

LAS 6290/4935 (111A/21CE) The Amazon, Fall 2015
Monday, 9:35-12:35 am
376 Grinter Hall

Instructors: Dr. Marianne Schmink and Dr. Bette Loiselle

Course description: This interdisciplinary seminar provides an introduction to history, ecology, and current issues and dilemmas related to Amazonian conservation and development policies, with a focus on Brazil. The course explores issues and controversies related to the interaction of ecology, history, socioeconomics and politics in shaping conservation and development issues in the Amazon, and the evolution of thinking about history, ecology, and development policies. The Amazon region provides a focal point to discuss major paradigm shifts and methodological innovations, ethical and political discussions, and conceptual debates in a variety of fields. The class explores competing development paradigms, big drivers, small drivers, and the dynamics between them at different times and places, as well as alternative local and global proposals – their promise and dilemmas.

The course combines guest lectures, discussion, group projects carried out by cross-national student teams as global classroom exercises, and individual research papers/proposals. Expected enrollment: 10-15 graduates in diverse Masters and PhD programs; 1-3 undergraduate Latin American Studies majors.

Course website: Go to the Learning Support Systems homepage [<http://lss.at.ufl.edu/>], click on “e-learning on Canvas” and enter your Gatorlink username and password into the boxes. The course page should come up if you are registered

Main course objective: At the end of the semester, students will understand the complexity of Amazon history, society and ecology, and its implications for alternative development policies and research priorities.

Specific learning outcomes: By the end of the semester students will be able to:

- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of interdisciplinary conceptual frameworks to explain problems of Amazonian conservation and development;
- Analyze the complexity and diversity of Amazonia and its importance in research and knowledge generation;
- Understand the contributions of UF faculty, students and alumni to key issues in Amazonian conservation and development;
- Write a research paper or proposal focused on a topic related to Amazon conservation and development;
- Write a peer review of a research paper or proposal;
- Collaborate both inside and outside the classroom with students from diverse backgrounds and distant regions, using diverse forms of communication and social networking tools

Class readings are available on the Canvas website, under “Files” dated for each week of class. Assignments, readings and other materials for each class session can be found under “Modules” dated for each week.

Class Schedule

Introduction

August 24 Introduction; Amazon development history

Ecology & History: Background

August 31 Tropical ecology; geological history; climate; biodiversity and forest dynamics: Bette Loiselle

September 7 LABOR DAY: NO CLASS

September 14 Prehistoric settlement: Mike Heckenberger
Title of paper

September 21 Urbanization: Marianne Schmink

September 28 PES/REDD & Climate Change: Jack Putz, Claudia Romero, Thales West
Preliminary statement & bibliography

Focus on Conservation and Development Challenges

October 5 Deforestation, fragmentation and fire feedbacks: Robert Walker
Peer review I

October 12 Mining and oil extraction: Santiago Espinosa; Andrea Chaves
(GLOBAL CLASSROOM WITH PUC-QUITO)

October 19 Social movements and land struggles: Cynthia Simmons
(GLOBAL CLASSROOM WITH UFPA, BELÉM)

October 26 Dams: Carolina Doria, Denis Valle, David Kaplan; Elineide Marques
(GLOBAL CLASSROOM WITH UFRO, PUERTO VELHO AND UFT, PALMAS)

November 2 Cultural forests of the Amazon: Nigel Smith
Draft paper

November 9 Community forest management: Karen Kainer
Peer review II

November 16 Oil palms and traditional knowledge
(GLOBAL CLASSROOM WITH UFPA, BELÉM)

November 23 Community-based ecotourism: Amanda Stronza
(GLOBAL CLASSROOM WITH IPÊ, SÃO PAULO)

November 30 Policy roundtable

December 7 Wrap up and evaluation
Final paper

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Student evaluation:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Class participation | 10% |
| Discussion leadership | 10% |
| Comments on readings | 10% |
| Group presentation | 20% (15% assessed by instructors + 5% by peers) |
| Peer reviews | 10% (graduate students only) |
| Final paper or proposal | 40% |

Class participation: Students are expected to come to class having read carefully the reading assignments for that session. They should be prepared to contribute to class discussions by raising questions and comments related to the topic for that class. Each student also will be assigned to lead class discussion of assigned readings for one class period.

