Preliminary Examination Statement - Third Draft
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Introduction

For those on the committee who are not familiar with my background, I will begin with a short personal introduction and summary of relevant scholarly and professional work. My intention is to help situate my current research questions, interests and knowledge of my chosen specializations.

I completed a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and a Master of Science in Environmental Science and Policy at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg. My graduate coursework followed a focus track in Environment-Society interactions. Courses in environmental science and ecological systems were balanced by classes emphasizing conservation and human dimensions of environmental change. Although my research incorporated qualitative methods, I was also trained in ecological field methods and statistics. I've included a list of relevant coursework at the end of this memo.

My master's thesis was a qualitative empirical study looking at the voluntary simplicity movement. This research was driven by my interest in social movements and lifestyle activism, sustainable consumption/development, and theoretically informed by political ecology. Specifically, my research was exploring the ways in which broader social, political and economic structures shape how simplifiers frame and manifest alternative consumptive practices and to what extent was this impacted by the ecological environment. I also wanted to understand how simplifiers understand their own agency and formed subjectivities.

I see my research interests moving forward as a continuation of this previous work in several ways. Although I am shifting focus away from alternative consumption practices, I am still driven by an interest how subjectivities and identities are shaped by broader social, political and economic institutions and how this impacts the way that people engage with the physical environment. I have also maintained a strong interest in social movements, collective action and activism, which I hope to explore through each of my areas of specialization.

My personal and professional engagements also reflect an ongoing interest in the environment and environmental activism, social justice and alternative food systems. I worked for five years as a recreational fisheries biologist for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. I've also been actively involved with a number of different organizations that work to address issues pertaining to environmental conservation, environmental justice and food justice.

Anticipated Dissertation Research: Agroforestry in Greece

Greek nationalistic identity is culturally specific with language, religion, and food traditions being particularly salient features. Greek cuisine is defined by specific domestic agricultural products that have a long history of cultural and economic significance. Because of this close linkage between products, food culture, and national identity, one could argue that national identity is intertwined with Greek agrarian identity which, therefore, can also be

defined by a particular kind of socio-natural relationship through culturally and historically specific land use and agricultural practices.

Historically, Greek agricultural practices were rooted in mixed land use techniques, now termed 'agroforestry' and 'agroecology', that include: silvoarable, silvopastoral and agrosilvopastoral. This method of land tenure incorporated the cultivation of food and row crops as well as orchard and grove trees (including fruit, hardwood and olive) and the grazing of livestock, such as goats and sheep on a single parcel of land. In the latter half of the 20th century, the Greek food system underwent substantial changes with the global industrialization of agriculture and a changing political economy both in Europe and abroad with the spread of neoliberal globalization. With entry into the European Union (EU), demand for exports and commodity crops increased and Greece fell under the purview of the Common Agricultural Policy. Farmers were suddenly eligible for EU subsidies that disincentivized agroforestry practices and encouraged more intensive land use. This, in turn, altered the Greek agrarian cultural identity and farmers' relationships to the land.

After WWII Greek agricultural practices began to shift away from mixed use/agroforestry as mono and row cropping began to be introduced. This shift was part of a larger, global trend that occurred with the widespread industrialization of agriculture. Other characteristics included the introduction of synthetic inputs, as well as the consolidation of land tenure and the increase in modernization and mechanization of agricultural production. Simultaneously, Greece began to have increased rural to urban migration. Young Greeks were leaving rural agricultural livelihoods to move to urban centers seeking higher education and employment in government agencies. These patterns also contributed to land consolidation and an overall decline in family farms as many fields went fallow. With entry into the European Union (EU), agriculture patterns continued to become increasingly modernized and industrial. EU subsidies administered through the Common Agricultural Policy encouraged export and commodity crops, higher density planting and increasing yields that were not consistent or practical with agroforestry techniques.

Several factors have now led to an increased interest in agroforestry and sustainable farming practices. First, concern has been growing over the impacts social, environmental and economic impacts of industrialized agriculture. Second, agroforestry is increasingly seen as a mechanism for adapting to and remediating climate change and research is increasing that supports the implementation of agroforestry practices as to this end. This shift is also reflected in new EU policies and programs which promote forest conservation and sustainable agriculture.

