EnvS 6000, 7000

Theoretical Foundations in Human Dimensions of Ecosystem Science and Management

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Office Hours (Fall 2016): Wednesdays, 10:30-12:30, Thursdays, 11:30-1:30, or by appointment.

We live in an era when interactions among human societies and ecosystems are moving to the forefront of research, development, public discourse, and policy arenas worldwide. How does humanity affect ecosystems and how, in turn, are ecosystems affecting humanity? In what ways are societies coping with environmental issues? Do we have the institutions, technology, and incentives to be more effective at managing the human/environment interface? In other words, can the human race live sustainably on planet earth? Research that embraces such issues is multi-scaled and comes from disciplinary and interdisciplinary sources. The HDESM graduate program at Utah State University embraces social science and interdisciplinary perspectives from a variety of fields, including social sciences, natural resources, human geography, and environmental science. Among the topics we will investigate in this class are: formation and persistence of attitudes and values toward environmental issues; social and cultural variation in resource perceptions and uses; environmental conflict; climate and environmental change; new approaches to natural resource economics; natural resources policy; and coupled natural-human systems.

The course will be conducted in a seminar format, organized around discussions of assigned readings each week. Students will write a paper using the concepts and findings of these readings to develop a research topic that they will pursue in their graduate work. Students will present this paper in class at the end of the semester, and in writing by 12:00 PM Thursday, December 17.

Texts:


Other readings will be on Canvas (https://online.usu.edu). Readings are filed by week under Pages.
Learning Objectives

1. Learn fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories of human perceptions, motivations, and behavior, especially in relation to human-environment interactions.

2. Gain a broader understanding/appreciation of cutting-edge social science research, in order better to understand human perceptions, motivations, and behavior.


Schedule

Week 1: Orientation. 9/1

Week 2: Introductory readings in social science issues regarding climate change. Canvas. 9/8

Week 3: Neurogenesis; socialization. Canvas. 9/15

Week 4: Socialization; cultural variation. Canvas. 9/22

Week 5: Cultural variation in perceptions of climate change. Canvas. 9/29

Week 6: Communication; social and cultural variation in attitudes; ecosystem services. Canvas. 10/6

Week 7: Socialization; human macroecology. 10/13

Week 8: No class–Fall Break Schedule. Canvas. 10/20

Week 9: Problem solving; planning. Canvas. 10/27

Week 10: Conflict and conflict management. Canvas. 11/3

Week 11: Coupled human and natural systems. Canvas. 11/10

Week 12: Seeing Like a State. 11/17

Week 13: Thanksgiving. 11/24

Week 14: Battle for Yellowstone; student presentations. 12/1

Week 15. Student presentations. 12/8

Final paper due: 12:00 PM Thursday, December 15.