

## GEOG 16301 – Natural Resources, Capitalism, and Society

Meeting Times: Mondays, 12:30 PM – 3:15 PM

Robinson 311

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Office hours: by appointment

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### Texts

- Coe, N.M., P.F. Kelly, and H.W.C. Yeung. 2013. Economic Geography: A Contemporary Introduction, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Wiley. ISBN: 978-0-470-94338-0
- Cato, M.S. 2011. Environment & Economy. Routledge. ISBN: 978-0-415-47741-3
- Hawken, 2010. The Ecology of Commerce Revised Edition: A Declaration of Sustainability. HarperBusiness.
- Other readings will be distributed electronically or in class

### Course Description from Rowan Catalogue

“This course examines the environmental and social impacts of capitalism, and offers students various tools for understanding and critiquing this powerful political-economic system. Changes in US and global economic geographies and relationships are also examined from the 19th c to the present. This course may not be offered annually. 3.000 credit hours.”

### Course Learning Outcomes

A course description can be useful, but it doesn't always address the **purpose** of the course. Sometimes students (and professors) get frustrated when they feel like they don't know what the purposes of a course are or why they are doing what they are doing in a course. I want to avoid this by letting you know, right away, what the general goals of this course are:

- Understand that all economic systems (and especially capitalism) are geographic and environmental systems.
- Develop critical analysis and communication skills (both written and verbal), and especially in the context of small groups.
- Articulate the relationships between environmental, social, and economic issues and the role of businesses in causing and potentially solving sustainability problems.
- Become familiar with the sources of data and methods used to solve problems in economic geography and develop confidence in ability to locate and critically evaluate source materials and especially economic data.
- Appreciate the diversity of political-economic responses to environmental problems found all over the world.

### Specific Learning Objectives

Learning outcomes shape the overall form and content of the course. But let's be more specific: At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Describe the political, environmental, and cultural dimensions of economic and sustainability issues.
- Articulate how the processes of capitalism create geographic variations in economic, social, and environmental status, at local, regional, and international scales.
- Critique (and defend!) capitalism and its role in society as a powerful socio-economic system able to cause and resolve environmental problems.
- Share detailed examinations of specific instances of business and economics impacting the environment and society through analysis of case studies.
- Link economic-geography and sustainability concepts to your own life and personal worldview.

### Course Organization and Tentative Schedule

At Rowan, class sizes are typically smaller than those at other public universities. This is a good thing; it gives us a chance to get to know one another. It also opens up opportunities for discussion, collaboration, and active learning. These things will form the core of each class meeting, so instead of listening to me lecture the whole time, we will build our understandings of course topics individually and collaboratively through a variety of activities. **If you don't want to participate in these sorts of activities, in each class session, this may not be the course for you.**

