



**BEIJ ENVI 380 China and the Environment: Biophysical Backgrounds,
Politics and Possibilities**
**The Alliance for Global Education China Now: Development, Politics and
Social Change Program**
Professor Chad Futrell

The environmental challenges that have accompanied China's integration into the world economy have begun to take center stage both domestically and internationally. From air quality and algae blooms during the Beijing Olympics to (dog) food scares, pollution has regularly grabbed headlines over the past few years. Moreover, increasing public and official recognition of climate change has made China's greenhouse gas emissions a global concern. Given China's environmental challenges, it is not surprising that policymakers, academics, and environmental activists in China and from around the world is increasingly turning their attention to these problems.

The course begins by examining the biophysical landscape of China and historical ways of viewing these landscapes. This includes considering traditional Han Chinese cosmology, colonial botany and the Western scientific method, as well as Mao's utopian environmental projects. From there we will discuss China's environmental issues in successive weeks, including the source and implications of China's large population, agriculture, grasslands, water, and climate change. We will also discuss China's institutional frameworks and the relevance for the environment the emergence of a "green" civil society, and its connections to global environmentalism. In addition, exploring issues related to pollution enables us to critically reflect upon how Beijing's air and water pollution affects our bodies as we live and study here. Finally, the course focuses the last couple of weeks on energy and climate change, as these two interconnected issues will dominate global and international politics for the foreseeable future.

I hope you will leave the course with a broad understanding of the topic along with some analytical tools to grapple with specific issues that interest you. Along with understanding the historical, cultural, and institutional contexts of China's environmental challenges, the course focuses on how both the drivers and implications of these challenges are mutually constituted by local, national, transnational, and global processes. Finally, we will take advantage of the fact that Beijing is a wonderful field site by incorporating fieldtrips and ethnographic observation into the curriculum.

Requirements

Background and Interests Essay (1-2 pages)

Describe your previous experience and knowledge regarding China and environmental issues as well as your Chinese language ability. Also, tell me what you think are the most important environmental issues in China. Finally, please tell me what environmental issues and/or aspects of China you are most interested in learning about this summer.

Readings and active participation**15%**

In order to create an atmosphere of collaboration and lively discussion, students are expected to do all of the assigned readings before class. The course will be organized like a seminar. I will begin most classes with a brief lecture contextualizing the readings within broader literatures, traditions, and politics. The remainder of the class will be spent discussing the readings and their implications for understanding China's environmental situation.

Environmental reflection essays and fieldtrips (2 essays, 300–800 words each)**15%**

Students are encouraged to integrate the readings with their own experiences in China. To that end, students will respond to a given day or week's readings with a short, critical reflection. I will explain more in class what I am looking for here, but the reflections are intended to help you synthesize course readings with your daily experiences of China's environment.

We will take a number of fieldtrips during the semester, including possible trips to: the offices of environmental NGOs, a "water walk" along the waterways of Beijing with local NGOs and Beijing residents, and/or bird watching group in Yuanmingyuan (the Old Summer Palace).

Critical Discussant (twice - 2-3 pages each)**20% (10% each)**

There has been an explosion of academic, government, and journalistic analysis and coverage of environmental issues in recent years. This is a vastly different situation from even the late-1990s, when researchers working on environmental issues in China were far fewer. Although this is a welcome development, it also makes it difficult to cover everything. The syllabus includes a number of supplementary readings for each topic. I will identify an article or two from the supplementary readings that challenges, supports, or expands on the topic covered that week. Students will choose one or two of the supplementary readings, writing a short, critical essay summarizing and incorporating them into that day's readings. These essays will be distributed to the class the DAY BEFORE the class so that students can read them ahead of time. The student will then help me lead discussion during the class. The purpose of this exercise is both to stimulate discussion and to bring in a viewpoint that we would not have been able to cover otherwise because of time limitations.

Research Project Proposal**20%**

Students will prepare a short (6-8 page) research proposal through the course rather than a term paper. The purpose of this project is for students to think through how they would go about researching and analyzing a particular environmental problem in China. What kinds of information would you need? Which government agencies are responsible for addressing that environmental issue? Whom would you need to interview? How would you gain access to that person? What are the major (local, national, transnational) debates around that topic?