In Greece, farmers have been attempting to reintroduce agroforestry/agroecology land use methods. Although this resurgence is in part a product of a growing recognition and awareness of the environmental impacts of industrial farming methods, it is also attributable to other trends occurring within Greece. The debt crisis has produced changing agricultural demographic and employment trends with an increase in women farmers, urban to rural migration patterns and an increase in college educated youth returning to family land to practice

subsistence and commercial farming in the absence of other employment prospects. But because the food system is embedded in larger political and economic processes, I argue that the new and precarious political and economic terrain produced through the economic crisis has significant implications for the future of agriculture in Greece. Given Greece's geographic makeup and location, these impacts will be further compounded by changing environmental conditions due to climate change. As farmers attempt to reintroduce agroforestry practices they will need to develop creative solutions to overcome new economic and bureaucratic obstacles not previously faced. The physical environment has also changed in Greece so farmers must also cultivate an adaptive environmental knowledge that is responsive to climate change and the impacts that decades of industrialized agriculture have had on the environment. Therefore, I am interested in investigating the uniquely post-crisis Greek agrarian identity that is and will continue to emerge defined by new socio-natural relationships as well as the significance of this identity as Greeks redefine and reposition themselves in relation to the nation and to the European Union within broader nationalistic discourses.

1) Environmental Geography

Political Ecology of Food, Agriculture and Land Use Change

Piers Blaikie and Harold Brookfield's *Land Degradation and Society*, widely accepted as one of the foundational texts in the discipline, defines political ecology in this way:

> "The phrase "political ecology" combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy. Together this encompasses the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources, and also within classes and groups within society itself" (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987:17)

Political ecology asserts that the human induced environmental change cannot be understood without considering the social, political and economic systems in which it is embedded. In other words, land use and the physical processes of environmental change are intricately tied to social, economic, and political processes and policies. Political ecology explores the uneven power relations produced through the use and management of the ecological environment. Conversely, physical processes can also affect and shape the social, economic and political institutions.

Political ecology assumes that access to resources and land well as the science that we use to understand environmental change and health are all highly politicized. Blaike and Brookfield (1987) argued that understanding the underlying causes of poverty were key to understanding the underlying causes of land degradation and they "linked the economic marginalization of land users to their ecological and spatial marginalization" (Neuman, 2005, 31). In foregrounding marginalization in their research, Blaike and Brookfield adopted a threefold understanding of "marginalization" as economic, social (in the Marxian sense) and ecological (regarding biophysical limits). Political and economic interests impact scientific knowledge by influencing the way environmental issues are framed and the questions that scientists ask. Environmental knowledge is also culturally mediated and, according to Neumann

(2005) the "environment and environmental problems are discursively constructed" (pg. 7). Because of these inherent power dynamics, political ecology explores how struggles over human rights, social justice, and poverty are "linked to the politics of environmental conservation and degradation" (Neumann, 2005, pg 2-3).

Political Ecology evolved out of cultural ecology. Cultural ecology took a systems analysis approach to understanding human-environment relations. It saw the ecosystem as basic unit of analysis and as a determining factor in cultural change. Cultural adaptation was viewed as a response to ecological processes and as a mechanism for regulating human-environment interactions. Although this theoretical approach mapped well to small somewhat isolated communities, it was inadequate with the spread of capitalist globalization and the subsequent integration of all communities into the global market. Cultural ecology was critiqued for the separation of 'humans' and 'environment' treating them as discrete, observable objects. Michael Watts, a prominent voice early on in political ecology theory, was particularly critical of cultural ecology, instead advocating the use of Marxian political economy and social theory to understand human-environment interactions (Neumann, 2005, 20-22)

Political ecology was a response to neo-Malthusian explanations of environmental decline. It complicates the framing of environmental problems as a product of overpopulation or of bad decisions made by the poor. Political ecology understands environmental ills to be a product of social and political problems rather than solely a result of inadequate technology or deficient managerial practices. Instead such practices are thought to be the result of processes of marginalization that create and perpetuate conditions of poverty and land dispossession. Contrary to cultural ecology, political ecology saw political economic analysis as critical to understanding environmental degradation and human-environment interactions. Early work in political ecology included ecological surveys and data to document environmental change. Because of this twofold approach, political ecology functions as a bridge connecting the social and natural sciences.

