

# **Ecological Anthropology and Regional Sustainability**

Anthropology 428 (3cr)  
Summer 2020

## **Course Information**

Course format: Blended (asynchronous and synchronous online)  
Meeting times: Tuesdays and Thursdays (May 18-August 07): 3pm-4pm via Zoom.

## **Instructor**

Varpu Lotvonen (M.A., PhD student), Department of Anthropology, UAF  
Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays: 4pm-5pm on Zoom (chat or video possibilities)  
Email: vmlotvonen@alaska.edu  
Phone: 907-750-7455

**Prerequisites:** WRTG F111X; WRTG F211X, WRTG F212X, WRTG F213X or WRTG F214X; junior standing or permission from the instructor.

## **Catalog Course Description**

Biological, environmental and cultural factors and their interplay in defining the human condition, with examples from the Arctic and other populations.

## **Expanded Course Description**

This course is intended as an introduction to ecological anthropology. Ecological anthropology is interested in the questions of how sociocultural groups interact with their environments in culturally informed ways. Some questions relevant to this subfield are:

- How humans adapt to environmental conditions over time and shape their environments?
- How do culture and nature influence each other (if such dichotomies are even meaningful)?
- How can we untangle the issues of power, economy, and politics in relation to environment?

Humans are a species with high capacity to adaptation. In fact, culture it itself can be seen as an adaptive trait. Humans are a widely successful species that has populated nearly all of Earth's continents. We will look at how cultural anthropology and its signature method, ethnography, have been employed in investigating the links between cultures and environment. An important viewpoint of this class is that the ways of understanding the world are cultural constructs, and that divergent understandings are possible. Some scholars argue that new viewpoints are critical for rethinking the environmental history of capitalism that has led to the current era of Anthropocene that poses a significant adaptive challenge for humans today and in the future.

Anthropocene is a term that enjoys a varying level of popularity among scientists and it refers to the current geological era during which humans have affected the atmospheric and environmental conditions to the extent that it affects all of the Earth's ecosystems. Some changes that have occurred include melting glaciers and sea ice, droughts, environmental toxins, and shrinking of habitats for non-human as well as

human species. These changes do not affect everyone equally. Some communities, groups of people, or countries are more affected than others, which poses questions for environmental justice, as well as a need for future solutions.

With a view from the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions and issues, this class will provide students with critical tools for looking at human cultures within a wider webs of relations. As well, we will investigate the issues relating to sustainable futures in the Anthropocene.

## **Learning Objectives**

1. To develop critical thinking about the complex interactions between environment and human sociocultural systems both historically and today.
2. To develop understanding of, and sensitivity to, epistemological and ontological assumptions regarding the environment. We will also strive to attain reflexive understanding of these matters.
3. To develop skills in reading and critical thinking that are applied toward writing a scholarly research paper and giving an oral presentation.

## **Course Structure**

This class is offered in blended synchronous/asynchronous format online.

In days before the class, the instructor will share two or three 10-15 minutes lecture videos online that you may view at your own time, but they do need to be viewed before the class discussion commences for the day. The videos will center on key concepts of that week's theme. After viewing the lecture videos, you will need to form and submit one question that relates to the videos and one question that relates to the readings. (Detailed instructions will follow once the BlackBoard for this class is online.) During our Zoom time on Tuesdays (3-4pm), we will have a seminar-like discussion about the questions and the themes of the week.

Before each Thursday meeting (on Zoom at 3-4pm), students will watch another lecture video or two and complete the one-question assignment. During the Zoom meetings, we will discuss our readings in a seminar-like format.

Opportunisticly, we will have guest speakers who work with sustainability and related issues, and we will watch the documentary *Last Yoik in Saami Forests*.

You will also keep a weekly on-line learning journal that focuses on finding arguments, evidence, and conclusions from the readings (specific instructions handed out later).

## **Required Course Materials**

- Townsend, Patricia K., 2017. *Environmental anthropology: From pigs to policies*. Third Edition. Waveland Press.
- TBD
- Other readings and materials for this course will be provided as pdf files on the Blackboard website.

## **Course Website:**

Blackboard <https://classes.alaska.edu/> is a web-based course management and collaboration portal for the asynchronous portion of the class. Blackboard enables UAF educators to manage course materials and to communicate quickly and effectively with students. For this course, you are required to access Blackboard for course-related information and materials.

