

**ANTH 2380/UGEC 2950**  
**Environmental Crises and Cultures of Survival**  
**Spring 2025**

Lecture: Wednesday 13:30 – 15:15 at T.C. Cheng Bldg C3

Tutorial: Wednesday 15:30 – 16:15

Instructor: Dr. Man-kei Tam (MK), [mankeitam@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:mankeitam@cuhk.edu.hk)

Office Hours: By appointment

**Course Outline:**

This course pays attention to the environment and its relation to human experiences. Through the lens of environment, we bring human diversity into presence, examining peoples' ways of life of—from Indonesia highlander to Tokyo urbanites—and their words and deeds to tackle crises of planetary scale—climate change, nuclear disaster, air pollution, waste, deforestation. Facing these crises, can anthropological inquiry of the environment help us to explore a humanity that can accommodate living beings of all kinds? How can such inquiry inspire us to make changes that create a world we can live together?

We'll follow these trails in the environment to look for engagement and conversation: cultural perception on the origin of agriculture, resource use and religious belief, debating traditional ecological knowledge, globalization and state intervention, environmental justice, land dispossession, waste and pollution, disaster and extreme environment. Through ethnographies of people who are struggling to survive, this course asks why they are pushed into poverty, how their resources are being exploited, what they do to fight for justice; it covers SDGs related to the issues of sustainable agriculture (SDG2), tackling climate change (SDG13) and promoting peace, justice and institutional accountability (SDG16).

本課程關注環境與人類生活經驗的關係。我們透過環境視察人類的多樣性，探究不同人群--從印度尼西亞高地族群到東京都市人--的生活方式，當中他們應對氣候變化、核災難、空氣污染、廢品、森林採伐等全球性危機的言說與行動。人類學對環境的研究能否幫助我們面對上述危機，並探索一種能夠容納各種生靈的人性？這樣的探問如何可以激發我們做出改變，以創造一個讓我們共同生活的世界？

我們將從環境中沿著不同路徑來尋求參與和對話：農業起源的文化認知、資源使用與宗教信仰、傳統生態知識的辯論、全球化與國家介入、環境正義、土地掠奪、廢品與污染、災難與極端環境。透過案例掙扎求存中的人們的民族誌，本課程討論他們為何淪為貧民、他們的資源如何遭掠奪、他們做什麼來尋求公義；本課程涵蓋與可持續農業（SDG2）、應對氣候變化（SDG13）和促進和平、正義與制度問責（SDG16）相關的可持續發展目標。

### **Learning Outcomes:**

1. Understand how humans have engaged the environment historically and cross-culturally;
2. Examine the relationship between the environment, local communities and the state in the present world through issues including deforestation, climate change, and nuclear disaster;
3. Explore contemporary environmental crises to cultivate sensitivity to possible forms of resistance and action from local and global perspectives;

### **Assessment Criteria**

1. Class Participation: 15%
2. Tutorial Participation and Discussion: 20%
3. Leading Tutorial Discussion: 15%
4. Mid-term Essay: 15%
5. Final Paper: 35%

### **Ground Rule(s):**

Please refrain from using any ELECTRONIC DEVICE including mobile phones, computers, tablets, etc in class. Please step out of the classroom to do so if need be.

[http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away?utm\\_source=facebook.com&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=npr&utm\\_term=npnews&utm\\_content=20170819](http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=npnews&utm_content=20170819)

### **A Note on Academic Honesty:**

Students are required by university policy to *submit all papers to VeriGuide before* turning them in. Be sure that you leave enough time to submit the paper to VeriGuide, print out the receipt, and sign it.

**There is no excuse for plagiarism.** To learn more on citation and plagiarism, see

<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ant/tstyle.doc> and

[http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/english/resource/referencing\\_avoidingplagiarism1.pdf](http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/english/resource/referencing_avoidingplagiarism1.pdf).

## **Part I: Cultural Knowledge of the Environment**

\*Required

Week 1 (January 9): Cultural Perceptions of the Origin of Agriculture

- \*Sahlins, Marshall. 2006. "The Original Affluent Society." In *The Politics of Egalitarianism: Theory and Practice*. J. Solway, ed., pp.79-98. New York: Berghan Books.
- Ingold, Tim. 2018. "On Taking Others Seriously," In *Anthropology: Why It Matters*. Cambridge: Polity.

