

City, Environment, and Nature

Geography 905

Spring 2014

3 credits

Meets:	Monday, 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Location:	Bolton 487
Instructor:	Ryan Holifield
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Office Hours:	By appointment (MWF early afternoons are usually the best bet)

Introduction to the course

The purpose of this seminar is to introduce graduate students to different ways of conceptualizing, theorizing, and researching urban environments and urban natures. Through close, intensive readings of a series of books and articles, we will examine several different approaches to urban ecology, including approaches grounded in systems theory, environmental history, Marxist urban political ecology, feminist theories, and actor-network theory, along with related poststructural approaches. In the process, we'll consider a wide range of substantive themes: ecosystems, nature, difference and inequality, habitat and infrastructure, food, and nonhuman urban dwellers, just to name a few. This seminar will be of potential interest to students in geography, urban studies, urban planning, architecture, anthropology, history, sociology, urban education, biological sciences, and others interested in the relationships between cities and nature or the environment.

It is important to emphasize that this is not a “practical” or “applied” course. In other words, our goal in this course is not going to be getting up to speed on state-of-the-art approaches to sustainable urban planning, management, development, or policy. Although we will take a glance at this (massive) literature, we will spend far more time delving into scholarly literature that challenges, critiques, or develops alternatives to predominant approaches to urban ecology.

This is also not a course for students who dislike social theory. Although in most weeks we will focus on case studies of various kinds, we will spend a considerable amount of time and energy grappling with often extremely difficult and abstruse theoretical texts. I enjoy that sort of thing, and I welcome students who are interested in (or at least open to) learning about current debates in urban theory. But I also understand that for students who are “allergic to theory,” this may not be your cup of tea.

The course is organized around both substantive urban environmental issues and the broad approaches listed above. One of our major goals will be to discern how these approaches *differ* – and what difference these differences make for our own choices in doing urban, environmental, or urban

environmental research. In most weeks, we'll encounter a mix of theory and empirical analysis, but sometimes one or the other will dominate.

Finally, let me emphasize that the literature on cities, environments, and nature is not only diverse, but also enormous. There is no way that I can do justice to this literature in a single reading list; we will read but a sampling. However, I will encourage you to use your term paper as an opportunity to explore themes and research areas that we do not have time to read as a class.

Required and recommended materials

The following books are required for this class:

Loftus, Alex. 2012. *Everyday Environmentalisms: Creating an Urban Political Ecology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Melosi, Martin. 2008 (2000) *The Sanitary City: Environmental Services in Urban America from Colonial Times to the Present, Abridged Edition*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press.

Robbins, Paul. 2007. *Lawn People: How Grasses, Weeds, and Chemicals Make Us Who We Are*. Philadelphia: Temple.

Copies are available in the bookstore, but you may also wish to search the Internet for used copies. Other required readings will be available via the class D2L site.

Recommended (we'll read part of it):

Cronon, William. 1991. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York and London, W.W. Norton.

The following books are strongly recommended for this class (and for graduate school more generally), but not required:

Recommended resources on academic reading and writing:

Adler, M. J., and Van Doren, C. L. (1972). *How to Read a Book* (Rev. and updated ed.). New York: Simon and Schuster.

Boice, R. (1990) *Professors as Writers: A Self-Help Guide to Productive Writing*. Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press.

Strunk, W., and White, E. B. (1959). *The Elements of Style*. New York: Macmillan.

Williams, J. M. (1989). *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. Glenview, IL, Boston, and London: Scott, Foresman & Company.

Course learning objectives and assignments

By the end of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- (1) *Discuss* and *explain* the basic arguments, assumptions, and premises of dominant contemporary approaches to conceptualizing, theorizing, and researching urban environments and urban natures.
- (2) *Compare, contrast,* and critically *evaluate* these competing approaches, both in general and in relation to a particular substantive area of research.
- (3) Work with others to *facilitate productive discussions* of approaches to urban environments and urban natures.

The components of your class grade are linked closely to these learning objectives. Your final grade will be determined by the following:

1. Regular class participation (20%) [All objectives]

This class will operate primarily as a discussion-oriented seminar. By class participation, I mean the following: showing up regularly, being prepared for every class (i.e., having carefully read the assigned readings), and participating actively in discussions. "Participating actively" does not mean talking constantly, but it requires at least speaking up in each class session. Regular attendance and participation are crucial to the success of this course.

