Syllabus: ANT 431/MES 520: Folklore, the Environment, and Public Policy

Course description: Folklore, the environment and public policy examines the interaction of humans with the environment from the perspective of folklore, and reviews its impact on public policy at the local, state, federal and international level. Students will conduct primary research. This is an online course using Blackboard. 3 credit hours

Instructor: Pauleena MacDougall Office hours by appointment
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581-1848
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Prerequisites: none

Course objectives:

Students will learn about how folklore reveals the way people interact with the environment through their work, recreation, and aesthetics. The course will review major theories of the commons, sense of place, liberation ecology, and issues relating to the environment and sustainability of culture. It will examine the way people name places, how they imagine place and will review the politics of sustainability from a cultural perspective. Students will examine the ethics of place both theoretically and practically, and will explore whether there is a distinction between land ethic and human ethic. All of this will be placed within the context of folklore: for example, traditional work that interacts with natural resources, traditional healers, the use of herbal medicines, the words people use to describe places, the stories people tell about their place. Students will examine how these ideas of folklore and the environment can be used to inform public policy debate about population/environment.

This will be a course in which students do research using primary sources, fieldwork, materials from the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral history, or the American Folklife Center and other folklore resources.

The course will fulfill the gen ed requirement relating to environment and population. Students will be exposed to the concepts listed:

a) the role of both local and global environmental change on the quality of human life;

b) the pervasive role of human population growth on environmental quality and the quality of life, both in industrial and developing countries;

c) the influence of cultural, religious, economic, educational, and political factors on population growth and environmental quality;
d) possible solutions to the population/environment problems, which may include the role of technological advancements, a reexamination of educational and political institutions, enlightened reassessment of traditional religious and economic conceptions.

Expected outcomes:

- Students will acquire interdisciplinary skills, understand environmental issues from a folklore perspective and gain new insight into grass roots movements that impact environmental policies.
- Students should be able to compare and contrast the effects of different belief systems on human interaction with natural ecosystems.
- Students should be able to analyze the impact of a specific human cultural practice, belief system, or political/economic policy on the supporting ecosystem.
- Students should be able to project and explain the likely effects of modifications to the ecosystem.
- Students should be able to suggest specific modifications to cultural practices and/or political/economic policies that relate to a natural ecosystem.
- Students can describe a technologically advanced human society structured to be in balance with its sustaining ecosystem.
- Students demonstrate an understanding of how popular views of nature are influenced by scientific discoveries.
- Students demonstrate their understanding of how stories within a culture shape perceptions and values about the natural environment.

Electronic requirements

Course Infrastructure and Access

This course is given entirely on Blackboard. All weekly assignments must submitted to the discussion board. They must be typed in the body of the email.

Weekly reading assignments are found under Course Information on Blackboard. Students may read them on their computer monitor or download and print them. You must have readily available access to the web, email and broadband in order to take this course.

Technical support is available from CED Tech Help via email.

Online courses are more challenging because of the need for good time management and adherence to assignment due dates. If you find yourself getting behind, contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Pdf’s of course materials are available for download from the class web site: under Course Information

Blackboard WEB ADDRESS: https://www.courses.maine.edu/
**Grades:** Grade will be based on position-reaction papers and class discussion, (30%) class project including primary research (40%) and a final take home exam based on class readings and student research (30%)

**DUE DATES:** *All reaction papers must be uploaded to the Discussion Folder on the Blackboard site Sunday noon* of the week they are due. Students are expected to read and discuss each other’s posts.

**Project:** Projects should focus on folklore and environmentally sustainability issues. See suggested list of topics to get some ideas. By week 6 you should email me the title and list of resources you will use in your project. By week 11 you should send me an outline and rough draft of your project. The Final project is due week 13.

**FINAL:** The exam will be given to you to do during finals week and is due by Friday of that week.

**Academic Honesty**
Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, and all forms of misrepresentation in academic work, and it is unacceptable at the University of Maine. As stated in the University of Maine’s online undergraduate “Student Handbook,” plagiarism (the submission of another’s work without appropriate attribution) and cheating are violations of the University of Maine Student Conduct Code. An instructor who has probable cause or reason to believe a student has cheated may act upon such evidence, and will report the case to the supervising faculty member or the Department Chair for appropriate action.

