

**Rhodes University
Department of Anthropology**

Anthropology 3 Term 1, 2019



Ecological Anthropology
LECTURER: Prof Shankar Aswani
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ANTHROPOLOGY 3 COURSE 2019

Module 1: Ecological Anthropology

Instructor: Prof. Shankar Aswani

Course Outline

Ecological Anthropology focuses on the complex and dynamic interactions between human beings and their physical environment. It explores how human populations manipulate and transform their ecosystems and how such interactions shape human social, political, and economic institutions. Scholars, however, have theoretically and methodologically interpreted this interaction in different ways. In this course we examine the emergence and history of ecological thinking in anthropology and the various theoretical approaches within the discipline that have developed from the coalescence of natural and social sciences. The course provides a general overview of the main theoretical currents in the field and presents particular case studies to illustrate their applications.

The theoretical frameworks studied include *Environmental Determinism*, *Environmental Possibilism*, *Cultural Evolutionism*, *Ethnoecology*, *Culture Ecology*, *Cultural Materialism*, *Systems Ecology*, *Sociobiology*, *Evolutionary Ecology/Psychology*, *Political Ecology*, *Historical Ecology*, *Spiritual Ecology*, *Radical/Deep Ecology*, *Eco-feminism*, *Common Pool Resource Systems* and *Indigenous Ecological Knowledge*, and *Environmental Anthropology*. Although the focus is global, we concentrate on case studies from Oceania and Africa. This course offers students a chance to explore the role of ecological anthropology in contemporary global social and environmental problems.

Module Structure and General Information:

The module will be comprised of lectures, tutorials and possible video/film viewing.

Lectures and class discussions: Please consult your 'Guide to Anthropology Two' leaflet for the lecture times and venue. You are strongly urged to attend lectures; random registers will be taken to monitor attendance.

Tutorials: For tutorials students will meet Thursday at 14:15-15:00 AM. During the tutorials we will discuss an assigned reading and any other relevant topics.

Consultation hours: By appointment S.Aswani@ru.ac.za

Key Texts

Selected articles and chapters have to be found by the students online or the library. Some will be made available at Anthropology Main Office and through RUConnect

Please note that you are expected to read all assigned materials and to participate in all discussions.

Online book and video resource

Please note that the Alexander Street Press online videos and books is a fantastic resource which has been purchased on our behalf through the library funds. Please make use of it as we are very fortunate to have access to this.

<http://0-anth.alexanderstreet.com.wam.seals.ac.za/>

Assessment

Students will be expected to complete one assignment for this course. Marks will also be as follows:

Exams as per RU examination policy

1 Research Paper

Syllabus Modifications

The instructor reserves the right to modify anything in the syllabus during the course of the quarter, with prior warning via in-class announcements. Students are responsible for being apprised of any such modifications and for recording such modifications on their syllabi.

THE MODULE WEEK BY WEEK

Week One: 11–15 February

Lectures:

Mon- *Course Presentation and orientations:*

- What do we study in ecological anthropology?

The ancestors of evolutionary thinking in ecological anthropology and in the social sciences

- Thomas Malthus and theories of population
- Charles Darwin and evolution
- Herbert Spencer
- Morgan and Tylor
- Cultural and Biological Evolution (Freeman 1974)

Wed- *Human-environment interactions: Early approaches*

- Environmental/Geographical Determinism (Ellen 1982, Chap.1)
- Environmental Possibilism (Ellen 1982, Chap. 2)

Tutorial

Thu: Discussion: *Differentiating social and biological Evolution (Freeman 1974)/Also make up for Monday*

Week Two: 18–22 February

Lectures:	<p>Mon- <i>Cultural Evolutionism</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leslie White and Cultural Evolution (White 1959, Chap. 1-2) - Case study: The rise of civilizations <p>- <i>Culture Ecology and its applications</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Steward's Culture Ecology (Steward 1955, pp. 3-42) - Steward's adherents <p>Wed - Marvin Harris and materialist approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case study: Indian sacred cattle (Harris 1966) <p>– <i>Ethnoecology</i>: Conceptualizing nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case study: Ethno-botanical classification (Berlin 1991, 57-66) and loss (Fernandez-Llamazares 2015)
Tutorial	<p>Thu: Discussion: <i>Culture Ecology vs Cultural Materialism/evolution</i></p>

Week Three: Feb 25–1 March

Lectures:	<p>Mon- <i>Systems Theory and Ecology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Systems Ecology - Defining the “New Ecology” (Moran 1990, Chap. 1) <p><i>Pigs for the Ancestors</i> (Rappaport 1968 [1984] pp. 1-15, 28-31, 224-242).</p> <p>Wed- <i>Sociobiology</i></p> <p>Case study: Sociobiology and human social behavior in the Amazon (Chagnon 1988)</p> <p><i>Evolutionary Ecology</i></p> <p>Human Behavioral Ecology (Smith and Winterhalder 1992, Chap. 1-2)</p>
Tutorial	<p>Thu: <i>Pigs for the ancestors (1968) vs. Evolutionary Ecology</i></p>

Week Four: 4–8 March

Lectures:
Mon- *Historical Ecology*

- *An introduction to Historical Ecology* (Balee 2006)
- *Case study: Environmental change in the Insular Pacific: Birds as a case study* (Steadman 1997)

Wed- *Political Ecology*

- An introduction to Political Ecology
- Reassessing Political Ecology (Escobar 1999)
- Case study: Urban political ecology in Kenya (Njeru 2006)

Tutorial
Thu: *History Matters...why?*

Week Five: 11–15 March

Lectures:
Mon- *Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and Anthropology*

- Indigenous knowledge and its modern relevance (Berkes 2008, Chap. 1 and 4; Agrawal 1995)
- Indigenous knowledge and intellectual property rights

Wed- *Common Property Resources theory* (McCay and Acheson 1987, Chap. 1)

- Common property and environmental policy
- Property-rights regimes and natural resources
- Case study: Customary Tenure and TURFs (Aswani 2017)

Tutorial
Thu: Maori ecological knowledge in historical context (Wehi 2009).

Week six: 18–22 March

Lectures:
Mon- *Human Ecology and Resource Conservation*

- Is there a “noble savage”?
- Critiques of indigenous conservation (Diamond 1992)
- Case Study: The Amazon Piro and resource conservation (Alvard 1995)

Wed- *Socioecology and Climate Change*

- Social and ecological Resilience (Adger 2000)
- Complexity of coupled human and natural systems (Liu et al 2007)
- Coastal communities and vulnerability (Aswani et al. 2017; Cinner et al. 2012)

Tutorial **Thu:** Land and sea tenure in South Africa

Week seven: 25–29 March

Lectures: **Mon-** Outstanding lectures and material review

Wed- Outstanding lectures and material review

Tutorial **Thu:** None

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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