Semester 2: Core courses

C3: Practising Interdisciplinary Research on the Environment

Instructor: Sharachchandra Lele (slele@atree.org)

Co-instructors: Veena Srinivasan, Nitin Rai, Bejoy Thomas

Credits: 3 (48 contact hours in the form of 16 sessions of 3-hours each)

Semester: II (January to April 2014)

Course description:
This core course is meant to help students understand how to carry out interdisciplinary research on the environment. It will build on the disciplinary knowledge to which students were exposed in semester 1 and focuses on the challenge of linking and integrating this knowledge to study society-environment interactions holistically. It will begin by exploring the nature of environmental problems as a special class of social problems, of the inherently value-laden nature of such problems, and the need and challenge of doing rigorous interdisciplinary but rigorous research in this context. It will explore the specific normative ideas that are central the environment-development debate, and then take students through different (often competing) perspectives on the society-environment relationship.

In the second half of the course, we will discuss in detail a series of examples of interdisciplinary research that have used one or more of these perspectives to frame and analyse a particular environmental problem. Attention will be paid to understanding the normative, theoretical, and methodological choices made in the studies, including specifically the interdisciplinary linkages and the within-disciplinary choices and modifications.

At the end of such a course, the student is expected to be well-prepared to devise and implement an interdisciplinary research programme on the environment, and to understand the place of their research (now and future) in the wider action-research-policy work on the environment.

Session format
This course will be reading- and writing-intensive. It will be taught in 3-hour sessions. Each session will have readings assigned to it, and these will form the basis for class discussion.

Course assessments:
1. Students will be expected to submit written summaries of key readings related to the 7 case studies (35% of total marks) (Details on what is expected will be provided)
2. Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions and to have completed readings even when written summaries are not required (30%)
3. Students are expected to make a presentation of a proposal for interdisciplinary environmental research (preferably on their PhD topic) that addresses the challenges of framing, theoretical integration, linked variables, methods, scales, etc. (35%) (Details on what is expected will be provided)
### Session-wise time-table (All classes Monday 10:00am - 1:00pm)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>13-01-2014</td>
<td>Nature of environmental problems and need for interdisciplinary and functional bridging</td>
<td>[1], [2], [3], [4]</td>
<td>Sharad</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20-01-2014</td>
<td>Key normative ideas (Conservation, Sustainability, Environmental Justice, Sustainable Development, Democracy)</td>
<td>[5], [6], [7], [8]</td>
<td>Sharad</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>27-01-2014</td>
<td>Perspectives 1&amp;2: Economics and Institutional Analysis</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Sharad</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>03-02-2014</td>
<td>Perspectives 3&amp;4: Political Ecology and Env.Ethics/Psychology</td>
<td>[9]-chapter</td>
<td>Sharad</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10-02-2014</td>
<td>Perspective 5: Population</td>
<td>[9]-chapter 2</td>
<td>Sharad</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>17-02-2014</td>
<td>Perspective 6: Technology</td>
<td>[10], [11], [12]-excerpt</td>
<td>Sharad</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24-02-2014</td>
<td><strong>FIELD WORK WEEK for methods course</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>03-03-2014</td>
<td>Implementing interdisciplinary research: Variables, scales, methods &amp; rigour</td>
<td>[1].</td>
<td>Sharad</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10-03-2014</td>
<td>Forest Degradation: Sopinnavetats</td>
<td>[13, 14]-chapter 6, 15</td>
<td>Sharad</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>17-03-2014</td>
<td>Forest Degradation: Som &amp; Prabhakar</td>
<td>[16], [17], [18]</td>
<td>Sharad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>24-03-2014</td>
<td><strong>Case study: TBA</strong></td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td>31-03-2014</td>
<td><strong>HOLIDAY</strong> (Ugadi)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>02-April (afternoon)</td>
<td>Forest degradation: Scales</td>
<td>[19, 20]</td>
<td>Nitin</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>07-04-2014</td>
<td>Grasslands: Turner</td>
<td>[21], [22], [23]</td>
<td>Nitin</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>EXAM WEEK DATE TBA</td>
<td>Student presentations</td>
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</tbody>
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### READING LIST


POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL READINGS:

[30]

[31, 32]

[33]