**Please bring a laptop or other research-capable device to class**

Week	1 <sup>st</sup> part of class	2 <sup>nd</sup> part of class	Readings DUE	Assignments DUE
1 (9/9)	Welcome to NRCS!!	Some important concepts	<u>Coe et al.</u> chs. 1-2	---
2 (9/16)	“The Environment” and Economic Thought		<u>Cato</u> ch. 1 <u>Coe et al.</u> ch. 5 <u>Hawken</u> ch. 1	Online discussion board
3 (9/23)	Environmental Problems & Economic Causes	Screening of <i>Food, Inc.</i>	<u>Cato</u> chs. 2-3 <u>Hawken</u> chs. 2-3	Online discussion board
4 (9/30)	Economic Growth and the Environment		<u>Cato</u> ch. 9 <u>Hawken</u> ch. 7	Online discussion board
5 (10/7)	Guest Lecture: Dr. Jessica Smith, Colorado School of Mines		---	<b>Problem Set #1</b> Online discussion board
6 (10/14)	<b>Group Case Study Presentation #1</b>	Pollution: Market Failures, Pricing and Externalities	<u>Cato</u> chs. 10-11 <u>Hawken</u> ch. 5	Online discussion board
7 (10/21)	Capitalism & Environment	Globalization	<u>Cato</u> ch. 12 <u>Coe et al.</u> chs. 3-4, 8-9 <u>Hawken</u> ch. 6	Online discussion board
8 (10/28)	Screening of <i>Life and Debt</i>	Labor; Gender and Ethnicity as Sustainability Issues	<u>Coe et al.</u> ch. 6, 13-14	Online discussion board
9 (11/4)	Environmental and Ecological Economics	Green and Anti-Capitalist Economics	<u>Cato</u> chs. 4-7	Online discussion board
10 (11/11)	<b>Group Case Study Presentation #2</b>	Business as a solution?	<u>Hawken</u> ch. 8	<b>Problem Set #2</b> Online discussion board
11 (11/18)	Solutions: Producer Responsibility, Industrial Ecology		<u>Cato</u> ch. 8 <u>Coe et al.</u> ch. 12 <u>Hawken</u> ch. 4	Online discussion board
12 (11/25)	Solutions: Climate Change, “No-Regrets” Policy, Utilities, ESG/Impact Investing		<u>Cato</u> ch. 13 <u>Coe et al.</u> ch. 7 <u>Hawken</u> ch. 9	Online discussion board
13 (12/2)	Solutions: Localization, Markets vs. Commons, Personal Consumption	Screening of <i>No Impact Man</i>	<u>Cato</u> chs. 12, 14 <u>Coe et al.</u> ch. 15	Online discussion board
14 (12/9)	Conclusions: A Sustainable Economy?	<b>Group Case Study Presentation #3</b>	<u>Cato</u> ch. 15 <u>Coe et al.</u> ch. 16 <u>Hawken</u> ch. 10	Online discussion board
Finals Week	<b>Problem Set 3</b> will be due by 5:00 pm of the day of the exam period. I will give you an exact date as we get closer.			

Class Etiquette (adapted from Dr. Lesley Rigg)

Students are entitled to and deserve respect, courtesy and tolerance, regardless of their race, background, religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other perceived difference. Likewise, faculty, staff and fellow students deserve the same treatment. Therefore, within this class community, regardless of the mode of communication, every effort will be made to create a safe haven for diverse thoughts and communication. For more information, see the University “Classroom Behavior Policy and Procedures” document on the Provost’s website.

## Course Policies

- Attendance policy: I take attendance as a means of tracking participation. You do not earn points simply for being in class! If you are unable to attend class for some reason, let me know ahead of time (if you can). Also please know that I will not post notes or lectures online; that it is **your** responsibility to track down notes and the details of in-class activities and discussions from a classmate; and that even if you miss a class you still need to complete the readings assigned for the day and turn in any assignments due that day. **Please arrive to class on-time.** If you are late for some reason please come in quietly and don't disrupt the class. The University's attendance policy is available on the Provost's website.
- Cheating and Plagiarism: Don't do either of these; it is a waste of your time, a waste of my time, and extremely disrespectful to me and your classmates. It may also get you into serious trouble with the University. We will discuss academic integrity in class. In instances where it is clear the work submitted was not your own, you may lose points or receive a zero grade for the assignment. In the meantime, be sure to read the full University policy on 'Academic Integrity'.
- Computers and mobile devices: **Please bring a laptop or other research-capable device to class.** We may use these in in class to complete an assignment or activity, and many of you may use these items to take notes. That is OK with me, but don't distract yourself or others from the material and interactions of the actual course meeting. At any rate, this course represents just a few hours a week where you should take a break from txting, fb, the twittersphere, snapchat, etc – it's good to take a break every so often. Also I will adhere to the university policy: "The use of laptop or notebook microcomputers and other mobile electronic devices for classroom activities is allowed at the discretion of the instructor or in the case of a documented disability. The use of such electronic devices should not be a distraction to other students or the instructor. Students are expected to use electronic devices only as part of ongoing class activities. If an instructor believes the use of electronic devices is detrimental to the learning environment or gives any student an unfair advantage, then the instructor may prohibit their use at any time. Also, the use of any device for purposes of audio or video recording may occur only with the prior approval of the instructor."
- E-Mail Policy: No doubt, email is the best way to reach me. I will do my absolute best to respond to your emails within 24 hours, though I cannot make any guarantees. **You can help me answer your email by adhering to the following sample:**