There are several important environmental issues that we will not be able to cover in class, including most of the green environmental issues such as nature preserves. Fortunately, the Alliance digital library is extraordinarily well stocked in terms of environmental topics, and I can help you locate other materials on specific topics. Rather than write a full research paper, though, this project is focused on helping students grapple with the practical details of conducting research and business in China. Ideally, this will help students applying for a Fulbright or to graduate school to formulate a research proposal.

Exams**Midterm Exam****15%****Final Exam****15%**

There will be two short take-home exams to help synthesize the materials and ensure that students have retained the most important aspects of the course. Exams will be a mixture of short-answer “factual” questions along with questions that require short analytical responses.

Week 1 Sept. 7 – Sept. 10: Introduction to Course and Overview of Issues

Give some thought to your own knowledge and perceptions of China’s environment.

Kahn, Joseph and Jim Yardley, “As China Roars, Pollution Reaches Deadly Extremes, *The New York Times*, August 26, 2007.

Watch Discover Video: China from the Inside: *Shifting Nature*

Week 2 Sept. 14 – 17: Biophysical Landscapes and Views of Nature in Comparative Historical Perspective

Elvin, Mark. 1998, "The Environmental Legacy of Imperial China," *China Quarterly* 156:733-756.

McNeill, J.R. 1998. "China's Environmental History in World Perspective," in M. Elvin, ed., *Sediments of Time: environment and society in Chinese history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (31-52) (skim).

Weller, Robert. 2006 *Discovering Nature: Globalization and environmental culture in China and Taiwan*. Chapter 2 “Night of the living dead fish.” P. 19 – 42.

White, Lynn. 1967. “Historical roots of our ecologic crisis,” *Science* v.155 (March 10)

Supplemental Readings

Edmonds, Richard Louis. 1994. *Patterns of China’s Lost Harmony - A Survey of the Country’s Environmental Degradation and Protection*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 2 "Environmental Degradation in China's Past."

Chun, Youngsin. 2003. “Historical records of Asian Dust Events in Korea,” International Meteorology Conference.

Totman, Conrad. 2004. *Pre-industrial Korea and Japan in Environmental Perspective*. “Introduction” p. 1-8 and “To 1870, Since 1870” pp. 165-172.

Elvin, Mark. "Three thousand years of unsustainable growth: China's environment from archaic times to the present," *East Asian History*, Vol. 6 (1993).

Fann, Fa-ti. 2004. *British Naturalists in Qing China*. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. “Introduction” and “Natural History in a Chinese Entrepot,” pp. 1-39.

Hou Wenhui. 1997 “Reflections on Chinese Traditional Views of Nature.” *Environmental History* v.2 n.4 (October), pp.482-492.

Yi-fu Tuan, 1968. “Discrepancies between environmental attitude and behavior: examples from Europe and China,” *Canadian Geographer* v.12 n.3

Murphey, Rhoads. 1967, "Man and Nature in China," *Modern Asian Studies* 1(4):313-333.

Weller, Robert P. and Peter K. Bol. 1998. "From Heaven-and-Earth to Nature: Chinese Concepts of the Environment and their influence on policy implementation," in Michael B. McElroy, Chris P. Nielsen, and Peter Lydon, ed.s, *Energizing China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Committee on Environment.

Elvin, Mark and Liu Ts'ui -jung (eds).1998. *Sediments of time: environment and society in Chinese history* / Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University

Week 3 Sept. 21- 25: Utopian Dreams and Seeing Like a Socialist Environmental State

Shapiro, Judith. 2001. *Mao's war against nature: Politics and the environment in revolutionary China*. Introduction and Chapters 2 and 3

Ho, Peter. 2003. "Mao's war against nature? The Environmental impact of the grain-first campaign in China." *The China Journal*. 50:37-59.

Rohlf, Gregory 2003. "Dreams of Oil and Fertile Fields: The Rush to Qinghai in the 1950s" *Modern China* 2003 29: 455-489.

