**ER 170 / 270**  
**Environmental Classics**

**Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 - 12:30**  
**242 Hearst Gym**

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**Motivation:** What is the history and evolution of environmental thinking and writing? How have certain ‘environmental classics’ shaped the way in which we think about nature, society and development? Why did these become ‘classics’?

This course will use a selection of 20th century books and papers that have had a major impact on academic and wider public thinking about the environment/development to probe these issues. The selection includes works that have influenced environmental politics and policy (primarily) in the USA. The readings include works from the natural and the social sciences, as well as commentaries related to the core works. Through the classics and their commentaries the class will explore the evolution of environmental thought, and the public impact of the written word.

**Requirements:** This course requires reading roughly one book per week. In addition, influential papers that support, critique or extend the primary reading, will be assigned. Each class session will be a combination of lecture and discussion.

- **Weekly Assignment:** A short (roughly one page) commentary, critique, or question, based on the core book / paper. This statement is due electronically by 12 noon on the day before class and should be sent to the primary instructor for that week.  
  *Graduate students* are required to turn in 10 of these critiques over the 13 weeks of assigned books.  
  *Undergraduates* should choose 6 out of the 13 readings to comment on.

- **Final Paper Requirement:**  
  If you are a *graduate student*, you should turn in a 20-page research/review paper that explores one or more themes you find important in one or more core books, or that a supplementary reading in the course suggested to you.  
  If you are an *undergraduate*, you should turn in a 10 – 12 page journalistic piece on an environmental problem or controversy – perhaps from your home town or a place with which you are familiar? – using the themes and ideas in the readings.

  *This course may be taken P/F, in which case there is no final paper. No auditing, please. If there is a compelling reason to audit, you can speak to one of the instructors.*
Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Themes and Primary Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T 8/31</td>
<td>Kammen &amp; Ray</td>
<td>The evolution of environmental thinking and discourse; role of environmental ‘classics’, role of the ‘public’ intellectual</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Th 9/2</td>
<td>Kammen &amp; Ray</td>
<td>An Example of an Environmental Debate &lt;br&gt;The Skeptical Environmentalist</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>T 9/7</td>
<td>Kammen</td>
<td>The many relationships between nature and society &lt;br&gt;The Organic Machine, Richard White</td>
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<td>Th 9/9</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>T 9/14</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Modern agricultural practices and their impact on nature &lt;br&gt;Silent Spring, Rachel Carson</td>
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<td>Th 9/16</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>T 9/21</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Human population, resource use and resource degradation &lt;br&gt;The Population Bomb, Paul Ehrlich</td>
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<td>Th 9/23</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>T 9/28</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Environmental commons and sustainability &lt;br&gt;The Tragedy of the Commons, Garret Hardin</td>
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<td>Th 9/30</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>T 10/5</td>
<td>Kammen</td>
<td>Technological versus ecological determinism and evolution &lt;br&gt;The Closing Circle, Barry Commoner</td>
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<td>Th 10/7</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>T 10/12</td>
<td>Kammen</td>
<td>The value of technology, and technology shaping values &lt;br&gt;Small is Beautiful, E. F. Schumacher; Soft Energy Paths, Amory Lovins</td>
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<td>Th 10/14</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>T 10/19</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>The Rise of political ecology &lt;br&gt;Fate of the Forest, Susanna Hecht &amp; Alexander Cockburn</td>
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<td>T 10/26</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Th 10/28</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>The Rise of environmental justice &lt;br&gt;Dumping in Dixie, Robert Bullard</td>
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<td>T 11/2</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Th 11/4</td>
<td>Kammen</td>
<td>Environmental history of a city and its hinterland &lt;br&gt;Nature’s Metropolis, William Cronon</td>
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<td>T 11/9</td>
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<td>Th 11/11</td>
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<td>No class – Veterans Day</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>T 11/16</td>
<td>Kammen</td>
<td>Forests and the global paper economy &lt;br&gt;Pulping the South, Ricardo Carrere &amp; Lawrence Lohmann</td>
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<td>Th 11/18</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>T 11/23</td>
<td>Kammen</td>
<td>Geographic determinism? &lt;br&gt;Guns, Germs &amp; Steel, Jared Diamond</td>
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<td>Th 11/25</td>
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<td>No class - Thanksgiving Day holiday</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>T 11/30</td>
<td>Kammen</td>
<td>Geographic determinism? &lt;br&gt;Guns, Germs &amp; Steel, Jared Diamond</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>12/2</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>The Co-evolution of taste, society and nature &lt;br&gt;The Botany of Desire, Michael Pollan</td>
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<td>12/7</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>12/9</td>
<td>Kammen &amp; Ray</td>
<td>Summary and commentary: evolving themes and the intellectual impact and place of environmental classics.</td>
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Weekly Assignments /Required Readings

