

Ambedkar University, Delhi  
Proposal for Launch of a Course  
(To be approved by the Academic Council)

School/Centre proposing the course	<i>School of Human Ecology</i>
Programme(s)	
Course title	<i>Introduction to Human Ecology</i>
Course code	<b>SUSIEL902</b>
Total Credits	4
Course type (core/compulsory/ elective/any other – please specify)	<i>Elective</i>
Level (Pre-doctoral/MA/PG Diploma /Certificate/UG)	<i>Undergraduate, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Years, Elective (4 - Credits)</i>
Proposed date of launch	<i>August, 2015</i>
Course coordinator and team	<i>Suresh Babu (Coordinator), Rohit Negi, Asmita Kabra</i>

1. Does the course connect to, build on or overlap with any other courses offered in AUD?

*The course will be offered to final year undergraduate students as a part of the basket of Elective courses. All undergraduate students at AUD are required to take a specified number of credits from this basket. The course will build upon the basic understanding of environmental issues that the students will acquire as a part of the compulsory foundation course **Environmental Issues and Challenges (EIC)** in the 3<sup>rd</sup> /4<sup>th</sup> semester. This course also provides a preview of some of the core courses offered in SHE at the MA level through linkages made in the content.*

2. Specific requirements on the part of students who can be admitted to this course:  
(Pre-requisites; prior knowledge level; any others – please specify)

*None*

3. No. of students to be admitted (with justification if lower than usual cohort size is proposed):

*As per approved cohort sizes in SUS*

4. Course scheduling (semester; semester-long/half-semester course; workshop mode; seminar mode; any other – please specify):

*Semester*

5. How does the course link with the vision of AUD?

*The School of Human Ecology aims to foster interdisciplinary research and learning in the areas at the intersection of human society, non-human beings and the biophysical environment. The teaching and research programmes at SHE is guided by the idea that environmental concerns and challenges such as resource depletion, ecological degradation and conflicts result from complex interactions of social and environmental factors, and therefore meaningful intervention in these*

debates should be informed by knowledge and skills on a wide range of subjects. At this point SHE does not offer an undergrad course with the above stated goals and we see this as an opportunity to introduce an interdisciplinary course that examines the human condition to be simultaneously ecological and social. In addition there has been a realization, particularly during student intake into Master Programmes, that many of our undergraduates were not familiar with SHE and its stated vision.

6. How does the course link with the specific programme(s) where it is being offered?

*The course will be offered to all final year undergraduate students of SUS as a part of the basket of Elective courses. All undergraduate students at AUD are required to take a specified number of credits from this basket. The course will build upon the basic understanding of environmental issues that the students will acquire as a part of the compulsory foundation course Environmental Issues and Challenges (EIC). It has been part of our vision that the Schools in AUD that are more interdisciplinary in nature will offer a range of courses in this basket, which will provide UG students with a well-rounded exposure to important issues and challenges of the contemporary world. It will also offer them a window to the nature of interdisciplinary MA programmes on offer at AUD*

7. **Course Details:**

a. Summary:

*This course introduces the students to interdisciplinary perspectives on Human Ecology, a heterodox field that studies the multivalent relations between humans and the natural environment. This course is aimed to introduce the content matter as intricately linked and not located in disciplinary silos. The clusters have been developed with the vision of engaging with three important/central ideas in Human Ecology.*

b. Objectives:

*The course aims to introduce students to a more complex understanding of environmental issues and challenges, deliberating creating 'messiness' in their understanding of environment and development related issues, challenges, processes and actors. The objective is to enable students to understand the politics of environmental policy and practice and to have a more nuanced understanding, going beyond the simplistic discourses of 'crisis'.*

c. Expected learning outcomes:

The overall learning outcome is develop a complex understanding of the environment - that tends to be ecological, social and political in nature, simultaneously. The learner is expected to develop a basic level of critical thinking on contemporary environmental issues.

d. Overall structure (course organisation, rationale of organisation; outline of each module):

*This course is organized along three clusters that were considered essential to introduce the interdisciplinary vision of Human Ecology for the students of the School of Undergraduate Studies. Each of these clusters are lead by SHE faculty who have experience in teaching and*

research in associated fields. The clusters were developed after three rounds of internal consultations for selection of teaching materials and pedagogy, a peer review process through Project EQUAL.