**Disability Accommodation:**
If you have a disability for which you may be requesting an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, at their new location in East Annex, 581-2319, as early as possible in the term.

**Topics and Class calendar. Classes begin January 17, 2016**

**Week 1.** *(1/17-1/22)* Lecture: Folklore definitions (see power point slide lecture)

Readings: *You will find the readings in the course information section of the class web site.*


Homework: Write a one page reaction to the following questions based on the readings: What does folklore have to do with the environment? What is the connection between people, place and natural resources?

**Week 2.** *(1/23-1/29)* Lecture: Theory of the Commons (see power point slide lecture)


Homework: One page reaction to the following question based on readings. What is the Tragedy of the theory of the Commons that the authors critique and what is the controversy about it? Briefly summarize how the recognition of indigenous environmental knowledge has impacted contemporary policy. (It may be helpful if you view the lecture for this week before you write your response).

Week 3. (1/30-2/5) Lecture: Senses of Place
Readings: “Introduction” Senses of Place, Steven Feld and Keith Basso.

Homework: One page reaction to question based on readings: in your own words, what is your definition of Sense of Place and how might it relate to environmental policy?

Week 4. (2/6-2/12) Lecture: Liberation ecology

Homework: One page reaction to the following question based on readings. How would you define Liberation Ecology? How might this approach shape environmental policy?

Week 5.(2/13-2/19) View short film on World Population on WEB LINKS on your Blackboard class site

Homework: One page reaction to the following question based on readings. What issues relate sustainability of culture and population growth? How might they impact environmental policies?

Week 6.(2/20-2/26) Turn in Project Topic and List of Resources (email to instructor)

Homework: One page reaction to question based on readings: What did you learn from this reading about how the Apache people construct their own sense of place? Can you identify policy implications from this article?

Week 7.(2/27-3/5)


Homework: One page reaction to question based on readings. Explain how a glacier can be a social space and how might global warming impact that social space?

Spring Break March 6-20)

Week 8. (3/20-26)

Readings: “What are the alternatives to Global Culture?” in Conserving Cultures, author Harry Redner, pp. 147-218.

Homework: One page reaction to question based on readings. Do you agree or disagree with the author in his assessment of Global culture. Why?

Week 9. (3/27-4/2)


Homework: One page reaction to question based on readings. The stories center around living and traveling in and around glaciers. What did you hear in these glacier stories that help you understand the indigenous perspective of the environment? What are the cultural implications of glaciers melting?

Week 10.(4/3-4/09)

Readings: Place, People, and Folklore: An Isle Royale Case Study Author(s): Timothy Cochrane Source: Western Folklore, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Jan., 1987), pp. 1-20

Homework: One page reaction to question based on readings. Describe, in your own words, the consequences to Isle Royale fishermen when their island became a National Park. How could public policies better utilize folklore in decision making?

Week 11. (4/10-4/16) **Turn in outline and rough draft of your project in email to instructor.**

Readings:


Homework: One page reaction to question based on readings. In the United States green—both as a word with no color present and as a color is used as a symbol of non-polluting, healthy products. Green cars, green light bulbs, green cleaning products. In light of the article
on folklore and symbolism, should green be the universal color of environmentalists? Why or why not? Provide some examples of how this color is being used in the U.S. Does the color convey the same concepts in other cultures? Give examples.

Week 12. (4/17-4/23)

Readings:

Homework: One page reaction to the following question based on readings. The article reviews the controversial scholarship regarding the concept Ecotype. To what extent do you think there is an organic connection between the natural environment and folk narrative? Can you give examples to support your position?

Week 13 (4/24-4/30) **Final Project Due**


The author identifies tornado stories as a key to regional identity in the “Tornado Belt:”Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri. He demonstrates that weather can play an important role in regional economy. What kind of weather stories might you find in other parts of the country? Do you have any of your own to share? Why do people tell them?

Week 14 (5/1-5/7)


Homework: One page reaction to question based on readings. How might the author’s plan to collaborate before areas are protected work in actual practice to avoid some of the harmful effects of conserving ecosystems?