(Most of the commentaries are in the reader, which is available from Central Copy on Bancroft Avenue. Some of the readings are available online, and for these the URL is listed. A few additional readings will be handed out in class)

8/31 – 9/2  An Example Environmental Debate

*The Skeptical Environmentalist*

**Book 1.** Catch your breath, survey the literature, for the course and _order the hard to find/out of print volumes_ from online booksellers. It is important that you do this now so that you have the texts when they are needed, or you will be unable to complete the assignments on time.

- As an ER170 or ER270 student your assignments will differ this semester. Scan the readings to consider which books/weeks you wish to summarize and present.
- No written commentaries are due this week.

Note: we have not asked you to read the actual text, Lomborg’s *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, as the goal of this week is to get a flavor of the debates. As you will see, actually _reading_ this text is, in fact, part of the debate.

Due on 9/2:
Watch the debate, or read the transcript, between Lomborg and Kammen online: [http://www.uncommonknowledge.org/700/724.html](http://www.uncommonknowledge.org/700/724.html)

Review the debate between Lomborg and a range of his critics, which became a much debated and critiques ‘exchange’ in *Scientific American*. Read the critique by Gleick, and at least one of the others (Schneider, Holdren, or Bongaarts). A link to the entire exchange is:

[http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?articleID=000F3D47-C6D2-1CEB-93F6809EC5880000&pageNumber=1&catID=2](http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?articleID=000F3D47-C6D2-1CEB-93F6809EC5880000&pageNumber=1&catID=2)

*Additional Reading:*
You may be interested to examine a bit of the context for this debate, which stems from an even more famous ‘environmental debate’:

[http://www.overpopulation.com/faq/People/julian_simon.html](http://www.overpopulation.com/faq/People/julian_simon.html)

The characters in this debate will resurface later in this course.

9/7 – 9/9  The Many Relationships Between Nature and Society
The Organic Machine


Commentary:
“What is Environmental History?” Unpublished summary from the *Environmental History* resource page (11 pages).

This week begins the chronological progression of texts.

9/14 – 9/16 Modern agricultural practices and their impact on nature
_Silent Spring_


Commentaries:

A biography of Rachel Carson produced as part of *The American Experience* PBS-TV series is available in the library, and is well worth watching.

9/21 – 9/23 Human population, resource use and resource degradation
_The Population Bomb_


Commentaries:
Mahmood Mamdani. The myth of population control; family, caste, and class in an Indian village. (selected chapters will be handed out in class)

9/28 – 9/30 Environmental commons and sustainability
_The Tragedy of the Commons_


Commentaries:
For a classic (and not Hardin-sympathetic!) take on privatizing the commons, see:

10/5 - 10/7  Technological versus ecological determinism and evolution

The Closing Circle


Commentaries:

10/12, 14, 19  The value of technology, and technology shaping values

Small is Beautiful and Soft Energy Paths

Book(s) 7. Two texts for this module:

7.2 Amory B. Lovins (1976) "Energy Strategy: The Road Not Taken?" Foreign Affairs, October, 1 – 32.

Commentaries:


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**10/21 – 10/23 The Rise of Political Ecology**

*The Fate of the Forest*


*Commentaries:*
Charles Peters *et al.* Valuation of an Amazon Rainforest. *Nature* (339), June 29 1989. [this is itself a classic piece]

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**10/28 – 11/2 The Rise of Environmental Justice**

*Dumping in Dixie*


*Commentaries:*

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**11/4 – 11/9 Environmental history of a city and its hinterland**

*Nature’s Metropolis*


*Commentaries:*

11/16 – 11/18  
**Forests and the global paper economy**

*Pulping the South*


**Commentaries:**
http://www2.hawaii.edu/~irohter/FruitsOfResistenceArticle.htm

11/23 – 11/30  
**Geographic Determinism?**

*Guns, Germs & Steel*


**Commentaries:**

12/2 – 12/7  
**The Co-evolution of taste, society and nature**

*The Botany of Desire*


**Commentaries:**
Henry David Thoreau (1854). *Walden*. Chapters 7, 10 & 18. If you have time, Ch 2 is very good. All in the reader.
[Walden is, to many, the ultimate environmental classic. A moral and philosophical approach to the connections between nature and human society]
Syllabus version: 8/13/04