ENS 488: China’s Environment and the World
Online: Spring 20XX

Instructor: Tih-Fen Ting
Phone: (217) 206-7876
Office: PAC 316
E-mail: tting1@uis.edu

Required Readings


Plus supplemental readings on Blackboard. You can find supplemental readings in the Readings folder on the sidebar of the course Blackboard site. Most readings are posted as PDF files and require Adobe Acrobat Reader to open and download. If you do not have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer already, you can download it from the Internet for free.

Course Description
Human environmental affairs are full of paradoxes. For example, the United States has some of the world’s most stringent pollution regulations and yet the current administration is willing to de-regulate with little regard for the environmental and health risks involved. China is also full of environmental paradoxes. While being the world’s second largest economy with the largest foreign-exchange reserves in the world, China remains a poor country on a per capita basis. Despite being the world’s largest maker of solar panels and wind turbines, China still heavily depends on coal for its energy supply at the moment, making it the leading nation for carbon dioxide emissions. Urbanization is unfolding in China at a pace so fast that is unprecedented in human history and yet hundreds of millions of Chinese are still without safe drinking water and basic waste sanitation. Habitat loss and fragmentation has put hundreds of its species at risk of extinction; nonetheless, China remains one of the most biologically
diverse countries in the world. What do these environmental paradoxes mean for the future of China’s people and the rest of the world? Is China still at heart relentlessly pursuing growth at all costs? Should Chinese people be denied the right to the economic prosperity long enjoyed by the developed world? There is much to learn from a study of China’s environmental history as well as its likely influence in shaping the planet’s environmental future. In sum, this course examines the historical, cultural, and institutional contexts of environmental change and actions in China. The course also assesses the interplays of drivers and processes at multiple levels – local to global – that shape China’s environment, past and present, and what those challenges mean for the future of the world. The course will combine lectures, discussions, and films.

**Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain a global and environmental narrative of the modern world that challenges Eurocentrism and takes the entire world as the unit of analysis
- Comprehend the meaning and significance of China’s environmental transformation from the Neolithic to the present in the global context
- Appraise the complex historical, cultural, political, economic, and global forces that are shaping China’s environmental outcomes
- Analyze the domestic-international nexus of China’s environmental policy-making and governance
- Demonstrate the connections between China’s environmental challenges and the prospects for global sustainability
- Critically assess the necessity of international engagement with China for a viable environmental future of the world

**Teaching Expectations/Philosophy**

My role in your learning process is not just to transmit knowledge but to collaborate with you to explore and investigate new ideas. What makes teaching rewarding is to help you discover and develop your own learning and personal growth. Good teachers are life-long learners themselves because of their intellectual curiosity and because of their interactions with students. I see students as active participants in the process of learning; students learn best when they take responsibility for learning. In other words, you are required to take a proactive role in engaging the course materials. These materials – including readings, videos, discussion comments, and so forth – should be critically examined and actively studied. You are expected to move beyond passingly understanding or restating the course content, but instead to develop critical insight by making connections between course materials, your past learning, and the contemporary world. In short, your active participation is especially crucial to make the online course rewarding. No class can be successful without the devotion and commitment of both the students and teacher. I am always approachable; if you have any concern, question, or problem regarding the course, I encourage you to let me know. I welcome anything you would like to share with me regarding the course.
Course Requirements

1. **Online Discussion/Participation.** There are four categories of discussion and participation for this class: Weekly Readings, Documentary Commentaries, Student Lounge, and Instructor’s Corner. Discussion forums are not informal e-mail exchanges. You must take time to think through what you want to say, and to say it clearly. I will follow the discussion forums very closely but typically will weigh in only to keep the discussion on topic, to add specific information, or clear any misunderstanding.

- **Weekly Readings:** Readings are due the weeks that they are listed in the syllabus. Staying up to date with the readings is essential for success in this class. Hence, participation in the “Weekly Readings” Forum is mandatory. The central aim of the forum is for you to raise questions or comments about the readings, as well as to respond to your peers’ questions and their comments. You are expected to make at least two postings each week; the first posting should be made by 6 PM CST Thursday evening in response to the readings assigned for the week with your question(s) or comments; the second posting should be made by 6 PM CST Sunday evening in response to earlier questions or comments by your classmates to the readings. Your posting should be coherent, thoughtful, substantive, well-written, and courteous. Avoid vague or trivial postings such as: “I like Terry’s comment, it was interesting.” Instead, you should respond to your peers in light of your understanding of the assigned readings and previously read course materials. Note that doing the minimum amount of work usually results in only an average grade. You certainly can make more than two postings. I expect you to bring critical thinking and critical commentary to the discussion, but please remember that this is a learning environment: always be civil and courteous. Also, it is a good idea to type up your responses on a word processor, check and edit what you wrote, and then copy/paste to the Blackboard discussion forum. Be sure to click the “Submit” bottom when submitting your digest. The “Save” bottom only saves your draft, but does not submit your work.

