The different ways in which people conceptualize nature and the environment across cultures (including American) are investigated. The focus is on out-of-awareness cultural models, intermediary mental organizations of meaning that stand between universal concepts and culturally bound realizations. Critical evaluation of at least one project that attempts to use local and/or indigenous knowledge in managing the relationship between people, nature, and the environment is expected.

**Required Texts:**


Readings placed on e-reserve.

**The course is divided in three parts as follow:**

**Part 1: Nature Across Cultures:**
   General Issues; Religion and Nature; Cultures and Nature (weeks 1-6)

**Part 2: Environment and Nature in US:**
   The American Cultural Model of the Environment. (weeks 7-10)

**Part 3: Nature in Mind:**
   Mind, Culture, and Nature; Mesoamerica and North Native Americans. (weeks 11-15)

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**Week I:**
(February 18) Introduction to Course, Requirements. Nature Across Cultures. (Introduction and Ch 1)
(February 20) Biological Knowledge; Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. (Ch 3-4)

Readings:
   1. Selin: Introduction (pp. xix-xxiii)
   2. Selin: chapter 1: Environmentalism and Images of the Other (pp. 1-18)
   3. Selin: chapter 3: Variation and Uniformity in the Construction of Biological Knowledge Across Cultures (pp. 47-74)
   4. Selin: chapter 4: Local Understandings of the Land: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge (pp. 75-96)

**Week II:**
(February 25) Religion and Nature. (Ch 6)
(February 27) Hinduism and Buddhism. (Ch 21 and 18)

Readings:
   i. Selin: chapter 6: Worldviews and Ecology (pp. 115-128)
iii. Selin: chapter 18: Buddhist Views of Nature and the Environment (pp. 351-372)

**Week III:**
(February 1) China (Ch 20)
(February 3) Thailand and Japan (Ch 7 and 9)
Readings:
i. Selin: chapter 20: Daoism and Nature (pp. 393-410)
ii. Selin: chapter 7: The Spirit(s) of Conservation in Buddhist Thailand (pp. 129-146)

**Week IV:**
(February 8) Islam and Sub-Saharan Africa (Ch 11 and 22)
(February 10) Oceania (Ch 13)
Readings:
(i) Selin: chapter 22: Nature and Culture: An Islamic Perspective (pp. 421-432)
(ii) Selin: chapter 11: The Perception of Nature and the Environment in Sub-Saharan Africa (pp. 211-228)
(iii) Selin: chapter 13: Both Sides of the Beach: Knowledge of Nature in Oceania (pp. 245-276)

**Week V:**
(February 15) Native Americans (Ch 17 and 16)
(February 17) Amazonia (Ch 14)
Readings:
(i) Selin: chapter 17: We Are the Land: Native American Views of Nature (pp. 329-350)
(ii) Selin: chapter 16: “Nature Doesn’t Come as Clean as We Think it”: Dene, Inuit, Scientists, Nature and Environment in the Canadian North (pp. 311-328)
(iii) Selin: chapter 14: Native Views of the Environment in Amazonia (pp. 277-288)

**Week VI:**
(February 22) Review of Selin
(February 24) MIDTERM 1 (take-home)

**Week VII:**
(March 1) American Environmentalism (Ch 1-2)
(March 3) Cultural Models of Nature (Ch 3)
Readings:
(i) Kempton, Boster, Hartley: chapter 1: Introduction (pp. 1-16)
(ii) Kempton, Boster, Hartley: chapter 2: Background (pp. 17-38)
(iii) Kempton, Boster, Hartley: chapter 3: Cultural Models of Nature (pp. 39-62)

**Week VIII:**
(March 8) Cultural Models of Weather and Atmosphere (Ch 4)
(March 10) Environmental Values (Ch 5)
Readings:
(i) Kempton, Boster, Hartley: chapter 4: Cultural Models of Weather and the Atmosphere (pp. 63-86)
(ii) Kempton, Boster, Hartley: chapter 5: Environmental Values (pp. 87-116)

**Week IX:**
(March 22) Policy Reasoning (Ch 6)
(March 24) Patterns of Agreement and Disagreement (Ch 8)
Readings:
(i) Kempton, Boster, Hartley: chapter 6: Cultural Models and Policy Reasoning (pp. 117-162)
(ii) Kempton, Boster, Hartley: chapter 8: Patterns of Agreement and Disagreement (pp. 189-212)