Readings comments Each student will provide comments or queries that flow from the readings assigned for that class period. The rationale behind this assignment is to provide us with insights of individual perspectives prior to class, better incorporate what others have to say on the topic at hand, and begin class dialogue.

Students are required to post brief comments (1-4 paragraphs) on the assigned readings, for 10 of the class periods (of the student's choosing). The sum of these comments is worth 10% of your grade.

Please don't summarize each of the readings. Rather, please share with the class some of the thoughts that were stimulated by one or more of the readings. What did you get from the readings? What was the author's main argument, and how convincing was it? What evidence was presented? Did the readings stimulate you to reflect on a past experience?

Each student should post his or her comments by the Sunday morning (8:00 am) before each Monday class. Comments will be posted through UF's Canvas system at <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>. Click on the Fall 2015 course Amazon Seminar, go to "Discussion," find the folder for that week's class, and read the postings by the student(s) discussion leader for that week, as well as other students' postings. Add your own comments to the discussion thread in preparation for class.

Discussion leadership Each student will lead the discussion for one class session, to be assigned on the first day of class, August 24. Discussion leaders will read the assigned readings in advance, and post 2-4 questions and/or critiques of the readings assigned, by Friday morning (8:00 am) before each Monday class. In class, discussion leaders will be responsible for facilitating a 15-minute discussion of the readings.

Student Global Collaborative Projects For each global classroom session, small groups of 1-3 students at UF will work together on a mini-research project focused on the topic for that session (urbanization; mining and oil extraction; social movements and land struggles; dams; community-based ecotourism; oil palms and traditional knowledge) . UF students will be assigned to each of the 5 global classroom themes on the first day of class, August 24. Students at partner universities may also participate with their own presentations, or the groups may work together. For example, on October 26 the network of universities on Amazon Dams (UF, UFRO and UFT) will collaborate to lead a one-hour session focused on problems and solutions in specific dam sites, building on on-going research, and

involving graduate students in Rondônia and Tocantins (Brazil) in collaboration with students at UF, to prepare and present the session.

A common framework of questions will guide student collaborative projects focused on specific Amazonian issues/themes:

What are the main dimensions of the theme/issue?

What are the key historical and contextual factors influencing the issue?

What are potential solutions or pathways to address the issue at different scales?

What kinds of research and analysis are still needed?

Information on each of these questions will be included in a 20-40 minute presentation planned and prepared by the students working together. Each student will carry out specific background research to contribute to the group presentation, and help to develop discussion questions designed to stimulate debate among all the students in the global classroom. Student groups will work together in advance of the class session using electronic communications, to jointly plan, prepare and present background analysis on the issue being addressed. Each group member will receive the same grade from instructors on the assignment, and part of their grade will be assigned by the peers in their group who will evaluate their collaborative contributions. For UF students, the group assignment will count 20% of their course grade, 5% of which will be based on peer assessments. Students will also carry out a self-assessment of their own performance in the group collaboration.

These student-organized sessions will take place from 11:15 am to 12:15 pm EST, occupying most of the second half of the class time on September 21, October 12, 19, 26, and November 16 and 23. Many UF graduate students speak Spanish or Portuguese, and many Brazilian and Ecuadorian students speak English; students can also use Google translate or other programs to help with any language difficulties. We will facilitate translation of Powerpoints and other presentation materials if prepared with sufficient advance time.

Final paper

Each student must write a research proposal or paper for their final project, due on the last day of class. These projects are to be developed over the course of the semester. They should focus on a clearly-defined research question or problem, and show why it is important and relevant to the course. In addition to establishing a clear conceptual framework and specific research questions, proposals should lay out the precise research design and methodologies to be used to address the problem defined, and papers should present primary data or secondary findings and analyze their implications for the questions defined. Students are encouraged to discuss their ideas with the instructors during office hours or by appointment. USE SPELL CHECK AND GRAMMAR CHECK FOR ALL VERSIONS!