- **Student Lounge:** This is a place for you to talk among yourselves about any question you might have. You can certainly ask me if you have any question regarding the lecture or course material. Nevertheless, I hope the “Student Lounge” will also help you learn from one another.

- **Documentary Commentaries:** Each student is required to post her/his commentaries about the films in the “Documentary Commentaries” Forum (see below for more details) so that everyone can read the commentaries. You may wish to respond to your classmates’ comments about the films. However, this is not mandatory.

- **Instructor’s Corner:** From time to time, I will post questions in the “Instructor’s Corner” for the class. In such cases, your participation in the discussion related to my question(s) is required. I will post an announcement to the class whenever I post questions.

2. **Critical Response Papers (6).** Students are required to write six two-page critical responses to the six books of your choosing out of the eight books assigned for the course. Each critical
response should be typed; single-spaced (but double-spaced between paragraphs); use 12 pt font; use 1 inch margins. In your response, you can include what you think are the most exciting or significant aspect of the readings, what the underlying assumptions or philosophy of the readings are (e.g., compare and contrast different positions), what the problematical or troubling aspects of the readings are, or what you have learned from those readings and class discussions. Each Critical Response Paper is due on Saturday for the week that you choose to report; you are welcome to post it early.

3. Documentary Commentaries. Students are required to see the following documentaries and write one commentary either addressing one documentary or integrating more documentaries. The documentaries chosen for this semester are:

*The Guardian Videos on China’s Environment*, which include the following modules: China’s cancer village, drought in China, Beijing’s rubbish dumps, China builds windfarms, Eco-refugee, China aims to regrow its “empty forests,” and China’s melting glacier [http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/video/2010/jun/07/china-cancer-pollution](http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/video/2010/jun/07/china-cancer-pollution)


*Manufactured Landscape* available via iTunes


These documentaries, except *Manufactured Landscape*, are freely accessible through the web links listed above. A high-speed internet connection is recommended for smooth viewing via a personal computer. *Manufactured Landscape* is available via the iTunes store. Alternatively, you might be able to borrow these films from video stores, public libraries, or colleges in your local areas. You can do a search for the holdings of these films in your area libraries through the WorldCat database in the link below: [http://library.uis.edu/resources/index.html](http://library.uis.edu/resources/index.html).

For the documentary commentary, write a 2-3 page summary and analysis of the film. You should keep the following questions in mind when writing a commentary:

- What is the subject of the film?
- For what point of view is the film made? Does the film have a clear thesis?
- What evidence does the film present to support the argument(s)? How convincing is this evidence? Is the film thought provoking?
- What do you like or not like about the film?
- How might this film have helped you understand the subject you are studying in this class?
The commentary should be typed; single-spaced (but double-spaced between paragraphs); use 12 pt font; use 1 inch margins. Each student is required to post her/his commentary in the “Documentary Commentaries” Forum under the Discussion Board so that everyone in class can view one another’s comments about the films. Each time when you post your commentary, please create a new thread and attach your file to the thread. Please write your last name and the name of the film in the subject line (e.g., Ting: Manufactured Landscape). Documentary Commentary is due by Friday, April 12.

4. **“What Have I Learned” Reflection Paper.** You are required to reflect and provide a write-up on what you have learned from this course. Your reflection paper should address questions at two levels. On a broad level, you should reflect upon the following: what are the concepts or issues that you consider significant and why? How has your learning affected any preconception or misconception you brought with you into class? How does your learning from this class affect your view of the world? At a more specific level, you should analyze how prospects for sustainability in China are helped or hindered by one or more of the following: population policies, political institutions, the emerging civil society and non-governmental organizations, interaction with the international community, and economic reform. Finally, should the international community, particularly the United States, engage China regarding the course to global sustainability and how? **Due Wednesday, May 8.**

5. **Research Project Proposal (optional).** In lieu of “What Have I learned” Reflection Paper, students can opt for preparing a short (6-8 pages) research proposal. The purpose of this exercise is for students to think through how they would go about researching and analyzing a particular environment issue in China. The project can also be comparative in scope. Ideally, I hope this exercise will help students apply for a Fulbright or to graduate school if students are interested in studying or conducting research in China. I would be happy to work with you in formulating such a proposal.