**FINAL 5/1 (Due 5/14): A Take home exam will be given to you to complete by Friday before Finals Week.**

**Class Research Project Instructions (Please read carefully):**

Description: Using materials in the archives of the Maine Folklife Center and/or the American Folklife Center (many of these are online), Special Collections in the Fogler Library, and articles from academic journals as needed, explore a hypothesis about the **way people interact with the environment in traditional ways and how that impacts environmental sustainability in Maine or the northeast region of the United States and Canada.** Develop a research project that includes interviewing one or more persons who have traditional knowledge about your topic. Prepare a 10 page paper based on your findings.
IMPORTANT: You must fill out a student deposit agreement and if you record your interviews you must turn in a release form for the recording as well. The Folklife Center as well as the library has recorders that can be checked out by students for doing fieldwork.

Some suggested topics:

Traditional medicinal use of plants-local ways of sustaining the plants, providing local medicines to illnesses, or you might explore endangered plants in our area that are used medicinally and explore how the plants might be preserved.

Traditional use of plants for material culture (ie. Boat building, baskets, etc.) Who uses traditional materials, how are they collected? What are the local ways of preserving the resource, are any endangered?

Traditional resource-based occupations (lumbering, fishing, guiding, sports camping, farming, gathering wild food for sale (ie fiddleheads, blueberries) Similar questions as above.

Traditional energy use (for transportation, to run machinery or for heating)—how are people conserving energy in communities in Maine—are there any community-wide efforts, do utility companies have strategies for conserving or helping customers conserve, etc.

Traditional cultural practices tied to place (ceremonies, etc.) How might traditional practices tied to place be endangered because of global climate change or economic development? Are there local solutions?

Traditional recreational uses of resources-do snowmobilers, skiers, etc. use sustainable practices? Are there local solutions or local ways of minimizing the impact on the environment? Do snowmobile clubs for example educate their members on these issues?

Traditional hunting methods, poaching and game laws—explore game laws, how species are faring in Maine—are any endangered—are there local traditions that help preserve species?

STYLE

The paper can be submitted to me via email but it must follow the following guidelines:

Readable in Microsoft word or pdf form.

1 inch margins top, bottom, and sides

12 point font

Double spaced lines

References: (author, date, page #) at the end of a paragraph, followed by a References Cited that includes the following information:

Author first and last name, title of article, title of journal, volume, number and date of publication, page numbers. ie: Jones, Paul, “the study of snowflakes,” Journal of Climate Study I(4) 1930:16-42.

NOTE: If you choose a topic that is not on this list you must get approval from me before going forward with your research.
Approved online sources include:

*Journal of American Folklore* (through JSTOR)

*Journal of Folklore Research*  [http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/jfr/index](http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/jfr/index)

**OPEN FOLKLORE:**  [http://www.openfolklore.org/](http://www.openfolklore.org/)

**American Folklife Center:**
The easiest way to use AFC collections is through their online collections. I would suggest the following:

- [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/buckaroos/](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/buckaroos/) Buckaroos in Paradise (ranching)
- [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/omhtml/omhhome.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/omhtml/omhhome.html) Omaha Indian Music (ceremonies, etc.)
- [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/tending/](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/tending/) Tending the Commons: Folklife and Landscape in Southern West Virginia (this one’s especially good for this class)

**Maine Folklife Center:**
Start by searching URSUS with your topic

Also, check the website for relevant collections  [http://www.umaine.edu/folklife/collections.htm](http://www.umaine.edu/folklife/collections.htm)

You can click on most of these for more information. When you find materials relevant to your project, contact me with a list of what you would like to look at and I will provide access for you.

[http://www.helsinki.fi/folkloristiikka/English/RMN/index.htm](http://www.helsinki.fi/folkloristiikka/English/RMN/index.htm)

Open folklore:  [http://www.openfolklore.org/](http://www.openfolklore.org/)

**Bibliography**


Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso  *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press,1996)

Mary Hufford, ed.  *Conserving Culture: A New Discourse on Heritage*. University of Illinois, 1994

Pauleena M. MacDougall. *Northeast Folklore* volumes 35-43. Available in the library and at Maine Folklife Center