Political ecology is distinct from other human-environment research in that it often combines qualitative methods such as ethnography and discourse analysis with ecological field studies. Analysis is multiscalar and usually includes historical and political-economic analysis. Political ecology breaks from conventional spatial frameworks such as local, national and global and assumes that political, social, and economic processes and interventions can and usually do occur across multiple scales. Space and scale are socially produced, that is a product of social-environmental relations, therefore by understanding various processes (human, social, ecological) as combining to produce a multiplicity of geographies of resource use, political ecology complicates traditional or predefined classifications of scale and space and can theorize across fragmented scales (Zimmerer & Bassett, 2003). It is precisely this multiscalar approach that makes political ecology an ideal framework for my research. By offering a broad scope of analytical tools including qualitative methods it goes beyond the limitations of a traditional political-economic analysis by allowing me to explore the everyday lived experiences of farmers, their processes of identity formation and how this is expressed through their relationships to the land.

Yet despite this flexibility in the way geographies of resource use are carved out, geographic difference is increasing in importance. With the globalization of environmental change, environmental problems and environmental management are "scaling up" and the ways specific issues manifest and policies are implemented on the ground varies dramatically

(particularly given very different circumstances in the global south) (Zimmerer & Bassett, 2003). This is also impacted by the unfolding of transnational and global governance processes in geographically uneven ways which produced varied and uneven ecological outcomes.

Given the ubiquity of GIS in natural resource management, I think it is critical that I familiarize myself with GIS and its relevant data sources used in tracking land use change(for example remote sensing or lidar). I am also interested in the use of Critical Cartography, GIS and counter-mapping as a methodological tool for challenging dominant discourses and a mechanisms for the visual representation of counter narratives of place (Wood, 2010).

According to Robbins (2004) political ecology research has historically been located in the Global South examining processes of degradation and marginalization, environmental conflict, environmental identities and social movements, or conservation and control. Within these four categories, specific problems can be quite diverse and the foci can either center on "why *environmental systems* change" or "why *social systems* change" (emphasis in original) (Robbins, 2004). In early 2000s there was a "first word" turn in political ecology that looked at similar questions but across urban/rural landscapes in the Global North. Much of this research has been done in the rural American west but has also included such locations as the northeast and the pacific northwest and it has covered topics ranging from rural gentrification to fisheries to cattle ranching (Brogden & Greenberg, 2003; Darling, 2005; Jarosz, 2004; McCarthy, 2002; McCarthy, 2005; Robbins, 2002; Robbins, 2004; Sheridan, 2001; St. Martin, 2005; Schroeder, 2005; Wainwright, 2005; Walker, 2003).

There has been a great deal written on the political ecology of food and agriculture. Although I am familiar with many of the empirical studies on this work I would like to read more of the theoretical literature and foundational works. I've included some recommended texts as a starting point at the end of the memo. Clapp (2012) offers a concise historical and political economic analysis of the history of the global food system. Political ecologists have looked at the relationship between the economic and environmental impacts of food regimes (see for example Jarosz, 1993). Over the last two decades there has been a growing alternative food movement striving to build a more socially just, and economically and environmentally sustainable food system. Yet even this system has not gone without it's own set of critiques (Guthman, 2004; Alkon and Agyeman, 2011). I would also add that most of the reading I've done in the political ecology of food and food movements has been positioned geographically in the US and has centered on new food movements. I would like to read more work that comes out of the Global South that looks at worker's movements and agrarian change in response to globalization.

Environmental Justice and Climate Change Vulnerability

It is well known that people experience environmental ills (for example pollution) in different ways in different places. In the 1980's the environmental justice movement brought to light that people of color, the poor and other marginalized groups suffer from a disproportionate risk and exposure to environmental hazards (Bullard, 1990; Mohai and Bryant, 1992). This work first began by looking at incidences of toxic waste dumps in the United States. Although those looking at issues of environmental injustice had already begun exploring the ways the issue was unfolding on an international scale, the conversation is at the forefront of discussions around climate change vulnerability. Those living in the Global South are contributing the least to the problem of climate change but tend to be the first impacted and the most vulnerable to its effects (e.g. rising sea levels, changing precipitation patterns and drought, extreme weather events…).