Week 4 Sept. 28 – Oct. 2: China's Population Bomb and One-Child Policy

Watch Discover video on global population growth

Greenhalgh, Susan. 2003. "Science, modernity, and the making of China's one-child policy." *Population and Development Review*, June v29 i2 p163-201.

Retherford, Robert T. et al.,2005. "How far has fertility in China really declined?," *Population and Development Review*, March v31 i1 p57-87.

White, Tyrene. 2003. "Domination, Resistance, and Accommodation in China's One-Child Campaign," in Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden (eds.), *Chinese Society*, 2nd Edition (Routledge), pp. 183-203 (esp. pp. 196-200).

Week 5 Oct. 5 – 9: Alliance Field Trip – no class

Week 6 Oct. 12 – 16: Agriculture and Food

Ash, Robert F. and Richard Louis Edmonds. 1998 "China's Land Resources, Environment, and Agricultural Production," in Edmonds, *Managing the Chinese Environment*

Shapiro, Judith. 2001. *Mao's War Against Nature*. Chapter 3.

Sanders, Richard. 2006. "A Market Road to Sustainable Agriculture? Ecological Agriculture, Green Food and Organic Agriculture in China" *Development and Change* 37(1): 201–226.

Supplemental readings:

Brown, Lester. 1995. *Who Will Feed China? : wake-up call for a small planet* New York: W.W. Norton & Co. (*skim for main arguments*)

Paarlberg, Robert L. 1997. "Feeding China: a confident view." *Food Policy*. Vol 22 No. 3 pp. 269-279.

Rosegrant, Mark, Scott Rozelle, and Roberta V. Gerpacio (guest editors) *Food Policy*. June 1997. Special Issue: "China and the World food economy" Volume 22 Number 3 (supplemented with recent journalistic articles on food prices)

Yeh, A. G. and X.Li.1999. Economic development and agricultural land loss in the Pearl River Delta, China. *Habitat International* 23(3): 373-390.

Schneider, Mindi. 2008. "We Are Hungry: [A Summary Report of Food Riots, Government Responses, and States of Democracy in 2008.](#)"

Week 7 Oct. 19 – 23: Grasslands, Desertification, and Privatization: conflicting viewpoints

Watch video: Circle of Blue – Desert Overtaking Inner Mongolia

Wang Tao and Wu Wei. 2005. Sandy Desertification in Northern China. p. 234-247

Williams, Dee Mack. 1996 "Grassland Enclosures: Catalyst of Land Degradation in Inner Mongolia." *Human Organization* 55 (3):307-312.

Jiang, Hong. 2004. "Cooperation, land use and the environment in Uxin Ju: The changing landscape of a Mongolian-Chinese borderland in China":*Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 94(1): 117-139.

Ho, Peter, 2000. "China's Rangelands under Stress: A Comparative Study of Pasture Commons in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region." *Development and Change* 31:385-412.

Supplemental readings:

Ellis, et al. 1992. Chapter 1 "The grazing lands of Northern China: Ecology, society and land use," pp. 9-39; and chapter 14 "Key issues in grassland studies," pp. 193-194. *Grasslands and Grassland Sciences in Northern China*. Washington DC: Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China.

Banks, T. "Property rights and the environment in pastoral China: Evidence from the field." 2001. *Development and Change*, 32 (4):717-740.

Thwaites, Rik, Terry de Lacy, Li Yong Hong, and Liu Xian Hua. 1998. "Property Rights, Social Change, and Grassland Degradation in Xilingol Biosphere Reserve, Inner Mongolia, China". *Society and Natural Resources* 11:319-338.

Yeh, Emily T. 2005. "Green governmentality and pastoralism in Western China: 'Converting pastures to grasslands'" *Nomadic Peoples*, 9(1):9-29.

Week 8 Oct. 26 – 30 Fall Break – no class

Week 9 Nov. 2 -5: Forests – Reforestation or Exporting Deforestation?

Harkness, James. 1998. "Recent trends in forestry and conservation of biodiversity in China." *The China Quarterly*. No.156:911-934.

Yin, Runsheng, Xu Jintao, Li Zhou, and Liu, Can. 2004 "China's Ecological Rehabilitation: the unprecedented efforts and dramatic impacts of reforestation and slope protection in Western China. *China Environment Series 7*: 17-32.