2. Class presentation and discussion facilitation (10%) [Objective 3]

Each student will introduce and co-facilitate (with me) two assigned seminar sessions during the course of the semester. For each session for which you are a co-facilitator, you will do the following: (1) read reaction papers and discussion questions submitted to the D2L site (see below); (2) at the beginning of class, briefly (2-4 minutes, roughly) review key concepts and themes from the readings, summarize ideas from the reaction papers, and introduce discussion questions that you and others have submitted; (3) help me facilitate the flow of discussion. You are welcome to check in with me ahead of time if you have ideas for structure or format.

3. Weekly discussion questions and four outlines / reaction papers (20%) [Objectives 1 and 2]

You will be required to prepare four outlines of assigned readings and four brief "reaction papers" of 250-500 words in length. In addition, you should submit at least one discussion question each week (except the first and last). You will be responsible for distributing your outlines, papers, and questions to your instructor and your classmates via the D2L site, no later than 7:00 pm on the Sunday evening before the class session. The discussion leader for a session will be required to review the outlines, reaction papers, and questions submitted each week; we'll use these as launching points for discussion. Everyone else should make an effort to review these as well. You will receive your assignments, along with further instructions for preparing the outlines and discussion questions, in a separate handout (also on D2L).

4. **Term paper and peer review (50%)** [Objective 2]

Your final assignment for the semester will be to prepare a term paper of 4000-5000 words in length. You will receive more information about the term paper assignment, including the peer review of a classmate's first draft, in a separate handout.

Timeline:

- ❖ Working topic, question, and thesis due by 11:59 pm **Thursday, February 6** (1%)
- ❖ Working outline, bibliography, and initial draft pages due by 11:59 pm **Thursday, March 13** (4%)
- ❖ First complete draft, ready for peer review, due by 11:59 pm **Thursday, April 17** (10%)
- ❖ Peer review due by 11:59 pm on **Tuesday, April 22** (5%)
- ❖ Final draft due by 11:59 pm on **Thursday, May 15** (30%)

University policies

For the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's official policies on **disabilities, religious observances, active military duty, incompletes, discriminatory conduct, academic misconduct, complaint procedures, and grade appeal procedures**, please see the following web site:
<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>. Geography 905 adheres to all of these policies.

If you have questions or concerns about the class, please do not hesitate to contact the instructor.

Schedule of required readings

All readings that are not in your required books will be available on D2L as PDFs or as links to online PDFs.

NOTE: Readings are VERY MUCH subject to change, but I will warn you ahead of time if I make changes.

1) Introduction—January 27

Botkin, D. B., and C. E. Beveridge. 1997. Cities as environments. *Urban Ecosystems* 1 (1):3–19.

Braun, B. 2005. Environmental issues: writing a more-than-human urban geography. *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (5):635-650.

McDonald, G. W., and M. G. Patterson. 2007. Bridging the divide in urban sustainability: from human exemptionalism to the new ecological paradigm. *Urban Ecosystems* 10 (2):169–192.

Wolch, J. 2007. Green urban worlds. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97 (2):373–384.

2) Ecosystem—February 3

Burgess, E. W. 2008 (1925). The growth of the city: an introduction to a research project. *Urban Ecology*: 71–78.

Tansley, A. G. (1935). The use and abuse of vegetational concepts and terms. *Ecology* 16 (3):284–307.

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Pickett, S. T. . et al. (1997). A conceptual framework for the study of human ecosystems in urban areas. *Urban Ecosystems* 1 (4):185–199.

Melosi, M. V. (1993). The place of the city in environmental history. *Environmental History Review* 17 (1):1–23.

Harvey, D. (1996). *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*. Oxford: Blackwell (Selection)

Rocheleau, D., Thomas-Slayter, B., & Wangari, E. (Eds.). (2013). *Feminist political ecology: Global issues and local experience*. Routledge. (Selection)

Murdoch, J. 2001. Ecologising sociology: Actor-network theory, co-construction and the problem of human exemptionalism. *Sociology*, 35 (1), 111-133.

3) What is the city made of?—February 10

McIntyre, N., K. Knowles-Yanez, and D. Hope. (2000). Urban ecology as an interdisciplinary field: differences in the use of “urban” between the social and natural sciences. *Urban Ecosystems* 4 (1):5–24.

Cronon, W. (1991). *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: WW Norton & Company. (Selection)

Harvey, D. (1978). The urban process under capitalism: a framework for analysis. *International journal of urban and regional research*, 2(1-4), 101-131.