Additionally, due to political and economic conditions of inequality, these folks are commonly also the least equipped to respond to and adapt to climate change (Agarwal, 2002). I elaborate more on this topic in the following section on the discourse around sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

2) Critical Development Studies

Decolonization left a legacy of political instability and economic devastation as many countries were not only war-torn but also unable to feed themselves as a result of environmental degradation and the restructuring of the food system and economy around commodity crops.Through integration into the global economy, colonized nations had become highly dependent on extractive and exploitative industries, such as mining and cash crops, often destroying the environment and inhibiting the development of local industry. This also radically impacted social relations and political systems. With the end of World War II, "D"evelopment began to dominate the discourse structuring the relations between the Global North and the Global South.

The discourse of development came as a response from former colonial powers, the United States and Britain primarily. In his famous inaugural speech, president Harry Truman foregrounded development on the U.S. international peacekeeping agenda and in doing so ushered in what Esteva (1997, p. 6) calls the "era of development… the era of American hegemony" (p. 6). The historic moment in which this is happening meant that the post-war development program was also a political project. In his inaugural speech, Truman repeatedly frames developement as the U.S.'s responsibility to the "free people of the world" (Truman Inaugural Address). During the Cold War, the US and Russia were the dominant countries pushing competing development programs, capitalist and communist respectively. It is this juxtaposition of the West vs. East that gave rise to the label "the third world" for describing those countries deemed un(der)developed. It was theorized that economic development would maintain peace and prevent the spread of communism.

In the early years, the development project was informed by Modernization Theory (Potter, 2012). Development and underdevelopment were defined by a nation's wealth and integration into the global economy. Rostow (1959) was writing in response to Marx and theorized that societies transitioned from traditional to modern through a linear development process that occurred in five stages. Modernization Theory emphasized the role of the state and it was assumed that, with proper management, a strong government, and state oversight, all nations could achieve the wealth and affluence of the West. According to Rostow, the transition from traditional to modern could only occur through the introduction of technology and industry by Western developed nations during the "takeoff" phase. In other words, wealthy countries of the Global North were responsible for intervening in the economies and development of the Global South through economic investment and the introduction of new technologies. Early development discourse also drew on Cornucopian ideas regarding resource use. The assumption was that although increased development requires resources and may produce conditions of scarcity, these conditions also induce advances in technology and tapping into new resource streams. In other words, resources are abundant and there are no material constraints on development that can not be overcome through technology and innovation. and need there is a

limitless abundance of resources and therefore all nations could pursue ever unbridled economic growth through increasing levels of consumption.

Development discourse was produced by wealthy countries in the global North and "undeveloped" countries were usually former colonies. Yet the discourse of development ignored the colonial legacies that produced the very conditions of poverty and hunger and political instability that were assumed to be "natural" properties or characteristics of "underdeveloped" countries. In doing so, development continued to construct racist colonial imaginaries of the Global South as backward, primitive, exotic and uncivilized. Further, because the interventionist model positioned developed Western countries in a paternalistic role, the development model put into place a neo-colonial system of dominance and subordination (Ferguson, 1990).

Sustainable Development, Climate Change Discourse, Adaptation

In the 1960s, books such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Paul Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* called into question the efficacy of the Cornucopia approach to development. Carson shed light on the environmental impacts of Green Revolution development technologies, specifically the unregulated use of pesticides and herbicides. Ehrlich was much more concerned with population growth in the Global South though he was also critical of consumption patterns in the Global North. He argued that Earth's resources were limited and that civilization would eventually collapse if then-current patterns were maintained. Concerns such as these sparked increased interest in environmental health and regulation and the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the rise of the environmental movement in the 1970s. By the 1980s sustainability begins to enter the development discourse and in 1987 the term "sustainable development" was officially defined by the Brundtland Commission to mean "development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Our Common Future, 1987). Although this definition has been widely adopted, it has also been critiqued for being overly vague and ambiguous.