**Grading Criteria for Participation**

The ability to contribute information and your informed opinion in meetings with colleagues and employers is an important skill. Contributing information is not sufficient for constructive participation; you also must be able to interact with the group in courteous, respectful manner. In this class, we emphasize discussion not only as means of covering information and eliciting views, but to help students develop communication skills. To be prepared to participate in the discussion, you will need notes on your reading. It is good to take written notes on all assigned readings. These notes should help you prepare for class discussion.

At the end of the semester, you will be asked to evaluate your participation in the activities of the class. During the semester, you also will evaluate and be evaluated by your classmates. Your instructor will evaluate you on the same criteria:

**Excellent:** Consistently contributed to group work, peer reviews, and class discussion; genuinely listened to instructor and classmates and thoughtfully responded to ideas drawing on
course material.

**Good**: Regularly contributed to group work and class discussion; listened to instructor and classmates and responded to ideas drawing on course material.

**Adequate**: Sometimes contributed to group work and class discussion; sometimes listened to instructor and classmates and responded to ideas drawing on course material.

**Poor**: Do not contribute to most discussions, or contributions were not thoughtful, informed, relevant, or useful.

## Course Grades
Course grades will be determined as follows:
- Weekly Readings Discussion 150 points (10 points each week)
- Critical Response Papers 180 points (30 points each)
- Documentary Commentary 40 points
- “What Have I Learned” Reflection Paper 70 points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Boundaries of Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Course Procedures, Policies, and Responsibilities
1. **Access.** Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through the UIS Office of Disability Services (ODS) in the Human Resources Building, Room 80. Phone: 217-206-6666.

2. **Lectures.** Each week when there is a lecture scheduled, it will be posted in the Lecture folder on the Blackboard site by 5 PM CST on Wednesday. The lecture will be brief and meant to contextualize the readings within a broader framework before we dive into the specifics.

3. **E-mail procedures.** I receive an enormous amount of email on the daily basis. To help me keep track of your emails, please put the course number (ENS 488) in the beginning of the subject line (e.g., ENS 488 Questions) whenever you have private comments/questions for me. Also, I might send email to individual students or the class from time to time, and will do so only via your UIS accounts. Therefore, please check your UIS email account regularly if you also use other private commercial account (e.g., a yahoo account).

4. **Late assignment.** You are required to read the syllabus and understand all policies and dates of submission for all assignments. Late assignments will result in a deduction of 5 points each day past the due day.
5. **Academic integrity.** As students at UIS, you are expected to act with academic integrity. The UIS Academic Integrity Policy provides definitions for academic dishonesty and behaviors that are subject to sanctions. These include cheating, plagiarism, acquiring information from an unauthorized source, providing information when not authorized to, conspiracy, fabrication and falsification of information, and violation of department or college rules. According to the UIS Academic Integrity Policy, “[s]tudents are responsible for being aware of the UIS Academic Integrity Policy and demonstrating behavior that is honest and ethical in their academic work.” Please access the following link for the UIS Academic Integrity Policy: [http://www.uis.edu/academicintegrity/policy/index.html](http://www.uis.edu/academicintegrity/policy/index.html).

Using another person’s work as if it is your own without giving any due credit is called plagiarism. Plagiarism is unethical and thus not to be tolerated. Please be careful – you run the risk of being expelled from the program or UIS by committing plagiarism. The instructor will refuse to grade the plagiarized assignment and record it as no credit. Penalties may include failure in the course as well as recommendation for disciplinary probation, suspension, or dismissal from the class, program, or UIS. If you are still unclear what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, Penn State University has a website on the subject that might be helpful to you: [http://tlt.its.psu.edu/plagiarism/tutorial](http://tlt.its.psu.edu/plagiarism/tutorial).

6. **Cyber-Absences.** In an online course, it is important that you fully participate in class activities, and that you check your email and our course Blackboard site regularly for discussion forum postings, announcements, and so forth. You will not be able to excel in this course if you disappear for a week or two. Cyber-absences will impact your discussion/participation grade. If extraordinary circumstances arise that prevent you from participating in class, please notify the instructor as soon as possible.

7. **Technology emergencies.** Technology emergencies do happen: computers crash, internet connections fail, and the UIS web server does fail on occasion. It is your responsibility to address such problems if they arise. Center for Online Learning, Research, and Service (COLRS) has a link for online classroom help: [http://www.uis.edu/colrs/students/index.html](http://www.uis.edu/colrs/students/index.html). If you need Blackboard help, also go to: [http://www.uis.edu/colrs/students/index.html](http://www.uis.edu/colrs/students/index.html).