Bondi, L., & Rose, D. (2003). Constructing gender, constructing the urban: a review of Anglo-American feminist urban geography. *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 10(3), 229-245.

Latour, B., E. Hermant, S. Shannon, and Plessis-R. I. S. (1998). *Paris ville invisible (Paris: Invisible City)* La Découverte. (Selection)

(See D2L for links. Here is the full Internet English-language version: <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/virtual/paris/english/frames.html>).

4) Nature—February 17

Young, R. F. (2009). Interdisciplinary foundations of urban ecology. *Urban Ecosystems* 12 (3):311–331.

Cronon, W. (1991). *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: WW Norton & Company. (Selection)

Loftus, A. (2012). *Everyday environmentalism: creating an urban political ecology*. U of Minnesota Press. (Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2)

Villanueva Gardner, C. (1999). An ecofeminist perspective on the urban environment. In *The nature of cities: Ecocriticism and urban environments*, eds. M. Bennett and D. Teague.

Latour, B. (2010). An Attempt at a "Compositionist Manifesto". *New Literary History*, 41(3), 471-490.

5) Heterogeneity—February 24

Grove, J. M., and W. R. Burch. (1997). A social ecology approach and applications of urban ecosystem and landscape analyses: a case study of Baltimore, Maryland. *Urban Ecosystems* 1 (4):259–275.

Pulido, L., Sidawi, S., & Vos, R. O. (1996). An archaeology of environmental racism in Los Angeles. *Urban Geography*, 17(5), 419-439.

Loftus, A. (2012). *Everyday environmentalism: creating an urban political ecology*. U of Minnesota Press. (Chapter 3 – skim the first part, but read 66-74)

Di Chiro, G. (2008). Living environmentalisms: coalition politics, social reproduction, and environmental justice. *Environmental Politics*, 17(2), 276-298.

McFarlane, C. (2011). The city as assemblage: dwelling and urban space. *Environment and Planning-Part D*, 29(4), 649.

6) Water and waste, part I—March 3

Walsh, C. J., Roy, A. H., Feminella, J. W., Cottingham, P. D., Groffman, P. M., & Morgan II, R. P. (2009). The urban stream syndrome: current knowledge and the search for a cure. *Journal of the North American Benthological Society* 24: 706–723

Melosi, M. 2008 (2000) *The Sanitary City: Environmental Services in Urban America from Colonial Times to the Present*, Abridged Edition. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press. (pp. 1-129)

Loftus, A. (2012). *Everyday environmentalism: creating an urban political ecology*. U of Minnesota Press. (Chapter 4)

Truelove, Y. (2011). (Re-) Conceptualizing water inequality in Delhi, India through a feminist political ecology framework. *Geoforum*, 42(2), 143-152.

Gandy, M. (2004). Rethinking urban metabolism: water, space and the modern city. *City*, 8(3), 363-379.

7) Water and waste, part II – March 10

Lundin, M., & Morrison, G. M. (2002). A life cycle assessment based procedure for development of environmental sustainability indicators for urban water systems. *Urban water*, 4(2), 145-152.

Melosi, M. 2008 (2000) *The Sanitary City: Environmental Services in Urban America from Colonial Times to the Present*, Abridged Edition. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press. (pp. 129-263)

Bennett, V. (1995). *The politics of water: Urban protest, gender, and power in Monterrey, Mexico*. University of Pittsburgh Press (Selection).

Kaika, M., & Swyngedouw, E. (2000). Fetishizing the modern city: the phantasmagoria of urban technological networks. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24(1), 120-138.

Teh, T. H. (2013). Bypassing the flush, creating new resources: Analysing alternative sanitation futures in London. *Local Environment*, (ahead-of-print), 1-15. [or TBD]

8) Animals – March 24

Kark, S., Iwaniuk, A., Schalimtzek, A., & Banker, E. (2007). Living in the city: can anyone become an 'urban exploiter'?. *Journal of Biogeography*, 34(4), 638-651.

Atkins, P. (2012). *Animal Cities: Beastly Urban Histories*. Ashgate Publishing. (Selection)

Davis, M. (1998). Ecology of fear: Los Angeles and the imagination of disaster. New York: Metropolitan Books. (Chapter 5)

Wolch, J. (1996). Zoöpolis*. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 7(2), 21-47.

Hinchliffe, S., M. B. Kearnes, M. Degen, and S. Whatmore. (2005). Urban wild things: A cosmopolitical experiment. *Environment and Planning D* 23 (5):643.

