

Department of Geography
University of Illinois
<https://compass.illinois.edu>

Fall 2010
Instructor: Tom Bassett

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:

T. Bassett and A. Winter-Nelson 2010. *The Atlas of World Hunger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

T. Forsyth and A. Walker. 2008. *Forest Guardians, Forest Destroyers: The politics of environmental knowledge in Northern Thailand* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press).

M.C. Maternowska (2006) *Reproducing Inequities: Poverty and the politics of population in Haiti* (New Brunswick: Rutgers U. Press).

F. Pearce 2010. *The Coming Population Crash and Our Planet's Surprising Future* (Boston: Beacon Press)

R.Thurow and S. Killman 2009. *Enough: Why the World's Poorest Starve in an Age of Plenty* (New York: Public Affairs).

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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 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.