Zoom! (Online synchronous course delivery) UAF's new video conferencing platform, Zoom, is available by visiting <https://alaska.zoom.us>, selecting "Sign in – Configure your account" and using your UA credentials to sign in. Students must have internet access and a computer equipped with camera, microphone, and speakers/headphones. Remember to use the mute button while you are not speaking in order to minimize outside interference.

## **Course Requirements**

Students are expected to complete all the assignments by due date, read all the provided materials, and join every class ready and prepared to discuss them. Please have your readings at hand during the Zoom meetings so that you can refer to them.

- Attendance and participation in the Zoom meetings are critical for the success of this class. If an emergency situation will prevent you from joining the class meeting, please let the instructor know as soon as possible by phone or email.
- During class meetings on week 1 and 2, each student will give a brief, approximately 15-20 minute introduction that will address the question of how they individually, perhaps academically, and through their family and cultural ties relate to the natural world. Visual aids such as presentation slides are encouraged but not mandatory.
- Each student will keep a learning journal online. Specific instructions and a grading rubric for this assignment will be provided at the beginning of the semester.
- Research paper about a topic of your choosing that relates to ecological anthropology. 10 pages, Times New Roman or Calibri, double spaced, font size 11 with a complete list of references in a citations style of your choosing (CMS/APA/etc.). At least 5 references to class readings. If you have trouble deciding on a topic or if you wish to discuss your plan I will offer assistance.
  - o Brief 350-500 words plan for the paper is due on July 7<sup>th</sup> (Week 8).
- Oral Presentation based on your research paper. Students will present their research project to the class in a 10-15 minute, oral presentation with PowerPoint during week 12 (August 4 and 6).

## **Evaluation:**

Attendance/Participation: 20%

Self-introduction (oral): 10%

Lecture questions: 10%

Learning journal: 20%

Final Paper: 25 %

Oral presentation of final paper: 15%

**All assignments must be completed in order to pass this class.** Late submissions, sent after 11:59pm on the due date will lower your grade by 5 points per day unless you are under emergency circumstances.

**Grades will be based on the following scale:**

98-100% A+  
94-97% A  
91-93% A-  
88-90% B+  
84-87% B  
81-83% B-  
78-80% C+  
74-77% C  
71-73% C-  
60-70% D  
59% and below F

**Student Support Services** are available at UAF: <http://www.uaf.edu/sssp/> These services include: free tutoring services; academic advising, mentoring, and personal support; direct financial assistance to qualified low-income participants; use of laptop computers, 4 labs, and other technology resources; and cultural and social engagement. The office is located at 514 Gruening Building, and the phone number is 474-6844.

**Writing Center** Students can get help with their writing at The Writing Center (801 Gruening): <https://write.alaska.edu/uaf-writing-center/> You can make an appointment (474-5314) to go over a paper with someone at any stage in the writing process, from rough outline to final draft.

**Speaking Center** Students can get coaching on refining their presentation topic and organizing their presentation effectively at the Speaking Center (507 Gruening). You can make an appointment here: <https://www.uaf.edu/speak/>

**Academic Honesty & Plagiarism** Be sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism and what are acceptable forms of citing published (and unpublished) material. For an explanation of what constitutes plagiarism see: <http://library.uaf.edu/ls101-plagiarism> For an explanation of how to properly cite sources see: <http://library.uaf.edu/ls101-citing> Please know that cheating and plagiarism are serious matters, so do your own work in accordance with the UAF Student Code of Conduct: <http://catalog.uaf.edu/academics-regulations/students-rights-responsibilities/>

**UAF Help Desk** Go to <http://www.alaska.edu/oit/> to see about current network outages and news. Reach the Help Desk at:  
e-mail at [helpdesk@alaska.edu](mailto:helpdesk@alaska.edu)  
fax: 907.450.8312  
phone: 450.8300 (in the Fairbanks area) or 1.800.478.8226 (outside of Fairbanks)

**Disability Services** The University of Alaska is committed to providing equal access for students with disabilities (see <http://www.uaf.edu/disability/>). If you experience a disability and will need special accommodations, please contact me during my office hours.

