



ANTH/ENV/GEOG 362: Environmental Anthropology Course Syllabus Spring Semester 2025

Instructor: Clelia Viecelli, PhD

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: tbd

Office Hours: by appointment after a class or via Zoom (see Moodle site)

Email:

Course Type: Standard Course *or* Course with Service Learning component

Course Fee: USD\$ tbd

Course Description

We live in a historical period marked by a series of environmental crises where humans are, more than ever before, a geological and climatological force, altering landscapes at a planetary scale. Debates on climate change and its related effects such as biodiversity loss are at the center of governmental policies, UN reports, academic scholarship, and initiatives of social movements and local communities. In this scenario, approaching the natural world as distinct from the social world is clearly untenable to maintain. To better educate the next generation of citizens and scholars, it is increasingly crucial to provide a critical perspective to students that enables them to overcome the nature/culture divide and understand a world that is simultaneously social, natural, political and technological.

One of the specific tasks of anthropology is to move across different socio-cultural contexts and scales, exploring the singularity of local relationships between human beings and the environment, while taking into account the mutual influence of political, economic and socio-cultural processes. Through the exploration of ethnographic case-studies from different geographical locations with a special focus on the Italian peninsula, this course aims to analyze how people's relationships to the environment and the living world are constructed, experienced, and contested.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Below are the course's learning outcomes, followed by the methods that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- *identify* socio-cultural factors affecting human relationships to the environment, and the implications of ecology for studies of culture and society in a diverse range of contexts;
- *apply* anthropological approaches and theoretical concepts to the study of global environmental change and the contemporary debate about ecology, environment and non-human animals;
- *articulate* critical arguments to discuss theses, rework problems, and make judgments in relation to the issues addressed in Environmental Anthropology;
- *evaluate* existing research on the living world and the environment from an anthropological perspective;
- *integrate* experiential learning activities with classroom knowledge to practice systematic, public-facing, and ethical scholarship using twenty-first-century research and communication tools.

Course Materials

Readings

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course's Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

Assessment

Attendance	10%
One-On-One Prof Meeting	5%
Weekly Moodle Quizzes	20%
Field Note Journal	25%
In-class Presentations	15%
Final Exam	25%

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. If you attend all the meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance..

One-On-One Professor Meeting (5%)

Getting to know your professor makes you more comfortable with that person and therefore more likely to ask for help. It also might help for you to ask questions about the various assignments or discuss a paper idea. In this course, you get 5% of your grade for coming one time before Week 9 to office hours.

Weekly Online Quizzes (20%)

Students will be assigned a quiz every week, which will be due before class time and will not be reopened. The quiz will be on Moodle and it is not timed. Students can take the quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the average grade they receive. There will be a combination of *technical*, *methodological*, and *content questions*. The content questions will help students zoom in on the most important ideas of the readings. The technical questions will help students learn the class's policies and administrative procedures. The methodological questions will test on skills that will pop up every week, like finding an author's argument and assessing sources.

Field Note Journal (25%)

Students will be provided with a notebook at the start of the semester, which they will use as a personal space through which to reflect on course material and ideas. In-class assignments (e.g. summaries of assigned readings, analyses of primary sources, mental maps, reflections, predictive exercises) will be regularly scheduled and graded twice throughout the semester, i.e. before the mid-semester break (Week 6) and at the end of the course (Week 12). Each of these checks is worth 10% of your grade, for a total of 20%. See the full prompt on Moodle for more information.

In-class presentations (15%)

Students will present in groups the results of their research. Schedules and topics will be decided during the semester. See full prompt on Moodle for more information.

Final Paper (25%)

In the final exam scheduled for Week 13, students will apply what they have learned throughout the semester. They will write a short essay based on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted during the semester. Students will find on Moodle a full prompt.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero. As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused “sick days” and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student’s academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student’s final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students’ grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B). Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute’s Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than

15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time (no more than five minutes) to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism.

Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

Laptop & Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. As a general rule, the consumption of food in the classroom is not permitted. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the professor for specific cases, such as food tastings integral to the course content. Please note that cell phones must be set on silent mode before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices (e.g., earbuds) cannot be used during class lectures and discussions, unless there has been a specific academic accommodation. This policy also applies to earbuds and headsets.