### **Unit-wise Course Details**

#### **Unit 1: Society, Ecology and Development** (Lead faculty: Dr. Rohit Negi)

The key idea behind this unit is to introduce students to the historical and contemporary ways in which ecology and society are intertwined, and in doing so, orient them to a properly human-ecological perspective. This unit builds on assumption that nature is historically acted upon by human ideas and labour, and their biophysical environment and non-human neighbours in turn inform cultural forms.

These learning objectives are to be approached in a scalar manner: the unit would begin by drawing on insights from the field of cultural ecology to situate livelihoods and the world of ideas alongside the particular environmental context. It would then embed these contexts within more global structures and processes related to the state and capitalism by considering the question of development—including questions of growth, human development, social mobility—via its materiality, that is, its ecological intersections and manufactured landscapes. Thereafter the unit will consider the rapid urbanization and resultant transformations in social-ecological systems across the globe.

All of this would be done with insights drawn from the vibrant literature produced by scholars working in the tradition of political ecology, including work focused on the development and urban political ecology, but geared towards an undergraduate audience that may not have a background in these concerns.

#### **Learning outcomes**

It is envisioned that students will begin to a) understand ecology and society in a holistic perspective; and b) consider environmental concerns as simultaneously technical and political, to which a variety of approaches, including those anchored in the social sciences, can productively contribute. Learning activities, especially ones collaborative in nature, will be created with the following learning objectives:

- Appreciating the lifeworlds and ecological knowledges of indigenous communities.
- Acknowledging the connectedness of lives and ecologies across the globe via everyday commodities.
- Understanding the ecological underpinnings of urbanization as well as the production of novel ecologies in cities.

#### **Indicative reading list**

- a. Excerpts from P. Robbins (2004), *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*, Blackwell.
- b. R. Rappaport (1967), 'Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations among a New Guinea People', *Ethnology* 6(1): 17-30.
- c. J. Fairhead and M. Leach (1995), 'False Forest History Complicit Social Analysis: Rethinking Some West African Environmental Narratives', *World Development* 23(6): 1023-1035.
- d. A. Jalais (2008), 'Unmasking the cosmopolitan tiger', *Nature and Culture* 3(1): 25-40.
- e. M. Watts (1984), 'Hazards and Crisis', *Antipode* 15(1): 24-34.

- f. M. Gandy (2009), 'Where does the city end?' available at [http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/about-the-department/people/academic-staff/matthew-gandy/files/AD\\_Where.pdf](http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/about-the-department/people/academic-staff/matthew-gandy/files/AD_Where.pdf), accessed on 8 July 2015.

### **Online Resources**

- a. Videos on cultural ecology, indigenous cultures and environmental adaptations
- b. 'Darwin's Nightmare' (documentary)
- c. 'Children of Men' (feature)
- d. 'People and Power: Niyamgiri Hills' (Al Jazeera report)
- e. Documentary (20-25 minutes) on the story of the ongoing transformations in a small town in Himachal Pradesh

### **Unit 2: Depletion, Loss and Conflict** (Lead faculty: Dr. Suresh Babu)

The central idea behind this cluster of modules is to introduce the students to the scientific basis of present day ecological concerns. It will help students locate the conflicts over changes in nature, such as in environmental quality, pollution or disruption of natural biogeochemical cycles, and species extinctions. Further case studies would be used to explain how ecological disruptions have lead to conflicts in human societies.

