

GEOG2124 Environmental Change and Socio-political Conflicts (6 credits)

Course Teacher: Dr Harry F Lee

Objectives

Global environmental change is currently a hot issue. This course attempts to address its possible impact upon human society in geopolitical perspective.

Course Synopsis

This course examines the relationship between global environmental change, population growth, and socio-political stability in the 21st century, with a special focus on the likelihood of environmentally related violence in the developing world. The background knowledge of climate-induced and human-induced environmental change will be introduced. The associated physical and social dimensions of environmental change will also be covered. Emphasis is placed on discussing how environmental stress triggers human conflicts in geopolitical perspective. This is a course of general appeal to students with different backgrounds. Each class will begin with a lecture, followed by significant time for questions and discussion. Debate is encouraged.

Lecture Topics

- The technical aspects of climate-induced and human-induced environmental change
- The social and political effects of environmental change
- Population growth and demographic stress
- Nonlinearity, complexity, values, and the limits to adaptation
- Geopolitical theory from the Greeks to the global era
- The contested grounds of human conflicts in the new environmental politics

Assessment

Examination (two hours) 50%; Coursework 50% (consists of a group project).

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge:

- Comprehend the complex relationship among environmental stress, population growth, and human conflicts
- Understand the geopolitics of environmentally related violence
- Develop a comprehensive vision of global security

Skills:

- Able to exercise interdisciplinary curiosity, bring ideas together from multiple fields, and successfully apply them to contemporary issues that are critical to human society
- Able to apply both macroscopic and microscopic analytical skills
- Know how to resolve the competing interpretations of controversial issues

Recommended Reading List

1. Cohen, S.J. and Waddell, M.W. (2009) *Climate Change in the 21st Century*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
2. Homer-Dixon, T.F. (1999) *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.