As an instructor and as a person, I am dependent on both my computer and my telephone. That said: An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, I have a physical notebook policy: I ask you to leave your computers in your bags and phones in your pockets and use a regular notebook. There are four exceptions: 1) if you have an accommodation; 2) if you're using a tablet to take notes, 3) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer; or 4) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools.

U.N. Sustainable Development Goals

This course contributes to the achievement of one or more goals of U. N. Agenda for Sustainable Development:



Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Introduction to Environmental Anthropology

Meeting 1: *Introduction to Anthropology and Syllabus Review*

Meeting 2: *An Anthropological perspective on the Environment*

Readings for the week:

Townsend, P. K. (2017). *Environmental Anthropology: From Pigs to Policies* (3rd edition). Waveland Press. pp. 1-8.

Harnish, A., Wilk, R. R., & Haenn, N. (2016). *The Environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living* (Second edition). New York University Press. pp. 3-11.

Townsend, P. K. (2017). *Environmental Anthropology: From Pigs to Policies* (3rd edition). Waveland Press. pp. 12-17.

WEEK 2

Going beyond the nature/culture divide

Meeting 1: *What is Nature? What is Culture?*

Meeting 2: *Multi-species ethnography as a research method*

Readings for the week:

Cronon, W. (1996). The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature. *Environmental History*, 1(1), 7–28. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3985059>

Harris, M. (1992). The Cultural Ecology of India's Sacred Cattle. *Current Anthropology*, 33(1), 261–276.

Kirksey, S. E., & Helmreich, S. (2010). The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography. *Cultural Anthropology*, 25(4), 545–576. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01069.x>

Lepore, J. (2023, May 22). What We Owe Our Trees. *The New Yorker*.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/05/29/what-we-owe-our-trees>

WEEK 3

Parks & People: A view from Environmental History

Meeting 1: *Agriculture and Early "Civilization"*

Meeting 2: *Guest Lecture by Zachary Nowak, PhD*

Readings for the week:

Scott, J. C. (2017). Agro-ecology of the Early State. In *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (pp. 116–149). Yale University Press. <https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300231687-007>

Jacoby, K. (2001). The State of Nature: Country Folk, Conservationists, and Criminals at Yellowstone National Park, 1872-1908. In C. Stock & R. Johnston (Eds.), *The Countryside in the Age of the Modern State: Political Histories of Rural America* (pp. 91–112). Cornell University Press.

WEEK 4

Anthropocene, Nature and Us

Meeting 1: *Critical Definitions of "Anthropocene"*

Meeting 2:

Readings for the week:

Hetherington, K. (2019). Introduction: Keywords of the Anthropocene. In K. Hetherington (Ed.), *Infrastructure, Environment, and Life in the Anthropocene* (p. 0). Duke University Press. pp. 1-11

- Davis, H., & Todd, Z. (2017). On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 16(4), 4.
- Haraway, D. (2015). Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin. *Environmental Humanities*, 6(1), 159–165. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615934>

WEEK 5

Gender and the Environment

Meeting 1: Male and Female as Culture and Nature?

Meeting 2: A Feminist Political Ecology

Readings for the week:

- Ortner, S. B. (1972). Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture? *Feminist Studies*, 1(2), 5–31.
- Rocheleau, D., Thomas-Slayter, B., & Wangari, E. (1996). “Gender and Environment: A Feminist Political Ecology Perspective”. In *The Environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living* (Second edition.). New York University Press. pp. 34-40.
- Podcast with Vandana Shiva on ecofeminism

WEEK 6

Relationships between humans and non-human others

Meeting 1: How do we think with animals?

