

REVISED Course Syllabus – Spring 2025

GEOG 330 Section 500

Resources and the Environment

3 credit hours

Tues and Thurs 2:20 pm to 3:35 pm

Halbouty 101

Instructor:	Kathleen O'Reilly, Ph.D.
Instructor's Office Hours:	1-3 pm Wednesdays (in person only), also by appointment
Office Address	812 Eller Bldg aka O&M Building
E-mail	koreilly@tamu.edu
Teaching Assistant:	Anand Datla
TA Office Hours:	3-4:30 pm Wednesdays in person or Zoom, also by appointment
Office Address	803A Eller Bldg aka O&M Building
Email	anand@tamu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This 3 credit course focuses on natural resource systems, emphasizing economic, social and political processes that shape society's use of natural resources. We will examine themes such as population-resources interactions, discourses of nature, institutions and environmental governance, ethics, political economy, public lands, and conservation. Students will learn key explanations and frameworks, and apply these approaches to examine some key resources systems (**apex predators, water, energy, forests and food**). Students will also improve their reading of scholarly literature pertaining to human-environment issues.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to (1) analyze scholarly literature pertaining to human-environment interactions, (2) evaluate the drivers of natural resource use and environmental degradation, (3) compare and contrast types of resource use, (4) evaluate the efficacy of environmental conservation and resource policy, (5) recognize varying social constructions of nature, and (6) offer solutions to overcoming key environmental issues.

COURSE FORMAT

This course will be conducted at an intermediate undergraduate level. You are expected to attend all class sessions and be prepared to discuss the readings in depth. Lectures will include student participation in the form of discussion. Additionally, some days will be more discussion focused, when students will investigate topics more closely, based on a readings, podcasts or films accessed before class. The course itself is divided into two components: (1) an investigation of key ideas and theories underpinning how we understand resources and the environment, and (2) an application of those ideas to resource systems (e.g., lawns as part of agribusiness). You will be tested over each course component.

Keep up to date! Check Canvas daily for announcements on readings, films, etc.

Primary Text, available online for free through the library:

1. Robbins, P., John Hintz, Sarah A. Moore, (2013) *Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction*. 2nd Edition. New York: Wiley Blackwell.

Additional Readings, available on Canvas

2. Büntgen et al. (2023). Drought as a trigger of the rapid rise of professional skateboarding in 1970s Southern California. *PNAS Nexus*. 2: 1-4.
3. Schoenberger, E. (2015) *Nature, Choice, and Social Power*.
4. Simon, G. and Alagona. (2013). Contradictions at the confluence of commerce, consumption and conservation; or, an REI shopper camps in the forest, does anyone notice? *Geoforum* 45: 325-336

Films/Videos

Films and videos can be found through <https://library.tamu.edu> or are streaming free online. Please check your syllabus, as many links are on the day that they are due.

*** I reserve the right to make minor alternations to assigned readings and topics during the semester. I will inform you in advance of any changes.***

ASSESSMENT:

Exam I	100 pts	20%
Exam II	100 pts	20%
Final Exam	100 pts	20%
Quizzes (10)	100 pts	20%
Assignment	100 pts	20%
TOTAL	500 pts	100%

Grading System:

Final letter marks are determined through the following scheme:

A - 100 – 90% B – 89 – 80% C – 79 - 70% D – 69 – 60% F – Below 60%

Please note that I do not routinely round up scores, meaning an 89.9 is a B, not an A.

Exams: 300 points

There will be two midterm exams and one final exam (not cumulative that will cover all assigned readings and material covered in class. Exams include multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer, and essay questions. Come on time to the exam; no exams are distributed after the first student has turned in his or her exam. The exam will be taken in class through Canvas. Besides assessment, the purpose of this exercise is to strengthen student skills in critical thinking and increase student confidence in their ability to summarize ideas, thoughtfully maneuver through issues, recognize implications, envision alternatives, and think creatively. Quizzes will draw from reading assignments, films, discussions and lectures—anything covered as part of assignments or class lectures, etc.

Participation Grade—Quizzes: 100 points

There will be ten in-class quizzes that will cover the readings and/or materials assigned for that class day. Each quiz is worth 10 points. These are rapid, know-it-or-you-don't quizzes. Full credit for the correct answer. Half credit for the incorrect answer. If you arrive after the quiz answer has been given in class, you forfeit your chance to take the quiz. **You cannot make an A in the class, regardless of the number of points you receive if you do not take at least 7 quizzes. You cannot make an B in the class, regardless of the number of total points you receive, if you do not take at least 6 quizzes. You cannot make an C in the class, regardless of the number of total points you receive, if you do not take at least 5 quizzes.**

Assignments: 50 points

The assignment "The Great Outdoors" involves students planning a backpacking trip and researching the gear that they will need. Assignment instructions will be distributed and discussed during class time. Late work is not accepted unless by excused absence.