8. **Instructor Responsibilities.** I will try to reply within 24 hours or less to any messages you may send me. However, please do not expect responses minutes after you hit the send bottom. Also, please do not expect any timely responses on UIS holidays. I will aim to have quizzes and written assignments graded within two weeks after I receive them. I will post your grades on the Blackboard grade sheet (i.e., My Grades) when I have them. Therefore, you can easily track your course grade over the semester by clicking on My Grades. If you have any concern, question, or problem regarding the course, I encourage you to contact me. I welcome anything you would like to share with me regarding the course.
Schedule: Topics, Readings, Tests, Assignments

I. Global and Environmental Narrative of the Modern World

WEEK 1  Introduction
Readings:
  • The Origins of the Modern World: Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, and 3
  ➢ The Rise of the West (or Rhetoric on “The Rise of the West”)
  ➢ The Material and Trading Worlds, circa 1400
  ➢ Starting with China
  ➢ Empires, States, and the New World, 1500-1775

WEEK 2  Global and Environmental Narrative of the Modern World - continued
Readings:
  • The Origins of the Modern World, Chapters 4, 5, 6, and Conclusion
  ➢ The Industrial Revolution and Its Consequences, 1750-1850
  ➢ The Gap
  ➢ The Great Departure
  ➢ Changes and Continuities

II. China’s Environment and History in the Global Context

WEEK 3  China’s Natural Environment and Early Human Settlement
Readings:
  • China: Its Environment and History, Chapters 1 and 2
  ➢ Introduction: Problems and Perspectives
  ➢ China’s Natural Environment and Early Human Settlement

Critical Response Paper for “The Origins of the Modern World” due

WEEK 4  China’s Environment in Ancient, Early Imperial, and Middle Imperial Periods
Readings:
  • China: Its Environment and History, Chapters 3 and 4
  ➢ States, Wars, and Farms: Environmental Change in Ancient and Early Imperial China
  ➢ Deforesting the North and Colonizing the South in the Middle Imperial Period

WEEK 5  China’s Environment in the Later Imperial and Modern Periods
Readings:
  • China: Its Environment and History, Chapters 5 and 6
  ➢ Empire and Environment: China’s Borderlands, Islands, and Inner Peripheries in the Late Imperial Period
  ➢ Environmental Degradation in Modern China
WEEK 6  China’s Environment in the Era of People’s Republic of China
Readings:
- China: Its Environment and History, Chapters 7 and 8
  - “Controlling” Nature in the People’s Republic of China
  - Conclusion: China and Its Environment in World Historical Perspective

III. Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China

WEEK 7  Mao’s War Against Nature
Readings:
- Mao’s War Against Nature, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2
  - Population, Dams, and Political Repression
  - Deforestation, Famine, and Utopian Urgency

Critical Response Paper for “China: Its Environment and History” due

WEEK 8  Mao’s War Against Nature, continued
Readings:
- Mao’s War Against Nature, Chapters 3 and 4
  - Grainfields in Lakes and Dogmatic Uniformity
  - War Preparations and Forcible Relocations

WEEK 9  SPRING BREAK
Critical Response Paper for “Mao’s War Against Nature” due

IV. Environmental Governance and Sustainability

WEEK 10  Where Conservation Meets Development: Can the Western Model Work?
Readings:
- Where the Dragon Meets the Angry River (entire volume)

WEEK 11  Citizen Action and Policy Change
Readings:
- China’s Water Warriors (entire volume)

Critical Response Paper for “Where the Dragon Meets the Angry River” due

WEEK 12  Environmental Values and Civil Society
Readings:
- The Struggle for Sustainability in Rural China (entire volume)
Critical Response Paper for “China’s Water Warriors” due

V. China’s Environmental Challenges and the Fate of the Modern World

WEEK 13 Environmental Imperialism, Urbanization, and Consumption
Readings:
- When a Billion Chinese Jump
  - Made in China?
  - From Horizontal Green to Vertical Gray
  - Shop Till You Drop
Critical Response Paper for “The Struggle for Sustainability in Rural China” due
Documentary Commentary due by Friday, April 12

WEEK 14 Globalization and Climate Politics
Readings:
- When a Billion Chinese Jump
  - Flaming Mountain, Melting Heaven
  - Ann Odd Sort of Dictatorship
  - Grass Roots
  - Peaking Man
Critical Response Paper for “When a Billion Chinese Jump” due

WEEK 15 Environmental Justice and Displacement of Harm
Readings:
- China’s Environmental Challenges

WEEK 16 Challenges of Going Greening and International Engagement
Readings:
- China’s Environmental Challenges
Critical Response Paper for “China’s Environmental Challenges” due