Lang, Graeme. 2002. "Forests, floods, and the environmental state in China" *Organization & Environment* 15(20)

Lang, Greame. "China's Impacts on Southeast Asian Forests" *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. 2006.

Supplemental Readings

Albers, HJ, Scott Rozelle, G. Li 1998. "China's forest under economic reform: timber supplies, environmental protection and rural resource access." *Contemporary Economic Policy*.16(1)22-33.

Yin, R.S. 1998. "Forestry and the environment in China: the current situation and strategic choices." *World Development* 26(12):2153-2167.

Yeh, Emily. 2000. "Forest claims, conflicts and commodification: The political ecology of Tibetan mushroom-harvesting villages in Yunnan Province, China." *China Quarterly* N161:264-278.

Menzies, Nicholas. 1988. "A Survey of Customary Law and Control Over Trees and Wildlands in China." In Louise Fortmann and John W. Bruce, ed.s, *Whose Trees? Proprietary Dimensions of Forestry*. Boulder: Westview Press. Pp. 51-62.

Weeks 10 and 11 Nov. 9 – 20 Water Resources, Pollution, and Politics: local scarcities, national implications

Ma Jun, 1999. *China's Water Crisis*. Chapters 1 and 2 Yangtze and Yellow Rivers

Nickum, J.E and Lee YS. 2006. "Same Longitude, Different Latitudes." *Environmental Politics* 15: 231-247.

Jun Jing, 2000. "Environmental Protests in rural China," in Elizabeth Perry and Mark Selden, *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*. New York: Routledge, pp. 143-160.

Saturday Fieldtrip: Water Walk with "Nature University"

Take-home midterm

Supplemental readings:

Nickum, James. 1998. "Is China Living on the Water Margin?" *China Quarterly*

Liu Changming. 1998. "Environmental Issues and the South-North Water Transfer Scheme," *China Quarterly* 156.

Berkoff, Jeremy. 2003 "China: The South-North Water Transfer Project--is it Justified? *Water Policy*

Kim, Jih-Un. 2001. "Drifting on the drying water pool: China's water scarcity and its political foreboding," *Asian Perspective* 25(1).

Week 12 Nov. 23 – 27: Environmental Laws and Policy Implementation

Economy, Elizabeth. 2004. *The River Runs Black*. Ch. 4 "The Challenge of Greening China" pp. 91-128

Jahiel, Abigail. 1998. "Organization of Environmental Protection in China," *China Quarterly* 156, pp.757-787.

van Rooij, Benjamin. 2006. "Implementation of Chinese Environmental Law." *Development and Change* 37(1) 57-74.

Chan, Gerald. 2004. "China's compliance in global environmental affairs." *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 45(1): 69-86.

Watch Al Gore's updated videos on Climate Change

Supplemental readings:

More thorough accounts of environmental law (Chapter 3: p. 66-102) and bureaucracy and policymaking (Chapter 5: p. 121-149) in China can be found in Kristen Day . (ed.) *China's Environment and the Challenge of Sustainable Development*, (ME Sharpe, 2005).

Lieberthal, Kenneth and Michael Oksenberg. 1988. *Policy Making in China: leaders, structures and processes*. . Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Palmer, Michael. 1998. "Environmental Regulation in the People's Republic of China: The Face of Domestic Law." *China Quarterly* 156, pp.788-808.

Lieberthal, Kenneth 1997. "China's Governing System and its Impact on Environmental Policy Implementation." *China Environment Series*, Woodrow Wilson International Center

Lo, Carlos W. H. and Gerald E. Fryxell. 2003. "Enforcement Styles among Environmental Protection Officials in China." *Journal of Public Policy*, 23(01): pp. 81-115.

Rock, M. 2002. 'Getting into the environment game: integrating environmental and economic policy-making in China and Taiwan', *American Behavioral Scientist* 45(9): 1435–55.

Mol, Arthur and Neil Carter. 2006. 'China's Environmental Governance in Transition.' *Environmental Politics* Vol. 15, No. 2, 149 – 170.