Week 2 (January 15): Religious Belief in Resource Use

- \*Rappaport, Roy. 1967. "Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations Among a New Guinea People." *Ethnology* 6(1): 17-30.
- \*Steward, Julian. 2016. "The Concept and Method of Cultural Ecology." In *The Environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living (Second Edition)*. Nora Haenn, Richard R Wilk, and Allison Harnish, ed., pp.12-17. New York: New York University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1972. "The Wet and the Dry: Traditional Irrigation in Bali and Morocco." *Human Ecology*, Vol. 1, No. 1:23-39.
- Harris, Marvin. 1992. "The Cultural Ecology of India's Sacred Cattle." *Current Anthropology* 33(1):261-276.

### **Tutorial starts at Week 3**

Week 3 (January 22): Traditional Ecological Knowledge

- \*Escobar, Arturo. 2016. "Difference and Conflict in the Struggle over Natural Resources." In *The Environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living (Second Edition)*. Nora Haenn, Richard R Wilk, and Allison Harnish, ed., pp.362-368. New York: New York University Press.
- \*Nazarea, Virginia D. 2016. "A View from a Point: Ethnoecology as Situated Knowledge." In *The Environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living (Second Edition)*. Nora Haenn, Richard R Wilk, and Allison Harnish, ed., pp.41-47. New York: New York University Press.
- Lin, Yih-Ren et al. 2020. "Situating Indigenous Resilience: Climate Change and Tayal's 'Millet Ark' Action in Taiwan." *Sustainability* 12: 10676.
- Tsai, Futuru C. L.. 2020. "Shuttling between Land and Sea: Contemporary Practices among Amis Spearfishing Men as a Foundation for Local Marine-Area Management." *Sustainability* 12: 7770.

Week 4 (February 5): Materialist Conception of Nature (I)

- \*Li, Tania. 2014. "Introduction," "Enclosure," In *Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Intro & Ch 4 Capitalist Relations.
- \*Wolf, Eric. 1972. "Ownership and Political Ecology." *Anthropological Quarterly* 45: 201-05.

Paulson, S., Gezon, L. and Watts, M. 2003. "Locating the Political in Political Ecology: An Introduction," *Human Organization* 62(3): 205-217.

Vandergeest, Peter, Mark Flaherty, and Paul Miller. 1999. "A Political Ecology of Shrimp Aquaculture in Thailand." *Rural Sociology* 64(4):573-596.

Week 5 (February 12): Materialist Conception of Nature (II)—State Intervention and Globalization

\*Li, Tania. 2014. "Capitalist Relations," In *Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Scott, James. 1998. "Introduction," "Nature and Space," In *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Choy, Tim. 2011. "Specific Life," In *Ecologies of Comparison: An Ethnography of Endangerment in Hong Kong*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

**Mid-term assignment will be posted at Week 5**

## **Part II: Contemporary Culture of Environmental Politics**

Week 6 (February 19): Extraction

\*Ottinger, Gwen. 2013. "The Battlefield," "Dangerous Stories," In *Refining Expertise: How Responsible Engineers Subvert Environmental Justice Challenges*. New York: New York University Press.

Kirsch, Stuart. 2010. "Sustainable Mining." *Dialect Anthropology* 34:87–93

Cohen, Benjamin and Gwen Ottinger. 2011. "Introduction: Environmental Justice and the Transformation of Science and Engineering," In *Technoscience and Environmental Justice: Expert Cultures in a Grassroots Movement*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

High, Mette. 2013. "Polluted money, polluted wealth: Emerging regimes of value in the Mongolian gold rush." *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 40, No. 4:676–688.

Week 7 (February 26): Waste

\*Strasser, Susan. 1999. "Toward a History of Trashmaking," In *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

\*Douglas, Mary. 1984. "Introduction," In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Ark.

胡嘉明、張劭穎. 2016. "導言：廢品的政治與文化," "第一部分," *廢品生活：垃圾場的經濟、社群與空間*. 香港：中文大學出版社.

Kirby, Peter W. 2010. "Tokyo's Vermin Menace." In *Troubled Natures: Waste, Environment, Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Liboiron, Max. 2020a. "There's No Such Thing as 'We.'" *Discard Studies*, 12 October. <https://discardstudies.com/2020/10/12/theres-no-such-thing-as-we/>.