Also in the 1980s neoliberal thought came to dominate political and economic discourse. Neoliberalism, which is closely associated with Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of Economics, builds on the ideas of Friedrich von Hayek classical liberal economics. Both schools of thought advance that economic growth occurs through free, self-regulating markets and trade policy that is dictated by comparative advantage. Whereas classical liberalism argued for an economy free from government intervention, neoliberal thought views the state as playing an important role in protecting and facilitating the free market through policy. In facilitating the free market, the state should also protect private property, encourage the privatization of public goods, and offer incentives for private investments that help to grow the economy (i.e. tax breaks). Neoliberalism emphasizes personal responsibility and individual choice. Under neoliberal policy reform (such as Structural Adjustment and Austerity) public spending decreases through a rollback of welfare state programs. During the 1980s the political figureheads of neoliberal reform were President Ronald Reagan in the U.S. and Margaret Thatcher in Europe. Calling on the old adage "a rising tide lifts all ships" advocates of neoliberal free market policy contend that when the market is left alone and economies are allowed to grow without state intervention, development levels will equalize. Critics of neoliberalism argue that it

only serves to increase economic disparity and that neoliberal policy lacks democratic participation and representation (Harvey, 2005).

Neoliberalism has had a profound effect on the way sustainability has been framed in development discourse. Approaches to sustainable development have primarily been market-based (Luke, 2005). On the micro level, responsibility for sustainability has increasingly become individualized and consumers are responsible for choosing environmentally benign products. More significantly, consumptive choices are increasingly thought of as a politicized act and therefore as a means of expressing one's rights as a citizen (Maniates, 2002). Policies also tend towards market-based responses, such as in the case of carbon-trading schemes as a way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Agarwal, 2002).

Rural Development Programs and Agrarian Reform

Development programs are advanced and facilitated by a number of different actors. These can be single nation-states but increasingly this takes the form of bilateral and multilateral organizations, and/or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and nonprofit organizations (NPOs). The World Bank (a branch of the United Nations) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are two multilateral organizations that have come to the fore of global development practice in the last three decades. Providing loans to governments to fund development projects, these organizations have tremendous sway in determining the projects and places that are developed.

Yet despite obvious ongoing government intervention, development agendas are often framed as non-political. James Ferguson's (1990) seminal work *The Anti-Politics Machine* he highlights the inherently political agendas and implications that are wrapped up in development projects. Historical political processes have usually given rise to the conditions that implicate particular nation-states as un/underdeveloped. Additionally, he questions the accuracy and objectivity of statistics supporting development programs. Finally, the technological interventions put into place through development practice are inherently political in that their are, often unaccounted for, localized social and political implications.

Greece is a country on the periphery and with a unique geopolitical history and positioning. Geographically a Balkan country, it has been a strategic battleground between the West and the East over the spread communist rule. US and British support immediately following the WWII sought to prevent the Greek Communist Party from overtaking the country during the Greek Civil War of 1944-1949. The US continued to intervene in the country's development to help prevent the spread of communism and allyship with the other communist countries of the region. Though I've not done extensive research into this, preliminary work suggests that after entry into the EU, Greece continued to remain one of the poorest member states and the target of EU rural development policy and funding. Therefore I think it will be incredibly useful to explore how these conditions have and continue to unfold through the lens of development theory. Further, there are strands of development theory, Feminist development theory for example, that privilege the importance of the everyday lived experience of those being 'developed' as critical points of entry for understanding development (Kabeer, 1994; Schlyter, 2006).

3)Political Geography and Theories of the Nation/Nationalism

Cultural Politics of National Identity and Citizenship(in the peripheral state)

Theories of nation and nationalism have their roots in the discipline of political science but have been taken up by historians, geographers, and post-colonial theorists among others. Ozkirimli (2000) organizes the theoretical genealogy of nationalism chronologically into four periods, the 18th and 19th centuries (conceptual birth but pre-academic study), 1918-1945 (it becomes a subject of academic inquiry), a post-war period beginning in 1945, and from 1980-the present. It is during this last phase that, as with many of the social science, we see the effects of the critical turn as theorists began to question the assumptions of the classical, Eurocentric debates. Specifically questions of subjectivity and identity come to the fore as feminist and postcolonial studies challenge the notions that all citizens experience the nation and nationalism in the same way (Ozkirimli, 2000). Beyond looking at broader theories of nation, nationalism and state formation, I am also interested in how this is experienced at the level of the individual and the everyday lived experience and reproduction of these identities through culture, particularly cultures of food.