Optional/recommended:

Hovorka, A. (2008). Transspecies urban theory: Chickens in an African city. *cultural geographies* 15 (1):95.

9) Trees – March 31

McPherson, E. G., Nowak, D., Heisler, G., Grimmond, S., Souch, C., Grant, R., & Rowntree, R. (1997). Quantifying urban forest structure, function, and value: The Chicago Urban Forest Climate Project. *Urban Ecosystems*, 1(1), 49-61.

Jones, O., & Cloke, P. (2002). *Tree cultures: The place of trees and trees in their place*. Berg Publisher. (Selection)

Heynen, N., Perkins, H. A., & Roy, P. (2006). The political ecology of uneven urban green space the impact of political economy on race and ethnicity in producing environmental inequality in Milwaukee. *Urban Affairs Review*, 42(1), 3-25.

Perkins, H. A. (2007). Ecologies of actor-networks and (non) social labor within the urban political economies of nature. *Geoforum* 38 (6):1152–1162.

Jones, O., & Cloke, P. (2008). Non-human agencies: Trees in place and time. In *Material Agency* (pp. 79-96). Springer US.

10) Food—April 7

Smit, J., & Nasr, J. (1992). Urban agriculture for sustainable cities: Using wastes and idle land and water bodies as resources. *Environment and Urbanization*, 4(2), 141-152.

Lawson, L. J. (2005). *City Bountiful*. University of California Press. (Selection)

Shillington, L. J. (2013). Right to food, right to the city: Household urban agriculture, and socionatural metabolism in Managua, Nicaragua. *Geoforum*, 44, 103-111.

Hovorka, A. J. (2006). The No. 1 Ladies' Poultry Farm: A feminist political ecology of urban agriculture in Botswana*. *Gender, place and culture*, 13(3), 207-225.

Whatmore, S., & Thorne, L. (1997). Nourishing networks: Alternative geographies of food. *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*. Eds. D. Goodman and MJ Watts. London, Routledge.

11) Human habitats – April 14

Rees, W. E. (1999). The built environment and the ecosphere: a global perspective. *Building Research & Information*, 27(4-5), 206-220.

Biehler, D. D. (2009). Permeable homes: A historical political ecology of insects and pesticides in US public housing. *Geoforum*, 40(6), 1014-1023.

[alternative possibility: Biehler, D. D. (2010). Flies, manure, and window screens: medical entomology and environmental reform in early-twentieth-century US cities. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 36(1), 68-78.]

Dooling, S. (2009). Ecological gentrification: a research agenda exploring justice in the city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33(3), 621-639.

Crabtree, L. (2006). Disintegrated houses: exploring ecofeminist housing and urban design options. *Antipode*, 38(4), 711-734.

Head, L., and P. Muir. 2006. Suburban life and the boundaries of nature: resilience and rupture in Australian backyard gardens. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31 (4):505–524.

12) Lawns – April 21

Robbins, Paul. (2007). *Lawn People: How Grasses, Weeds, and Chemicals Make Us Who We Are*. Philadelphia: Temple. (Read pp. 1-138)

Guthman, J. (2008). Lawn People: How Grasses, Weeds, and Chemicals Make Us Who We Are. *The Professional Geographer* 60 (3):425–426.

13) Sustainability – April 28

Rees, W. E. (1997). Urban ecosystems: the human dimension. *Urban Ecosystems* 1 (1):63–75.

Sassen, S., and N. Dotan. (2011). Delegating, not returning, to the biosphere: How to use the multi-scalar and ecological properties of cities. *Global Environmental Change* 21(3): 823-834.

MacGregor, S. (2002). Bright new vision or same old story? Looking for gender justice in the eco-city. *Urban affairs: Back on the policy agenda*, 71-92.

Rutland, T., and A. Aylett. (2008). The work of policy: Actor networks, governmentality, and local action on climate change in Portland, Oregon. *Environment and Planning D: Society and space* 26 (4):627–646.

Optional/recommended:

Wu, J. J. 2008. Making the case for landscape ecology: an effective approach to urban sustainability. *Landscape Journal* 27 (1):41-50.

14) Experimentation – May 5

Evans, J. P. (2011). Resilience, ecology and adaptation in the experimental city. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36 (2):223-237. [continued next page]

Loftus, A. (2012). *Everyday environmentalism: creating an urban political ecology*. U of Minnesota Press. (Chapter 5, Conclusion)

[We may also revisit an earlier reading or, if there is interest, take on a new one.]