


ENVIR 202: Lesson No. 2



Lenses Make a Difference

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Introduction

- ❖ Course Syllabus / On-line
 - Schedule
 - Lecture Slides & Resources
- ❖ Course website:
 - courses.washington.edu/envir202
- ❖ Course Listserv:
 - envir202a_wi06@u.washington.edu

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Perspective



Making Sense of the World

At least since recorded history, humans have striven to make sense of the world by ordering it; creating categories and relationships

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How do we order things?

❖ Example from ancient Chinese encyclopedia

1. Belonging to the emperor
2. Embalmed
3. Tame
4. Sucking pigs
5. Sirens
6. Fabulous
7. Stray dogs. . .
8. Frenzied
9. Innumerable
10. Drawn with a very fine camelhair brush
11. That from a long way off look like flies

(from Borges in Foucault, M. 1971. *The Order of Things*. p. xv)
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Another Example

The image shows the University of Washington logo in the center, surrounded by several academic disciplines listed in yellow ovals: Psychology, Art, Political Science, Sociology, History, Anthropology, Economics, Linguistics, Biology, Ecology, and Public Health. The background features a scenic view of the university's campus with yellow flowers in the foreground.

Explaining Things

- ❖ Once we have found a framework to order the world, we can then attempt to understand the way things are and identify the forces of change or stability.

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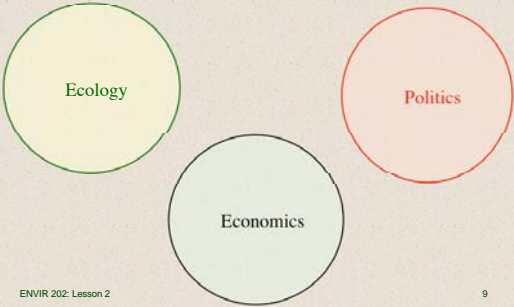
Lenses

- ❖ We use different lenses to help us make sense of things
- ❖ Lenses can:
 - > Sharpen our view
 - > Help us see detail
- ❖ But they can also:
 - > "Color" the way we see things



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Environmental Studies



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How are These Fields Related?

- ❖ Etymology for ecology and economics:
 - > "Eco" = Greek "oikos" = house
 - > Greek "oikonomos" = household manager
- ❖ Politics comes from:
 - > Greek "Polis" = "city-state" or the "perfect community"

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Academic Disciplines

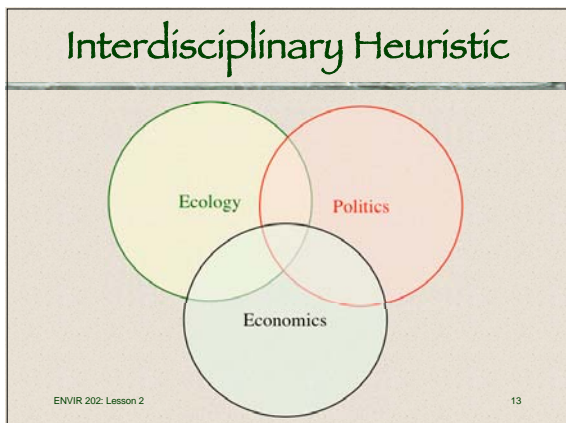
- ❖ **Ecology** is branch of science dealing with the relation of organisms with each other and their environments
- ❖ **Economics** is a branch of knowledge dealing with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services
- ❖ **Politics** is the art or science of governing a community ("polis")

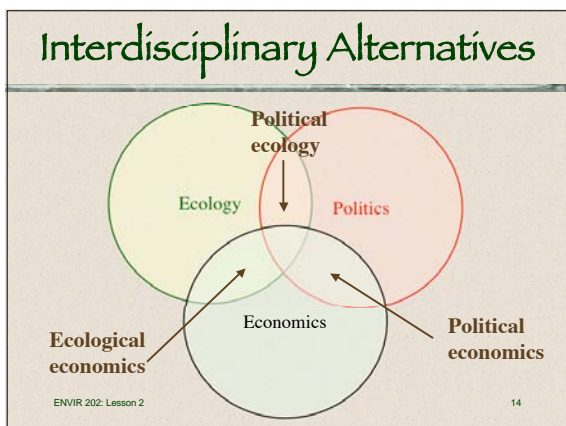
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Limits to Disciplinary Boundaries

- ❖ Human societies are very complex systems
 - > Interactions between social, economic, political, cultural, psychological and biological processes
- ❖ Explanations for changes in **population and health** vary depending on the way you look at the issues

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Political Economists


❖ Generally explore:

- > who/what institutions have the power in political and economic domains;
- > assume the environment is a resource

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Types of Political Economists

- ❖ Liberal political economists:
 - how individual consumption preferences are translated into production

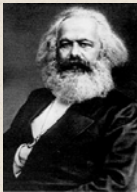


Adam Smith
(1723-1790)

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Types of Political Economists

- ❖ Socialist political economists:
 - how social organization of production produces inequality



Karl Marx
(1818-1883)

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Political Ecology

- ❖ Political economy in an ecological context
 - The environment is where political and economic systems function
 - Shares views with cultural ecology, ecological anthropology, environmental history, human ecology, and ecological economics
 - Politics is about socially negotiated rules of conduct and thus power

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Ecological Economics

- ❖ Humanity's increasing impact on the earth's environment requires synthesis of ecology and economics to create a sustainable society
- ❖ Sustainable development is ecological economics in practice

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Environmental History

- ❖ Considers the environment as an active force in human history
- ❖ Deciphers changing environmental consequences of human activities
- ❖ Examines human attitudes toward and definitions of "nature"

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3 Lenses of Environmental History

- ❖ Ecology: humans as organisms within an ecosystem
- ❖ Political Economy: laws; economy; the distribution of environmental consequences and realities
- ❖ Culture: Values, beliefs, religion, prejudices, norms, etc.

