historical and political-economic overview of the food “crisis”, while the authors of a new edited volume give us some hope as far as the frontiers of the “new” food justice activism.

RHM. Chapter 9, “Fries”

(DISCUSSION): McMichael, P. 2009. The World Food Crisis in Historical Perspective, *Monthly Review* 61 (3). <https://monthlyreview.org/2009/07/01/the-world-food-crisis-in-historical-perspective/>

(DISCUSSION). Alkon, AH and J Guthman (Eds). 2017. “Introduction” in *The New Food Activism: Opposition, Cooperation and Collective Action*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles.

(OPTIONAL). Graddy-Lovelace, G. 2017. The coloniality of US agricultural policy: articulating agrarian (in)justice. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44 (1): 78-99.

## Nov 6 – **Hunger and Famine**

Famine is not a thing of the past. We will read Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen's work on “entitlements” and human “capabilities” as key explanations for the occurrence of hunger and famine. Sen's argument is straightforward: it is not the lack of food *per se* that explains famine, but rather the lack of human capabilities and “freedoms”—or the attributes that allow humans to lead a dignified life. This discussion should also lead us back to the theme of social vulnerability, which very much drew on Sen's notion of entitlements (see Ribot to remind yourself of this). Finally, Sen's argument on famines is that famines do not occur in democratic societies; to a large extent, such mass starvation is a result of the lack of free press, an authoritarian state, and overall low prevalence of human entitlements.

Sen, A. 198. *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*. Chapter 1 and Chapter 4. The entire book by this Nobel Prize winning economist is available here: [http://staging.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/1981/81B09\\_608\\_engl.pdf](http://staging.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/1981/81B09_608_engl.pdf)

(DISCUSSION): Chappell, MJ. 2018. “Introduction: Food and Famine Futures, Past and Present” in *Beginning to End Hunger Food and the Environment in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, and Beyond*. Oakland: University of California Press.

(DISCUSSION): Bearak, M. May 24, 2017. Somalis are fleeing famine—only to find death in a place of refuge. *Washington Post* [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/these-somalis-fled-famine-only-to-lose-their-kids-to-cholera/2017/05/24/72bed074-398f-11e7-a59b-26e0451a96fd\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.530de38d4556](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/these-somalis-fled-famine-only-to-lose-their-kids-to-cholera/2017/05/24/72bed074-398f-11e7-a59b-26e0451a96fd_story.html?utm_term=.530de38d4556)

Nov 9 – **\*\*\*In-class film *Food, Inc*\*\*\***

Nov 13 – **Water, Justice, and Intersectional Feminism**

Continuing with Sen and ideas of social vulnerability, we will see how this framework applies to water. A capabilities approach stresses that politics, and not just engineering and resource supply, matter to the questions of who gets how much water, and who is exposed to contaminated versus safe water. We will examine these lines of analysis in the case of water access for poor women living in informal settlements in urban India and in so doing, develop a “feminist political ecology” of water access and inequality.

Jepson, W et al. 2017. Advancing human capabilities for water security: A relational approach. *Water Security* 1 46-52.

Sultana, F. 2018. Water justice: why it matters and how to achieve it. *Water International* 43 (4): 483-493.

(DISCUSSION): Harris, L, L Rodina and C Morinville. 2015. Revisiting the Human Right to Water from an Environmental Justice Lens. *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 3 (4): 660-665.

(DISCUSSION): Truelove, Y. 2011. (Re-)Conceptualizing water inequality in Delhi, India through a feminist political ecology framework. *Geoforum*, 42: 143-152.

Nov 16 – **Sanitation, Gender, and Informal Urbanism *Closed-book reading quiz 5 in class***

While the lack of water affects over a billion people worldwide, it is said that the lack of sanitation is even more dire—affecting nearly twice the number. Sanitation has historically been paid far less attention (and garnered far fewer financial resources). Yet, safe sanitation is vital for safety, health, and human dignity. Why do you think this is? We will discuss sanitation in the context of urban informal settlements with a special focus on gender.

(DISCUSSION): McFarlane, C et al. 2014. Informal Urban Sanitation: Everyday Life, Poverty, and Comparison. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104 (5): 989-1011.

(DISCUSSION): Ray, I. 2017. Public Spaces, Private Acts: Toilets and Gender Equality <https://items.ssrc.org/public-spaces-private-acts-toilets-and-gender-equality/>

Nov 20 – **Guest Lecture by Katherin Sibel, AU SIS Alumnus, Peace Corps Alumnus, and currently works on community development at FEMA in Puerto Rico**

Please take notes. I will announce an extra-credit assignment related to this lecture.

Nov 23 – **\*\*\*No Class: Thanksgiving Break\*\*\***

### Nov 27 – **A Working Class Movement for the Environment and Health?**

What would a working-class movement for environment and health look like? Given that cities concentrate socio-economic, ethnic, and racial inequalities, how will they become “greener” without displacing or otherwise harming low-income communities? We return to Naomi Klein’s book *This Changes Everything*, but this time assess its argument through a review written by Daniel Aldana Cohen in which he argues that the working class and lower income groups must take control of the narrative and direction of “greening” the city and of urban climate justice and read this with Kate Derickson’s commentary on post-hurricane Houston. While both are short commentaries, they should remind you of themes covered at the outset and throughout the semester.

(DISCUSSION): Cohen, DA. 2015. The Urban Green Wars. *Jacobin Magazine*.  
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/this-changes-everything-naomi-klein-climate-change/>

(DISCUSSION): Derickson, K. 2017. After the water recedes, Houston’s low-income communities of color must have a say in the city’s future.  
<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2017/08/31/after-the-water-recedes-houstons-low-income-and-communities-of-color-must-have-a-say-in-the-citys-future/>

### Nov 30 – **The Ultimate Intersection: Climate Change and Human Health**

For many climate scientists around the world, one important question remains: how do we get people to *care* about climate change, especially for those who it seems a distant or even unreal proposition? In recent years, and especially spearheaded by the world’s premier health journal *The Lancet*, there has been increasing focus on communicating the health risks of climate change, including direct dangers that people are likely to be concerned about, such as heat waves, allergies, and flooding, as well as indirect risks, e.g. to food or water systems. We will review some of the major health risks of climate change and discuss how these matter “at home” in America.

(DISCUSSION) Dunn, D. 2017. Impact of Climate Change on Health in ‘the Major Threat of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, *Carbon Brief* <https://www.carbonbrief.org/impact-climate-change-health-is-major-threat-21st-century>. You can download the full *Lancet* report here: <http://www.lancetcountdown.org/the-report/> but are not required to read it.

(DISCUSSION) Hardy, D, R Milligan and N Heynen. 2017. Racial coastal formation: The Environmental Injustice of colorblind adaptation planning for sea-level rise. *Geoforum* 87: 62-72.

### Dec 4 – **Final Exam Review and Wrap-Up**

I wrote a public piece earlier this year that sums up how I think about the environment, health, and social justice. Please take a moment to read it and come prepared to discuss this along with your reflections on what you’ve learned in this class.

Ranganathan, M. 2017. The Environment as Freedom: A Decolonial Reimagining. Social Science Research Council *Items*: <http://items.ssrc.org/the-environment-as-freedom-a-decolonial-reimagining/>