The course transaction would be located around three sub-themes:

- Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- Disruption of Ecosystems : Biodiversity Loss, Depletion of Structure and Function
- Conflicts over Nature

During the course transaction, students will take part in a field visit to Dheerpur Wetland Project Site/ Sanjay Van

### **Learning Outcomes**

It is expected that the students will be able to anchor some of the present day environmental issues to scientific knowledge of ecosystems that would enable them to engage better with these concerns. This cluster aims to fundamentally acknowledge that several major concerns of human society are borne of our alteration of process and natural flows, while some dimensions of causality and consequences could be debated.

### **Reading List**

- a. Myers, N., Mittermeier, R. A., Mittermeier, C. G., Da Fonseca, G. A., & Kent, J. (2000). Biodiversity hotspots for conservation priorities. *Nature*, 403(6772), 853-858.
- b. Tilman, D., & Downing, J. A. (1994). Biodiversity and stability in grasslands. *Nature*, 367, 363-365.
- c. Quammen, D. (1996). *The Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinction*. London: Hutchinson.
- d. Adams, D., & Carwardine, M. (1990). *Last Chance to See*. London: Pan Books.
- e. Diamond, J. (1997). *Gun, Germs & Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. London: W. W. Norton.

### **Online Educational Resources**

- a. Planet Earth (documentary series)
- b. Gun, Germs and Steel (documentary series)
- c. Last Chance to See (documentary series)
- d. Documentary (20-25 minutes) on Ecological Disruptions and Conflicts
- e. Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (short documentary), available on <http://vimeo.com/19503113>
- f. Reexamining the Forest (short video clip), available on <http://vimeo.com/110663633>
- g. Badru's Story (short video clip) available on <http://vimeo.com/55346388>

### **Unit 3: Environmental Justice and Environmental Movements** (Lead faculty: Dr. Asmita Kabra)

This unit will familiarize students with modern environmental movements, building on the notion that environmental degradation is not merely a technical or managerial matter but is deeply embedded in socio-economic and political contestations over resource access. It will trace the genealogies of modern environmentalism, stressing on the fact that there is no single notion of 'environmentalism' that everybody agrees on, nor is there a singular environmental movement in the world today. It will bring out the differential responses of environmental movements, groups, organisations, political parties, governments, institutions and corporations to emerging issues and concerns of environmental politics. In this unit, these issues will be illustrated through examples related to the environmental justice concerns related to biodiversity conservation. Specifically, it will familiarize students to environmental justice implications of alternative ways of 'doing' conservation, for instance 'preservation via dislocation', 'integrated conservation and development programmes' and 'community based conservation'.

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of the unit, students will be able to analyse critically which environmental issues are of crucial concern to whom, and why. They will be able to understand environmental contestations and debates between rural-urban, agriculture-industry, rich-poor, men-women and individuals-community resource conflicts. They will also be able to problematize some of these binaries and understand the multiple scales at which environmental movements operate and interact with each other, as well as the implications of this for collective mobilization and resistance around environmental concerns.

### **Reading List**

- a. Selected chapters from Doyle, T. And D. McEachern (2008). "Environment and Politics" 3. edition. London, Routledge
- b. Gadgil, M. and R. Guha (1994). "Ecological conflicts and the environmental movement in India". Development and Change, Vol. 25, 101-136
- c. Brockington, Daniel and James Igoe. "Eviction for Conservation: A Global Overview." Conservation and Society, Vol.4, No.3, 2006: 424-470.
- d. Kothari, A. (2014). Radical ecological democracy: a path forward for India and beyond". Development, 2014, 57(1), (36-45)

### Online Educational Resources

- Films and videos on nature conservation (National Geographic, the BBC Earth film series, others)
- Videos on indigenous movements ("Kaise Jeebo Re"; "Ancient Futures"; videos by Survival International, La Via Capesina and others)
- OERs from the Environment and Society Portal
- The e-JOLT project on mapping environmental conflicts
- Documentary (20-25 minutes) on the Kuno wildlife sanctuary