Several steps are required for the final project. First, each student should identify a general topic of interest and carry out some initial research to define a more specific problem and identify possible sources of information. By **September 14**, each student must turn the title of the project. On **September 28**, students must submit a 2-3 page summary statement of the research problems, hypotheses and objectives to be addressed in the proposal or paper, a preliminary outline of the proposed methodology to be used (for a proposal) or succinct description of the data to be analyzed (for a paper), and a preliminary list of bibliographic sources to be used for the project. The instructor and one peer reviewer will provide written feedback to each student on the basis on these statements. This statement/bibliography is worth 10% of your final grade.

A complete draft of the project is to be turned in by **November 2**. These drafts are required, but will not be graded. The instructor, and a peer reviewer from the class, will provide written feedback to each student on the draft project. **PLEASE TURN IN TWO DOUBLE-SPACED COPIES OF YOUR DRAFT.**

Finally, students will submit on Canvas a single-spaced 10-15 page (for graduate students) or 8-10 page (for undergraduates) research proposal or paper by 5:00 pm on **December 7**. Papers will be graded on: the significance of the research problem defined, conceptual/theoretical clarity, the coherence and creativity of the analysis, the quality of the writing and organization of the project, and relevance to issues addressed in the course. The final projects will be graded, but will not be returned to the students with comments.

Peer reviews [for graduate students only]

Each student will be assigned another student's paper or proposal to conduct two written peer reviews, due on **October 5** and **November 9**. The peer review should provide a comprehensive and constructive appraisal, in 1-2 pages. This would be in addition to any comments you make directly in the preliminary statement and bibliography, and would like to share with the author. Please submit your peer reviews on the Canvas course site under "Assignments" and send an email copy to your peer through Canvas Mail.

Some suggested questions for your peer review follow; these are mainly tailored to research proposals so they must be adapted for research papers. **You do not have to address every item in these guidelines: select the ones most relevant for the paper you are reviewing.**

A. Title:

1. Read the title before reading any other section of the paper, and evaluate its effectiveness (i.e. is it informative, clear, descriptive?)
2. How does the title reflect the main ideas of the introduction? Read the introduction and underline main ideas or central issues. What necessary information is missing from the title? How might the author revise the title to make it more clear or informative?

B. Introduction and Problem Statement:

The goal for an introduction is to present a clear hypothesis / research questions and rationale for their investigation.

1. Does the introduction give adequate background information, definition of terms, and citations of relevant literature to understand the hypothesis/research questions?
2. Can you identify a clearly stated hypothesis/ research questions that will be addressed in the body of the paper? If so, underline it; if not, circle the sentences that you think may be addressing the central issue. How could the research questions be improved (e.g. organization, clarity, length, feasibility)?
3. Is it clear why the question is being asked, i.e. what is the writer's rationale? Does the question build on and promise to expand existing knowledge? Will results be useful to address specific practical problems?

C. Research Design and Methods:

1. What is the overall design of the research (site; timetable; key variables and methods)? Does the design clearly address the research questions? What type of organization might make the methods easier to understand (e.g. increase clarity)?
2. Does the author indicate the types of observations s/he plans to make, the types of data s/he plans to collect, and how and when s/he plans to quantify (measure) their observations? Does the author state how s/he plans to analyze the data?
3. Do you think the methods are sufficient? Are you confused about a procedure or have any unanswered questions (e.g. about sampling procedures, measurements or statistical analysis)

used)? Comment on specific paragraphs in the text that are especially helpful or those that are unclear

D. References Cited:

1. Are all references cited in the paper listed in the references cited section, and are all of the references cited in the references cited section mentioned somewhere in the text?
2. Do the references seem appropriate to the subject of the paper? Are any key references missing?
3. Are the reference citations written in a consistent format?

E. Timeline and Budget (for proposals):

1. Do these seem adequate and reasonable to accomplish the research as described?
2. Is there sufficient detail to determine whether the research is doable given the timeframe and resources?

F. Overall Organization and Format:

1. Does the author present her or his ideas in a logical, straightforward, clear way?
2. Is the paper written in the most appropriate format? Any suggestions?