**Week X:**
(March 29) Review of Kempton, Boster, Hartley (Ch 9)
(March 31) MIDTERM 2 (take-home)
Readings:
   (i)  Kempton, Boster, Hartley: chapter 9: Implications of Our Findings (pp. 213-226)

Week XI:
(April 5) Biological Cognition (Ch 1)
(April 7) Universals and Devolution (Ch 2)
Readings:
   (i)  Atran and Medin: chapter 1 (pp. 1-16)
   (ii) Atran and Medin: chapter 2 (pp. 17-48)

Week XII:
(April 12) Methodology (Ch 3)
(April 14) Devolution and Relative Expertise (Ch 4)
Readings:
   (i)  Atran and Medin: chapter 3: Study Populations, Methods, and Models (pp. 49-62)
   (ii) Atran and Medin: chapter 4: Devolution and Relative Expertise (pp. 63-120)

Week XIII:
(April 19) Acquisition of Folkbiological Cognition (Ch 5)
(April 21) Mesoamerica (Ch 7)
Readings:
   (i)  Atran and Medin: chapter 5: Development of Folkbiological Cognition (pp. 121-142)
   (ii) Atran and Medin: chapter 7: Folkecology and the Spirit of the Commons: Garden Experiments in Mesoamerica (pp. 161-208)

Week XIV:
(April 26) North America (Ch 9)
(April 28) Conclusions (Ch 10)
Readings:
   (i)  Atran and Medin: chapter 9: Mental Models and Intergroup Conflict in North America (pp. 225-254)
   (ii) Atran and Medin: chapter 10: Conclusions and Projections (pp. 255-275)

Week XV:
(May 3) Review of Atran and Medin
(May 5) Review of Class

Thursday May 12, FINAL (in-class, open book)
Project Evaluation Paper Due at Final Time
Contributions of Students to Class:
This course takes the position that students who have not read the assignments before class will not fully profit from in class activities. The lectures (and other activities) will augment and expand on the material presented in the assigned readings, not only repeat the information. Reading assignments are included in the specific content of the week they refer to, but must be read before the first lecture of that same week (except for first class!). As part of their grade students are asked to summarize 2 readings/chapters of their choice from part 1 of the course. One of them will be presented in class. Arrangements will be made during the first day of class (a sign-up sheet for the presentations will be made available). Summaries (around 2-3 double-spaced pages) should be handed in at the beginning of class, on the day the article/chapter is discussed.

Grading:
The first and second midterms (take home) will be a 6-9 page long essay. The final exam (in class, open book) will be divided in three parts and it may include definitions, short answers, and a short essay (each section allows choices). Part of the last class before the exams will be devoted to a review of the material covered and to be tested in the exam. During this class a study guide will be handed out. The final paper consists of the evaluation of a project (students must receive approval of their choices) impacting the environment of local populations in any area of the world. The knowledge acquired by the students in the class is expected to make this evaluation gravitate around the attention paid to local conceptualizations of nature and the environment during the implementation of such projects. Students are urged to study constantly throughout the semester. It is impossible to catch up on ideas that will become increasingly more complex as the semester proceeds. No late assignment will be accepted. Absences may lower your grade and will be excused only by handing in written medical proof. Plagiarism (the presentation of the ideas or writings of another as one's own) will be penalized. When one uses an idea (or writing) of another, it must be credited in citation. If the student copies words directly, they must be in quotation marks.

Requirements for the Class:
1. Attendance and Participation (50 pts., 10 %)
2. Midterm 1 (125 pts., 25%)
3. Midterm 2 (100 pts., 20%)
4. Final Exam (100 pts., 20%)
5. Summaries of articles/chapters (one also presented orally) (25 pts. each for a total of 50 pts. 10%)
6. Final (Project Evaluation) Paper (75 pt. 15%)

Grading scale (in %, points, letters):

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NIU abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding provision of reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Moreover, your academic success is of importance to me. If you have a disability that may have a negative impact on your performance in this course and you may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate in providing accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Center for Access-Ability Resources (CAAR), the designated office on campus to provide services and administer exams with accommodations for students with disabilities. CAAR is located on the 4th floor of the University Health Services building (753-1303). I look forward to talking with you to learn how I may be helpful in enhancing your academic success in this course.

Have a great time!

PLEASE READ AND KEEP THIS SYLLABUS FOR REFERENCE