### e. Contents (week wise plan with readings):

Week	Plan/ Theme/ Topic	Objectives	Assessment (weights, modes, scheduling)*
1	Ecology, Labour and Livelihoods	<p><i>Activities will be created with the following learning objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study of indigenous societies, including their belief systems</li> <li>Considering the connectedness of lives via everyday commodities</li> <li>Contestations around the extraction of nature for 'development', including mining and construction of dams</li> <li>Appreciation of the unique urban ecology of Delhi</li> </ul>	25%
2	State, Development and Ecology		
3	Capitalism, Globalization and Ecology		
4	Urbanization and Ecology		
5	Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	<p>It is expected that the students will be able to anchor some of the present day environmental issues to scientific knowledge of ecosystems that would enable them to engage better with these concerns. This cluster aims to fundamentally acknowledge that several major concerns of human society are borne of our alteration of processes and natural flows, while some dimensions of causality and consequences could be debated.</p>	25%
6	Biodiversity Loss and the Extinction Crisis		
7	Disruption of Ecosystems: Depletion of Structure and Function		
8	Ecological Battles through case Studies		
9	Politics and environmental studies	<p>At the end of the unit, students will be able to analyse critically which environmental issues are of crucial concern to whom, and why. They will be able to understand environmental contestations and debates between rural-urban, agriculture-industry, rich-poor, men-women and individuals-community resource conflicts. They will also be able to problematize some of these binaries and understand the multiple scales at which environmental movements operate and interact with each other, as well as the implications of this for collective mobilization and resistance around</p>	25%
10	Varieties of environmental movements		
11	Environmental justice issues in biodiversity conservation		
12	Environmental justice and land use		

	change	environmental concerns.	
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\* 25% of credits are for the Independent Field Study

**8. Pedagogy:**

a. Instructional strategies:

*The course will be transacted in blended-learning mode, with content being delivered to students in face-to-face interaction as well as through online educational resources. The course will use open access resources and will combine classroom interaction with self-study, fieldwork and guided reading. The course will be transacted through Google Classroom (although a Moodle Version is also available at AUD), an online platform and will enable students to track their own progress as well as interact with faculty in online mode. The course content includes text and audovideo materials that were specifically created for this course under Project EQUAL – an EU funded network project that AUD was part of. The project laid particular emphasis on developing quality OERs, and use of technology.*

b. Special needs (facilities, requirements in terms of software, studio, lab, clinic, library, classroom/others instructional space; any other – please specify):


There are no special requirements; the classroom needs to be equipped with a projector and an audio system. The students would be expected to install Moodle or Google Classroom, both of which are open source platforms.

c. Expertise in AUD faculty or outside

*Each of these clusters are lead by SHE faculty who have experience in teaching and research in associated fields. The clusters were developed after three rounds of internal consultations for selection of teaching materials and pedagogy. This material has also been shared and reviewed by our partner Universities that were associated with Project EQUAL.*

d. Linkages with external agencies (e.g., with field-based organizations, hospital; any others)

*The Field Visit associated with the course would be coordinated with the help of expertise available with the Centre for Urban Ecology and Sustainability (CUES)*

  
Signature of Course Coordinator

Note:

1. Modifications on the basis of deliberations in the Board of Studies (or Research Studies Committee in the case of research programmes) and the relevant Standing Committee (SCAP/SCPVCE/SCR) shall be incorporated and the revised proposal should be submitted to the Academic Council with due recommendations.
2. Core courses which are meant to be part of more than one programme, and are to be shared across Schools, may need to be taken through the Boards of Studies of the respective Schools. The electives shared between more than one programme should have been approved in the Board of Studies of and taken through the SCAP/SCPVCE/SCR of the primary School.
3. In certain special cases, where a course does not belong to any particular School, the proposal may be submitted through SCAP/SCPVCE/SCR to the Academic Council.

Recommendation of the School of Studies:

Approved in 8<sup>th</sup> BOS held on  
04/3/16

Suggestions:



Signature of the Dean of the School