

Contemporary cultural ecology

(Winter semester 2011/2012 course syllabus)

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Department of Cultural Studies

Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague

Tuesday 9:10 – 10:45

Celetná Street 20, room 306

Credits: 4 ECTS

IS code: ATKV00090

First lesson is on October 4th, 2011. The course is held in English and is opened for all Czech and foreign students.

Course description

The relationship between human society and nature has many aspects. Contemporary cultural ecology represents approach which is trying to investigate as much of these various aspects of this relationship as possible. In the course there are presented different theoretical approaches to human-environment relationship, as well as diverse case studies from the history and our presence. Five main topics which form the structure of the course can be briefly summarized as follows:

1) Social sciences and the environment

There are presented the most important environmentally oriented disciplines of social sciences (roots of social and cultural ecology, human ecology, environmental sociology) and their relationship to biological ecology. There are discussed differences between ecology and environmentalism and thoughts of selected important environmental philosophers are introduced.

2) History of cultural landscape

The first question is: What is it landscape? Then we can ask what is it cultural landscape. History of cultural landscape in Czech is presented along with the cultural influence on landscape and natural influence on society. How does our landscape perception differ from the perception of other historical eras?

3) World development and ecological footprint

How much “natural goods and services” do we need for our life? How can we measure it? Which states are the most demanding and which least? Is Gross National Product good indicator of countries’ wealth or do we need better indicators? How do they work?

4) Energy demand and climate change

Climate change is not only natural phenomenon but also a great political and social issue. How does climate change “work”? What do people think about it? How can individual contribute to climate change or how can help to solve the problem? How big are CO₂ emissions of European households? And African? And yours?

5) Sustainable development

Sustainable development (SD) – possible solution for next generations or just a sexy phrase? Roots of SD and important political agreements. What are the three pillars of SD? And what is the relationship between them?

The typical lesson will start with students' Powerpoint presentation of topic selected beforehand and will continue with the lecture of the teacher and the discussion. Usually, there is some preparation needed for the lesson discussion (short reading, data mining, etc.). At least one field trip will take place in the semester (maybe more – according to weather conditions and other circumstances).

Course requirements

At least 70 % attendance.

Active class participation (and preparation – reading, etc.).

Each student should present one Powerpoint presentation.

Each student should write 1 or 2 short writings (essay or report).

Grading policy

Class activity and preparation (25 %)

Writings (30 %)

Presentation in class (25 %)

Short final test (20 %)

Recommended reading

The reading list contains some of relevant interesting literature. Required readings selected from the list (with appropriate page range) will be announced in advance and given to students in electronic form or in hard copy.

Beck, U. (2010), *Climate for Change, or How to Create a Green Modernity? Theory, Culture and Society* 27 (2-3): 254-266

Available through SAGE Publications

Bičák, I., Jeleček, L. and Štěpánek, V. (2001), Land-use changes and their social driving forces in Czechia in the 19th and 20th centuries. *Land Use Policy* 18 (1): 65-73

Available through ScienceDirect

Dunlap, R., Catton Jr., W. (1979), *Environmental Sociology*. *Annual Review of Sociology* 5: 243-273

Available through EBSCOhost

Daly, H. (1974), *The World Dynamics of Economics Growth. The Economics of the Steady State*. *The American Economic Review* 64 (2): 15-21

Available through EBSCOhost

Ewing, B., Moore, D., Goldfinger, S., Oursler, A., Reed, A. and Wackernagel, M. (2010), *The Ecological Footprint Atlas 2010*. Oakland: Global Footprint Network

[http://www.footprintnetwork.org/images/uploads/Ecological Footprint Atlas 2010.pdf](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/images/uploads/Ecological_Footprint_Atlas_2010.pdf)

Fischer, A., Peters, V., Vávra, J., Neebe, M., Megyesi, B. (2011), Energy use, climate change and folk psychology: Does sustainability have a chance? Results from a qualitative study in five European countries. *Global Environmental Change* 21 (3): 1025-1034

Available through ScienceDirect

Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (2007), *Fourth Assessment Report – Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers*

http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf

Lothian, A. (1999), Landscape and the philosophy of aesthetics: is landscape quality inherent in the landscape or in the eye of the beholder? *Landscape and Urban Planning* 44 (4): 177-198
Available through ScienceDirect

Naess, A. (1973), The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Ecology Movement. A summary. *Inquiry* 6 (1-4): 95-100

Naughton, J. (2001), A brief history of the Czech lands. James Naughton's personal pages at Oxford University
<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~tayl0010/history.htm>

United Nations (1987), *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*
<http://worldinbalance.net/intagreements/1987-brundtland.php>

White, Jr., L. (1967), The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis. *Science* 155 (3767): 1203-1207

Lecturer

Jan Vávra received his MA (2008) and PhDr. degrees (2009) in cultural studies at Department of Cultural studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, where he has been a PhD student and the organiser of the conference *Our common present*. He is also a research assistant at Faculty of Economics, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, involved in 7th EU Framework Program research project GILDED dealing with energy demand of European households. He is interested in social perception of environmental issues, energy demand, human-environment relationship, social and cultural ecology, landscape history and landscape aesthetics.

More information

Any important information about the course could be found on these websites:

www.kulturologie.cz

<http://www.ecoology.org/english/english-courses>