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Human/Environment Interactions

- ❖ Growing critique that political economists haven't paid sufficient attention to ecosystems; the "natural world"
- ❖ Call for field of political ecology

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Frankenfoods

- ❖ Ecology: "pollution" of normal crops by GMOs; nutrient needs of different strains; the science of creating new foods
- ❖ Political Economy: how European bans on American GMOs shape markets; rise of organic food industry; who can afford what kinds of food
- ❖ Culture: attitudes about what constitutes "natural"; the culture of fear

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Norovirus and Cruise Ships

- ❖ Ecology: physiological effects of norovirus; transmission vectors; effects of industry on regional waters (e.g. sewage, oil)
- ❖ Political Economy: importance of industry to regional economy; intense dependence on tourism; vulnerability of certain groups to disease
- ❖ Culture: Inside Passage mythology ("the last frontier"); appeal of cruises; cultural resistance to/resentment of cruise industry

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Urban Sprawl

- ❖ Ecology: water quality; heat islands; habitat loss; obesity
- ❖ Political Economy: policies and economies that encourage or limit sprawl; who can afford to sprawl
- ❖ Culture: the rhetoric of property rights; ideas about race and cities; car culture

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Theoretical Issues

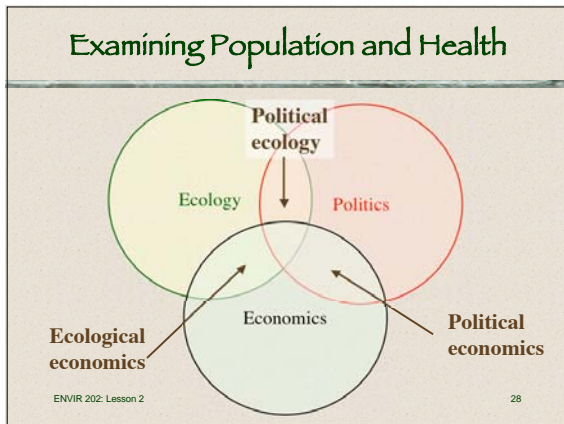
- ❖ Sustainability
- ❖ Intra- and inter-species distribution of wealth
- ❖ Intergenerational justice
- ❖ Dealing with non-monetized values, imprecision and uncertainty

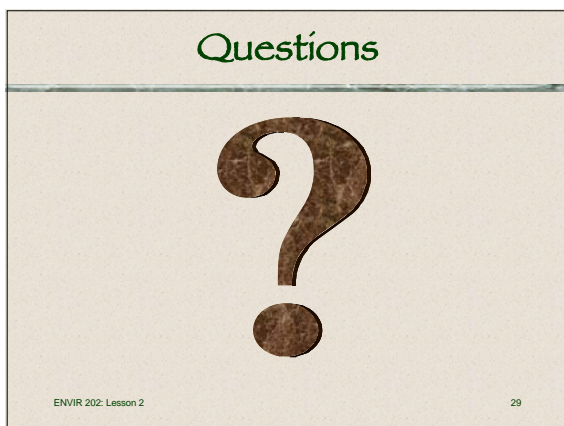
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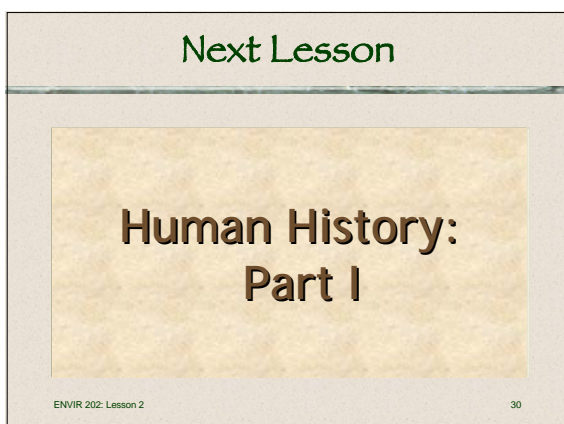
Environmental Problems Affecting Populations and Health

- ❖ In your lifetimes:
 - > human population growth
 - > food and water resources
 - > global climate change
 - > deforestation
 - > soil degradation
 - > pollution, ozone depletion
 - > losses of biodiversity

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Using the Frameworks: Salmon

- ❖ Ecology: disease in salmon farms; comparative biologies of wild and farmed fish; salmon as indicator/keystone species
- ❖ Political Economy: the commercial fishing industry; tribal subsistence fishing; supermarkets and "green consumerism"
- ❖ Culture: salmon as Native religious sacrament; salmon as icon of regional identity

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