Subject: Question about Assignment/Issue

Greetings/Hey/Dear Professor/Jordan/dude,

I was hoping for clarification about this specific issue. I understand parts X and Y, but part Z is really making me confused. Should I think about it according to A, or is B a better approach? Also, I'm not quite sure when the assignment is due – it doesn't say on the page, and I don't believe you mentioned it in class.

Thanks/Sincerely/Peace out,

First Name Last Name

Name of the class you're in

If, instead, you send me an email with no subject, don't have a specific question (for instance, "What are we supposed to do for this?" is a horrible question to ask your professors via email), don't include your

name, or the formalities of human communication (greeting, parting words), that gets really annoying, really fast, and it takes me longer to respond and I may not actually be answering the question you want answered anyway!!!

- Late assignments: Assignments are due as noted on the syllabus – so, turn them in on time! Assignments are due at the start of class either in hard copy or electronically, as directed in the assignment. **Late assignments are not accepted without a university-approved excuse.**
- Readings: I will post any non-textbook reading assignments online with enough time for you to complete them before we discuss them in class. I will also try to mention, in class, what is due for the next course meeting. If the readings are not from the assigned texts, then I will make them available electronically. **Readings are to be completed before class meetings.** Please note that while we may not discuss all aspects of a given reading in class, you are responsible for all assigned readings for exams, including any information from charts, maps, and other graphics.
- Special accommodations for religious observances: From the University policy on attendance, “Rowan respects the diversity of faiths and spiritual practices in the university community. Students who wish to observe religious holidays which occur when classes are scheduled must inform their instructors before the fact, and preferably within the first two weeks of each semester, even when the exact date of the holiday will not be known until later. Students who make such arrangements will not be required to attend classes or take examinations on the designated days, and faculty must provide reasonable opportunities for students to make up missed work and examinations.” I am happy to abide by this, but please help me out with specific dates and information; I may not be familiar with all of the important observances in your faith life!
- Students with accommodations from Disability Resources: From of the Office of Student Affairs, “Students requiring accommodations should contact the Disability Resources office upon receiving an acceptance letter or when a disability is identified.” You can access more information here from the Office of Disability Resources.

**Everyone is welcome in the University.  
I am happy to work with you.**

#### Assignment Breakdown

1. *Problem Sets and Case Study Analyses*: **225** points (3 x 75 points each)
2. *Group Case Study Presentations*: **150** points (3 x 50 points each)
3. *Attendance and write-up of environmental events*: **30** points (2 x 15 each)
4. *Online discussion*: **45** points (9 x 5 points each, 13 available to complete)
5. *Class discussion and activity participation*: **50** points

#### Grading Scale

100 – 90%	A, A-
89 – 80%	B+, B, B-
79 – 70%	C+, C, C-
69 – 60%	D+, D, D-
59 – 0%	F

Your grades will be updated regularly on Blackboard. You can earn a maximum of **500** points in the course. Extra credit points, if any, would be added to your overall points at the end of the semester.

Some Advice and Final Words:

- The single best way to succeed in this course is to attend each class meeting, fully prepared and ready to participate. It is also the best way to really ‘get something’ out of the course.
- Don’t approach your college education as a transaction, where you pay money and time to get grades and a degree. The journey is just as important as the destination. ENGAGE with your interests and the people surrounding you!
- *Did you know?* In a 2013 survey of 318 employers, a strong consensus emerged that capacities like critical thinking and project management skills that cut across all majors are more critical to career success than a student’s choice of major...you can learn something valuable for your future career in any and all classes you take! (AACU, *What Do Employers Want from College Graduates?*)