Reading Week (March 3-8): Field trip, place to be confirmed.

Week 8 (March 12): Disaster and extreme environment

\* Petryna, Adriana. 2004. "Biological Citizenship: The Science and Politics of Chernobyl-Exposed Populations." *Osiris*, Vol. 19:250-265.

Barker, Holly. 1997. "Radiation Communities: Fighting for Justice for the Marshall Islands." In B.R. Johnson, ed., *Life and Death Matters: Human Rights, Environment, and Social Justice*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

Bond, David. 2013. "Governing Disaster: The Political Life of the Environment During the BP Oil Spill." *Cultural Anthropology*, 28(4):694-715.

Kimura, Aya Hirata. 2016. "School Lunches: Science, Motherhood, and Joshi Power," In *Brain Moms and Citizen Scientists: The Gender Politics of Food Contamination after Fukushima*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Greenpeace International. 2016. "Fukushima: Living with a Disaster," March 10<sup>th</sup>. Accessed July 11, 2018. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oe\\_TCM7f71w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oe_TCM7f71w)

賴偉傑. 2015. 建構「支持的體系」取代「犧牲的體系」

Week 9 (March 19): Toxicity

\*Brown, Kate. 2016. "The Last Sink: The Human Body as the Ultimate Radioactive Storage Site." *RCC Perspectives*, no. 1: 41-47.

\*Roberts, Elizabeth F. S. 2017. "What Gets Inside: Violent Entanglements and Toxic Boundaries in Mexico City." *Cultural Anthropology* 32(4): 592-619.

Lora-Wainwright, Anna. 2017. "Situating the study of rural China's environmental health activism," "China's 'cancer villages': the social, political and economic contexts of pollution," In *Resigned Activism: Living with Pollution in Rural China*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Walker, Brett L. 2010. "Mercury's Offspring." In *Toxic Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Week 10 (March 26): Microbiome and COVID-19

\* Tsing, Anna. 2012. "Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species." *Environmental Humanities* 1: 141-154.

Lorimer, Jamie. 2020. "Hookworms Make Us Human: The Microbiome, Eco-immunology, and a Probiotic Turn in Western Health Care." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* Vol. 33, Issue 1: 60-79.

Krzywoszynska, Anna. 2019. "Caring for Soil Life in the Anthropocene: The Role of Attentiveness in More-than-human Ethics." *Transactions* 44:661-675.

Ticktin, Miriam. 2020. "Building a Feminist Commons in the Time of COVID-19." *Signs*. <http://signsjournal.org/covid/ticktin/>

Week 11 (April 2): Climate Change

\*Weston, Kath. 2017. "Climate Change, Slippery on the Skin." In *Animate Planet: Making Visceral Sense of Living in a High-tech Ecologically Damaged World*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Patel, Raj and Jason W. Moore. 2018. "Cheap Energy," In *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet*. London ; New York : Verso 2018.

BBC. 2020. "Climate change: Where we are in seven charts and what you can do to help." <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-46384067>

Jeff Gibbs. 2019. *Planet of the Humans*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zk11vI-7czE>

Week 12 (April 9): Conclusion—Rethinking Development

Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria. 2015. "Making Time for Soil: Technoscientific Futurity and the Pace of Care." *Social Studies of Science* 45, no. 5: 691–716.

### GRADE DESCRIPTORS (by Prof. Teresa Kwan)

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Criteria for 1) the course and 2) for coursework</i>
A	<p>1) Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.</p> <p>2) The work has creatively synthesized course materials and key ideas in an original way. The argument is logical and cohesive, the discussion is well-organized, and the writing is clear. Concrete evidence corresponds to statements and claims.</p>
A-	<p>1) Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.</p> <p>2) The work synthesizes course materials and key ideas in an original way, but there are areas for improvement.</p>
B-range	<p>1) Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.</p> <p>2) The work demonstrates a solid grasp of course materials and key ideas. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence.</p>
C-range	<p>1) Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.</p> <p>2) The work shows some effort, but course materials have not been sufficiently engaged. The argument and the writing is not clear, and/or there is no evidence for statements and claims made.</p>
D-range	<p>1) Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.</p> <p>2) The work shows little effort to engage course materials. There are major problems with clarity of argument and writing.</p>
F	<p>1) Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.</p> <p>2) The work has failed respond to the assignment prompt.</p>