This is not an area in which I am very well read, but what I have read suggests to me that theories of nation and nationalism will provide a useful and interesting lens through which I can explore the questions that drive my work. More specifically, I'd like to drill down and look at the cultural politics of national identity and citizenship, specifically in the peripheral state. Although my dissertation research will focus geographically in Europe, so in that context Greece is on the periphery of the EU, I feel this notion of the peripheral state is widely applicable to other regions and places. I also see the term 'peripheral' applied in a variety of ways, that is in a physical sense on the geographic periphery, in an economic sense to those on the periphery in, for example, international trade agreements or multi/transnational administrative apparatuses(like the EU), or on the cultural periphery, as are many of the Eastern European countries, which results in the racialization of particular national identities.

Writing in Critical Race Studies, though relevant to this discussion, Arat-Koc looks at Europe and the East/West binary that has developed as European identity, as defined by inclusion within the European Union, has been renegotiated and mapped on to new territories in different ways. Eastern Europeans are represented as backward and unmodern and as ethnically or culturally Asian rather than European. This subordination is reinforced through Western European humanitarian efforts in Eastern European countries. Particularly significant is the author's discussion of racism ingrained in structural processes of inclusion/exclusion experienced by Eastern Europe on the basis of economic, political, and economic conditions. This is also internalized according to the author by Eastern European countries creating "nesting Orientialisms" (p. 155) or a competitive environment in which each country constructs its own European identity and that of its neighbors to gain competitive edge on being European and white.

Food Sovereignty

I've chosen to include food sovereignty under this category although I could also see it categorized within the literature on the political ecology of food and agriculture. At this point, I

anticipate looking at food sovereignty, and food culture in general, as a mechanism for nation and national identity formation. I want to explore the political work that these concepts do in that process and how food sovereignty movements mobilize nationalist discourses. I do not mean to imply that this is divorced from political and economic discourses or discourse about the environment, I'm sure all work in tandem with one another. But, as an entry point into the litterature I thought this system of classification best.

Land Grabbing

I would like to also look into the literature on land grabbing as it is an issue of growing concern in Eastern Europe not just around food production but also with regards to mineral extraction in Greece. Land consolidation by major firms and countries for food production in the peripheral states is now well documented and social movements in resistance to land dispossession are growing, the European arm of La Via Campesina for example. I chose to include land grabbing under development (rather than political ecology) because I want to understand how rural development policy has produced the conditions necessary for such practices to take place. I think of this more as an entry point into the literature and will move forward with an open mind and flexibility as to how it will ultimately play into my dissertation research.

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Graduate Coursework

University of Washington

- ➢ Geographic Thought
- ➢ Critical Food Studies and Labor (Directed Reading)
- ➢ Critical Race Studies (Directed Reading)
- ➢ Cultural Geographies: Ideology, Discourse, Subjectivity
- ➢ Professional Writing
- ➢ Geographic Information Systems in Forest Resources
- ➢ Critical Cartography (Directed Reading)
- ➢ Scholarship as Public Practice (Certificate in Public Scholarship)
- ➢ Modern Greek (First and Second-Year)

University of South Florida

- ➢ Political Ecology (Directed Reading)
- ➢ Environmental Justice (Directed Reading)
- ➢ Advanced Human Geography (Focus on sustainability and urban development in Florida)
- ➢ Natural Hazards
- ➢ Political Geography
- ➢ Seminar in Environmental Policy
- ➢ Seminar in Environmental Science
- ➢ Qualitative Methods
- ➢ Statistical Methods
- ➢ Ecological Methods
- ➢ Geographic Information Systems

Courses Taught (TA)

University of Washington

- ➢ Geographies of Global Inequality (Autumn, 2016)
- ➢ International Development and Environmental Change (Spring, 2015)
- ➢ Geography of Food and Eating (Winter, 2015)
- ➢ Introduction to Globalization (Autumn, 2014)

University of South Florida St. Petersburg

- ➢ World Regional Geography (Fall 2010, Summer 2010, Fall 2009, Summer 2009)

Recommended Reading

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