Meeting 2: More-than-human world-making

Readings for the week:

- Govindrajan, R. (2018). The Goat Who Died for Family Sacrificial Ethics and Kinship. In R. Govindrajan (Ed.), *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas* (p. 0). University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226560045.003.0002>
- Tsing, A. (2017). The Buck, the Bull, and the Dream of the Stag: Some unexpected weeds of the Anthropocene. *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*, 42(1), 1.
- Tsing, Anna L., Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena, and Feifei Zhou, eds. 2021. *Feral Atlas: The More-Than-Human Anthropocene*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press. <https://feralatlus.org/>

Assignments:

Submit your course journal on Moodle - first check

Semester Break

WEEK 7

Indigenous knowledge of the environment

Meeting 1: Does nature have agency?

Meeting 2: Understanding nature through local systems of knowledge

Readings for the week:

- Kawa, N. C. (2016). How Religion, Race, and the Weedy Agency of Plants Shape Amazonian Home Gardens. *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment*, 38(2), 84–93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cuag.12073>
- Oetelaar, G. A. (2014). Worldviews and human–animal relations: Critical perspectives on bison–human relations among the Euro-Canadians and Blackfoot. *Critique of Anthropology*, 34(1), 94–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X13510187>
- Paolisso, M. (2005). Blue Crabs and Controversy on the Chesapeake Bay: A Cultural Model for

Understanding Watermen's Reasoning about Blue Crab Management. *Human Organization*, 61(3), 226–239. <https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.61.3.2dc5c4gxap2f6nwv>

WEEK 8

The Sacred in Nature

Meeting 1: *A Western example: Steiner's anthroposophy*

Meeting 2: *Biodynamics as a form of living heritage*

Readings for the week:

Breda, N. (2016). The plant in between: Analogism and entanglement in an Italian community of anthroposophists. *Anuac*, 5(2), 2. <https://doi.org/10.7340/anuac2239-625X-2530>

Viccelli, C. (2025). Biodynamics as cultural heritage: between Steiner's legacy and contemporary issues. Chapter. *Routledge Handbook on Food and Cultural Heritage* [forthcoming].

WEEK 9

In-class presentations

Meeting 1: *In-class student presentations (A-L)*

Meeting 2: *In-class student presentations (M-Z)*

WEEK 10

Toxicity and Waste

Meeting 1: *Reflections on food waste*

Meeting 2: *Documentary screening and in-class debate*

Readings for the week:

Giles, David (2020). After Market: Capital, surplus, and the social afterlives of food waste. Deakin University. Chapter. <https://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30136418>

Blanchette, A. (2019). Living Waste and the Labor of Toxic Health on American Factory Farms. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 33(1), 80–100. <https://doi.org/10.1111/maq.12491>

Langwick, S. A. (2018). A politics of habitability: Plants, Healing, and Sovereignty in a Toxic World. *Cultural Anthropology*, 33(3), 415–443. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca33.3.06>

WEEK 11

The Threat of Place for Food & Ecology

Meeting 1: *Terroir as a bunch of malarkey*

Meeting 2: *Ecologies of conservation*

Readings for the week:

Nowak, Z. (2012). Against Terroir. *Petits Propos Culinaires*, 96, 92–108.

Chew, M. K. (2013). Anekeitaxonomy: Botany, Place, and Belonging. In I. D. Rotherham, R. A. Lambert, & M. K. Chew (Eds.), *Invasive and Introduced Plants and Animals: Human Perceptions, Attitudes and Approaches to Management* (pp. 137–151). Routledge.

Swanson, H. A. (2015). Shadow ecologies of conservation: Co-production of salmon landscapes in Hokkaido, Japan, and southern Chile. *Geoforum*, 61, 101–110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.02.018>

WEEK 12

Writing Workshop and Future Perspectives

Meeting 1: *Writing Workshop*

Meeting 2: *Course Wrap-up and Looking into the future*

Readings for the week:

Robbins, P., & Moore, S. A. (2015, June 19). Love your symptoms: A sympathetic diagnosis of the Ecomodernist Manifesto. *Undisciplined Environments*.

<https://undisciplinedenvironments.org/2015/06/19/love-your-symptoms-a-sympathetic-diagnosis-of-the-ecomodernist-manifesto/>

Assignments:

Submit your course journal on Moodle - second check

WEEK 13

Last Class & Special Academic Events Week

Meeting 1: *Final Exam*