Week 13: Nov. 30 – Dec. 4 November Energy and Climate Change in a Nutshell

Smil, Vaclav. 2004. *China's Past, China's Future*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 2 "Energy" p. 9-72 (skim).

Rosen, Daniel H. and Trevor Houser. 2007. "China Energy: A Guide for the Perplexed." (skim)

Morgenstern, Richard D. et al. 2005. "Emissions Trading to Improve Air Quality in an Industrial City in the People's Republic of China," in Kristen A. Day, ed., *China's Environment and the Challenge of Sustainable Development*, pp. 150-179.

Watch: [Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Energy Use](http://webcast.berkeley.edu/event_details.php?webcastid=15770) webcast from China U.S. Climate Conference: http://webcast.berkeley.edu/event_details.php?webcastid=15770

Koehn, Peter H. 2004. Sustainable-development Frontiers and Divides: Transnational Actors and U.S./China Greenhouse-gas Emissions. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology* 11 (4), 380-396.

Climate Change negotiation exercise

Supplemental Reading

Wright, Tim. 2004. "Your Rice Bowl or Your Life: the Political Economy of Coal Mine Disasters in China: ""." *The China Quarterly*, 179:-1, pp. 629-46.

Yeh, Emily T. and Joanna I. Lewis. 2004. "State power and the logic of reform in China's electricity sector." *Pacific Affairs*. Vol. 77: 437-466.

Barton, Dominic and Jonathan Woetzel. 2007. "Dragon at the crossroads: the future of china's economy." In Kurt Campbell and Willow Darsie, eds, *China's March on the 21st Century*, Aspen Strategy Group, Aspen Institute, Chapter 1.

NY Times Interactive: Choking on Growth: Energy Rules
http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2007/11/24/world/asia/choking_on_growth_5.html

Week 14 Dec. 7 – 11: Pollution, Health, and Trash Trade

Watch video – *Trash Trade*, or shorter pieces on E-waste

Millison, Dan. 2005. "Reviving the Scorched Earth?" A Snapshot of China's Hazardous Waste Management and Cleaner Production Programs," in Kristen A. Day, ed., *China's Environment and the Challenge of Sustainable Development*, pp. 201-233.

Puckett, Jim, et al. 2002. *Exporting Harm: The High-tech Trashing of Asia*.
www.crra.com/ewaste/ttrash2/ttrash2 Accessed 4 December 2006.

Week 15 Dec. 14 – 18 NGOs, Public Participation and Awareness

Saich, Tony. 2000. "Negotiating the state: the development of social organizations in China," *The China Quarterly*, No. 161, pp. 124–141.

Wu, Fengshi. 2003. Environmental GONGO Autonomy. *Good Society*

Yang, Guobin. 2005. "Environmental NGOs and Institutional Dynamics in China" *The China Quarterly* 181: 46–66.

Martens, Susan. 2006. "Public participation with Chinese characteristics: citizen consumers in China's environmental management." *Environmental Politics* 15(2): 211-230.

Fieldtrip to Friends of Nature office.

Skim the websites of Greenpeace China and Hong Kong, WWF-China, Conservation International, and International Crane Foundation to get a sense of their projects and positions

Supplemental Readings

Ho, Peter. 2001. "Greening without conflict? Environmentalism, NGOs and civil society in China," *Development and Change*, Vol. 32, No. 5 pp. 893–921.

Lee, Yok-shiu F. 2005. Public Environmental Consciousness in China: Early Empirical Evidence. In *China's Environment and the Challenge of Sustainable Development*, edited by Kristen A. Day, 35-65. Armonk, NY, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Li, Junhui, 2005 *Position of Chinese Newspapers in the Framing of Environmental Issues* MS Thesis. P. 21-39.

Stalley, Phillip and Dongning Yang. 2006. "An Emerging Environmental Movement in China?" *The China Quarterly*, 186:1, pp. 333-56.

Futrell, W. Chad. 2008. "Evolution of International NGOs in China: broadening environmental collaboration and shifting priorities." *China Environment Yearbook: Changes and struggles*. p. 225-257 Brill Academic Publishers.

Take-home Final Exam and all other assignments Due December 17