**Student Protections and Services Statement:** Every qualified student is welcome in my classroom. As needed, I am happy to work with you, disability services, veterans' services, rural student services, etc. to find reasonable accommodations. Students at this university are protected against sexual harassment and discrimination (Title IX), and minors have additional protections. As required, if I notice or am informed of certain types of misconduct, then I am required to report it to the appropriate authorities. For more information on your rights as a student and the resources available to you to resolve problems, please go the following site: [www.uaf.edu/handbook/](http://www.uaf.edu/handbook/)

**Notice of Nondiscrimination** UA is an AA/EO employer and educational institution and prohibits illegal discrimination against any individual: [www.alaska.edu/titleIXcompliance/nondiscrimination](http://www.alaska.edu/titleIXcompliance/nondiscrimination).

The University of Alaska Board of Regents have clearly stated in BOR policy that discrimination, harassment and violence will not be tolerated on any campus of the University of Alaska. If you believe you are experiencing discrimination or any form of harassment, including sexual harassment/misconduct/assault, you are encouraged to report that behavior. If you disclose sexual harassment or sexual violence to faculty members or university employees, they must notify the UAF Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident. Your choices for disclosure include:

1. You may confidentially disclose and access confidential counseling by contacting the UAF Health and Counseling Center at 474-7043.
2. You can get support and file a Title IX report by contacting the UAF Title IX coordinator at 474-7599.
3. You may file a criminal complaint by contacting the UAF Police Department at 474- 7721.

**Final Comment:** If you run into any problems during the semester that affect your attendance or coursework, be sure to let me know – exceptions can always be made for illness and emergencies. Please let me know in advance if possible, or as soon as you are able. You can reach me by phone or email, attend virtual office hours. As well, if office hours will not work with your schedule, we can arrange a meeting at another time.

## COURSE CALENDAR (TENTATIVE)

All readings should be completed before the first class of the week, as we will discuss them and I will assume you are familiar with them.

Weekly schedule might be modified to accommodate opportunities. Remember to check your email frequently throughout this course for announcements.

Date	Topics & Readings	Assignments
<b>Week 1</b> May 19 May 21	<b>Topic: Introduction to the course</b> Townsend chapter 1: Introduction Townsend chapter 2: Julian Steward's Cultural Ecol. (Optional but recommended: Slow Hope)	Student self-introductions
<b>Week 2</b> May 26 May 28	<b>Topic: Nature/culture divide</b> Townsend chapter 3: Ethnoecology Readings TBD	Student self-introductions contd.
<b>Week 3</b> June 2	<b>Topic: Cultural adaptations</b> Townsend chapter 4-5: Rappaport's pigs/Amazonian	

June 4	hunters Moran (2016) Chapter 1: People in Ecosystems	
<b>Week 4</b> June 9 June 11	<b>Topic: Political ecology</b> Townsend chapter 6: Complex Societies  Nightingale, A. J. (2018). Theorizing Power in Political Ecology: the Where of Power in Resource Governance Projects.  Movie: Last Joik in the Sámi Forest	
<b>Week 5</b> June 16 June 18	<b>Topic: Human-animal relations</b> Readings TBD  Nadasdy, P. (2007). The gift in the animal: The ontology of hunting and human-animal sociality.	
<b>Week 6</b> June 23 June 25	<b>Topic: Multispecies anthropology</b> Readings TBD  Stépanoff, C., Marchina, C., Fossier, C., & Bureau, N. (2017). Animal Autonomy and Intermittent Coexistences: North Asian Modes of Herding.	
<b>Week 7</b>  June 30	<b>Topic: Traditional ecological knowledge</b>  Readings TBD	
July 2	No class meeting. Happy 4 <sup>th</sup> of July!	
<b>Week 8</b> July 7 July 9	<b>Topic: TEK, Biopiracy (and colonial legacies)</b> Readings TBD Readings TBD	Plan for research paper due
<b>Week 9</b> July 14 July 16	<b>Topic: Global resource extraction</b> Townsend chapter 7-8: Minerals/War	
<b>Week 10</b> July 21 July 23	<b>Topic: Climate change, population, and health</b> Townsend chapter 9-11: Climate change/ population/ Health	
<b>Week 11</b> July 28 July 30	<b>Topic: Environmental conservation and spiritual approaches</b> Townsend chapter 12-13: Conservation/ Spirituality/ Consumer cultures	
<b>Week 12</b> August 4 August 6	<b>Topic: Student presentations</b>	Oral Presentations
		Papers due: AUGUST 7th