Expectations:

I have high expectations of my students. First and foremost is a conducive environment for learning, which involves:

- attend class
- behave respectfully towards others, whether that is at moments of disagreement about topics discussed, or keeping distractions out of view.
- arrive on time and stay through class—this means your attention is expected until class is dismissed. If you are late, please sit on a side aisle to minimize distraction
- ask questions and listen to answers. Seating will be adjusted to make sure we can all hear each other.

In addition to normal high standards of courtesy and respect expected in any university classroom, please take note of the following:

Send all emails to Dr. O'Reilly at the address above. An email is not a text, and I expect an appropriate level of formality. Please do not use the Canvas system or gmail to communicate with me as I will not see it. **Include GEOG 330 in the subject line**, as all emails are filtered and read from that folder. You can expect a reply from me within 24 hours.

University Policies**Attendance Policy**

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students have two weeks to make up work from an excused absence.

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)). "The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)). Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of that person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, because it destroys trust among student cohorts, scholars, and colleagues. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest issue of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/>, under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty."

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, you will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether

or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's [Title IX webpage](#).

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in proper self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Students experiencing personal injury or illness that is too severe for the student to attend class qualify for an excused absence (See [Student Rule 7, Section 7.2.2](#).) To receive an excused absence, students must comply with the documentation and notification guidelines outlined in Student Rule 7. While Student Rule 7, Section 7.3.2.1, indicates a medical confirmation note from the student's medical provider is preferred, **for Fall 2020 only, students may use the Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class form in lieu of a medical confirmation. Students must submit the Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class within two business days after the last date of absence.**

Copyrights

All course materials are copyrighted. These materials include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless permission is expressly granted. Taping and reproducing of course material for other than personal use will be regarded as copyright infringement and referred to University lawyers for action. Before recording, ask me first. Professional notetakers must be enrolled in this course (university policy) and receive my permission prior to any commercial transaction involving course notes (state law).

SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Tuesday	Thursday
1	Jan 14, 16	Introduction to Course: The history of hemp in America	Introduction to Political Ecology: "Y'all Queda, Yee-hadists, Vanilla Isis" <i>Film: Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Takeover</i>
2	Jan 21, 23	Resources: What is a Resource? <i>Read: Robbins, Ch. 1</i>	Resources: What is the human-environment dialectic? <i>Read: Büntgen et al. (2023)</i>
3	Jan 28, 30	Population and Resources <i>Read: Robbins, Ch. 2</i> <i>Ted Talk: Hans Rosling</i>	Population and Resources <i>1. Film: Population Boom (Located on Kanopy)</i> https://texasam.kanopy.com/product/population-boom
4	Feb 4, 6	Environmental Governance: Tragedy of the Commons? Fish Game <i>Read: Robbins, Ch. 4</i>	Environmental Governance: collaborative forestry <i>Podcast: Timber Wars episode 7: "A way forward: https://www.opb.org/article/2020/10/03/environmentalist-loggers-common-ground</i>
5	Feb 11, 13	EXAM I	Environmental Ethics: <i>Introduction to the Great Outdoors Assignment</i>
6	Feb 18, 20	Environmental Ethics: Leave No Trace Principles <i>Read: Simon and Alagona</i>	Environmental Ethics: What is your environmental ethic? <i>Read: Robbins, Ch. 5</i>
7	Feb 25, 27	Culture: How Culture Shapes our View of Nature <i>Read: Robbins, Ch. 8</i>	Culture: How we think about wolves <i>Read: Robbins, Ch. 11</i>
8	Mar 4, 6	Culture / Commodification	In class: complete <i>The Great Outdoors</i> assignment and submit Coming to HALB 101 is not mandatory. I will be there, but you do not have to be.
9	Mar 11, 13	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
10	Mar 18, 20	Commodification of Nature: Markets <i>Read: Robbins, Ch. 3</i>	No class because of move. Had two Zoom reviews on weekend
11	Mar 25, 27	EXAM II	No class because of move. Had make up quiz to cover low scores on Exam I
12	Apr 1, 3	Communicating about Nature: Climate Change <i>Film: Climate of Doubt</i>	Production of Nature: Labor <i>Read: Robbins, Ch. 7</i>
13	Apr 8, 10	Production of Nature: the American Lawn <i>Read: Robbins, Ch. 14</i>	Energy: the Combustible Engine <i>Read: Schoenberger (2015), pp 111-174</i>
14	Apr 15, 17	Energy: the Resource Curse <i>Film: Sweet Crude</i>	Water: Privatization <i>Film: World Without Water</i>
15	Apr 22, 24	Water: The Rise of Bottled Water Water Taste Test <i>Read: Robbins, Ch. 15</i>	Final Exam during class time because students voted on changing the date and time.
16	May 6 Tuesday	No exam today	