I. Sociology of the Environment

A. All societies/cultures understand and define the natural world in different ways.

B. Different understandings of the natural world lead to

various cultures having different:

1. relationships to the natural world.

2. experiences with the natural world.

3. practices toward the natural world.

C. In sum: every society has a dominant world view

regarding the natural world aka the environment

D. As a way of explaining this contrast the traditional Navajo

world view with the dominant world view of Western and

American society.

E. Traditional Navajo

1. Natural world is sacred, or holy place.

a. Dinetah, sacred land

b. Four sacred mountains

2. The earth is a living breathing entity in an

animate world.

3. All beings whether animal, bird, insect, plant has:

a. a spirit

b. controls power

c. teaches a lesson

d. and has its place in the community of beings

4. There is an order to this world and the goal of

human beings ought to be to find one's place in the

order.

5. Hozho, or the beauty way of life.

a. K'e

b. humility

c. harmony

d. respect for all living things

6. This relationship is the primary and most important

relationship for the culture/society.

7. Above is reflected in cultural and religious practices.

a. corn and the prayer at sunrise

b. shape of homes or hogans

c. relationships with animals

i. creations stories

ii. moral stories

iii. hunting

F. Western culture

1. Human beings are "lords of the earth"

a. qualitative difference between humans

and other beings, i.e. soul or reason

b. hierarchical: humans at top

c. power to shape the world and create their own destiny

i. science discovers the laws of nature

ii. technology transforms discovery

into power over nature

d. they have the power to predict and control

the consequences of their transformations

2. Natural world exists as "standing reserve," or a

resource

a. waiting to be transformed into a commodity.

b. waiting to be adapted as a source of power

c. owned: private property

d. profit through exchange in the marketplace

3. Natural world has no inherent value, and

non-human beings have no inherent or intrinsic value.

4. Cultures which don't recognize the truth of the

above, like the Navajo, are captives a myths that keep

them "primitive," 'backward"; keep them from progressing.

G. Influences on Western society's world view.

1. Christianity

a. text

b. Church decisions

c. Puritans

d. manifest destiny

2. Science

a. world as calculable

b. predictable: matter in motion determined by laws of cause and effect

c. controllable

3. Capitalism

a. natural world is material to be extracted, produced and consumed through the market place

b. laws of the market place are natural phemonon

c. human beings by their nature are self interested extractors, producers and consumers

d. private property and profit

e. oceans, land, forests are sinks and garbage dumps