Geog 410: The Geography of Development and Underdevelopment

Course Description and Objectives: The idea that there are too many people in the world, especially the developing world, permeates the environment and development literature. “Overpopulation” is routinely blamed for a variety of ills—hunger, environmental degradation, poverty, early death, political instability. To reverse these underdevelopment trends, population control is promoted as the solution. A contending opinion views population as a resource that contributes to development. Population pressure on resources can goad people into making the most of what they have by creating new technologies and institutions to increase food production, prolong life, and conserve natural resources. In this course we focus on the population and resources debate so that, at the very least, we can decide when and where population growth is an issue and when it isn’t. We will then examine in detail the problems of world hunger and environmental degradation with emphasis on the global South. I will introduce the political ecological approach as an analytical framework to assess the importance of population growth versus other dynamics that affect public health and environmental quality. At the end of the course, students will be able to apply the political ecological approach to evaluate environment and development problems and solutions with emphasis on hunger and environmental degradation in the developing world.

Office Hours: Tuesday, 2-4:00 in 125 Davenport Hall, or by appointment.

Course Time and Locations: Classes are scheduled to meet on Tu and Th between 12:30-1:50 in 329 Davenport Hall. Four class meetings will take place in the ATLAS computer labs located in Room G27 of the Foreign Languages Building (Sept 16, 30) and 338 Davenport Hall (Nov 4, 11). Computer classroom time will be devoted to making thematic maps that will be integral to the term paper project (see below).

Course Requirements: The course grade will be based on student performance on exams, attendance and participation in discussions, and the term paper project. The breakdown of the grade is follows:

3 hourly exams: 60%
Term Paper Project: 30%
Class attendance and participation: 10%

Course Texts:


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**Lecture/Discussion Topics and Readings**

**Week 1: The discourse of development**

Aug 24  
Course Introduction: Course objectives, overview, and requirements

Aug 26  
Development as Discourse

**Readings:** Crush “Imagining Development”

Shrestha, “Becoming a Development Category”

**Week 2: The geography of world hunger**

Aug 31  
Indicators of malnutrition

**Readings:** Atlas, pp. 1-36  
T & K, ix-xix: 1-15

Sept 2  
Hunger Vulnerability

**Readings:** Atlas, pp. 37-70  
T & K, 17-51

**Week 3: The sources of hunger I**

Sept 7  
National resources

**Readings:** Atlas, pp. 71-96  
T & K, 53-84

Sept 9  
Technology, institutions, and power relations

**Readings:** Atlas, pp. 97-124  
T & K, 85-125
Week 4: The sources of hunger II

Sept 14  Poverty and public health
Readings:  Atlas, pp. 125-153
          T & K, 129-164

Sept 16  Computer Mapping Lab 1 (FLB G27)
Readings:  T & K, 165-224

Week 5: Ending world hunger?

Sept 21  International trade and aid
Readings:  Atlas, pp. 154-184

Sept 23  Talking about and Taking the Necessary Steps
Readings:  T & K, 225-286

Week 6: Population and resources

Sept 28  1st Hourly Exam

Sept 30  Computer Mapping Lab 2 (FLB G27)
Readings:  Maternowska, Chap 1

Week 6: The rise of population control

Oct 5    Malthusian Nightmares
Readings:  Maternowska, Chap 2
          Pearce, Chaps 1-3

Oct 7    International institutions and the regulation of reproduction
Readings:  Pearce, Chaps 4-9
          Maternowska, Chap 6

Week 7: Gender relations and family planning

Oct 12   Intra-household relations and poverty
Readings:  Maternowska, Chap 3
          Pearce, Chaps 10-12

Oct 14   Family Planning for richer and poorer
Readings:  Maternowska, Chap 4
          Pearce, Chaps 13-17
Week 8: Divergent paths in population growth

Oct 19  Resistance and migration  
Readings: Maternowska, Chap 5  
          Pearce, Chaps 18-21

Oct 21  Population futures  
Readings: Maternowska, Chap 7  
          Pearce, Chaps 22-28

Week 9: The politics of environmental knowledge

Oct 26  2nd Hourly Exam

Oct 28  Political ecological analysis  
Readings: Forest Guardians, Chap 1-2

Week 10: Environmental narratives and discourses

Nov 2  The objects of development  
Readings: Forest Guardians, Chaps 3-4

Nov 4  Computer Mapping Lab 3 (338 Davenport Hall)

Week 11: Framing environmental problems

Nov 9  Environmental problem closure  
Readings: Forest Guardians, Chaps. 5-6

Nov 11  Computer Mapping Lab 4 (338 Davenport Hall)

Week 12: The political ecology of conservation

Nov 16  Agricultural chemicals  
Readings: Forest Guardians, Chap 7

Nov 18  Biodiversity conservation  
Readings: Forest Guardians, Chap 8

Week 13: Sustainable development

Nov 30  Green development  
Readings: Forest Guardians, Chap 9

Dec 2  Student Presentations I
**Week 14: Presentations of term paper projects**

Dec 7  Student Presentations II

Dec 9  Final Exam

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**Term Paper Project**

Poverty and the politics of population, hunger, and environmental knowledge are the main threads weaving this course together. Students will write a term paper that explores these themes with reference to a specific development and underdevelopment topic approved by the instructor. The research paper will combine course texts with additional readings relevant to the topic. Student papers will be illustrated with maps that reveal the geographical dimension of the development/underdevelopment problem. Mapmaking skills will be developed in four computer lab sessions in which we will learn how to use MapViewer by Golden Software.

Students will present a near final version of their papers in the second-to-last week of class. Final versions are due the last week of class.