

PEOPLES AND CULTURES OF THE AMAZON (2013)

Dr. Eric B. Ross

Thursday, 7:10-9pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The essential aim of this course is to explore, theoretically, empirically, historically and philosophically, the extent, the nature and the sources of cultural variation across the vast Amazon Basin. Special emphasis will be placed on the relationship between environmental resource variability and cultural practices and beliefs. In the course of this exploration, however, we will also consider the salient features and implications of both mainstream anthropological perspectives on cultural interpretation generally and the nature of some key debates, both about Amazon cultures per se and about the contribution of Amazonian research to wider anthropological concerns and discourses. These will range from the very nature of culture and the character of human nature itself, to the role of war and conflict in human societies, to the fate of the Amazon in the face of contemporary regional and global development. In the process, one of the ongoing themes of the course will be to look at Amazonian societies, *not* to romanticize the determinants of human life-ways but, on the contrary, to *demythify* them

COURSE ASSESSMENT: One term paper of approximately 3000 words in length. Students will develop their own topic and finalize it after discussion with the course instructor (this is mandatory). The paper will be due on May 10. (Extensions are permitted, if requested in advance.)

1 Jan 17: Amazon Studies as an Empirical and Intellectual Project: Introduction and Overview

This introductory class will sketch an overview of the course and give students an idea of its aims and objectives. In particular, it will explore the varying implications of different interpretations of Amazon society and cultural variability, to begin to develop our ongoing discussion and debate about the wider anthropological issues and problems that Amazonian studies illuminate.

Mann, Charles 2002 1491 *The Atlantic*. March.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/03/1491/302445/>

Denevan, William The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492.

<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~alcoze/for398/class/pristinemyth.htm>

Hayward, Anthony 2011 Adrian Cowell Obituary. *The Guardian* Thurs. Nov. 3.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/tv-and-radio/2011/nov/03/adrian-cowell-obituary>

FILM: *The Tribe That Hides from Man* (Adrian Cowell, 1970)

This film occupies a special place in Amazonian studies, offering unusual insight into the supposedly enlightened way that indigenous Brazilians were incorporated into the expanding forest frontier.

2. Jan 24: Ecological Architecture: Vulnerability, Renewability and Sustainability

This section provides a general overview of the principal variations in ecological features of the Neotropics and of the broad pattern of human adaptations to their differential potential and limitations.

Reading

Gomez-Pompa, A., C. Vasquez-Yanes and S. Guevara 1972 The Tropical Forest: A Nonrenewable Resource. *Science* 177 (1 Sept.):762-765.

Eisenberg, John and Richard Thorington, Jr 1973 A Preliminary Analysis of a Neotropical Mammal Fauna. *Biotropica* 5(3):150-161.

Myers, Thomas, P. 1992 Agricultural Limitations of the Amazon in Theory and Practice. *World Archaeology* 24(1):82-97.

Sponsel, Leslie 1986 Amazon Ecology and Adaptation. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15:67-97. <http://www.ibcperu.org/doc/isis/7245.pdf>

3. Jan. 31: Adaptations: Pre-Columbian and Contemporary Modes of Food Production

This section will provide insight into the ecological limitations on Amazonian horticulture, while exploring some of the core dynamics of neo-tropical food production.

Reading:

DeBoer, Warren R. 1981 Buffer Zones in the Cultural Ecology of Aboriginal Amazonia: An Ethnohistorical Approach. *American Antiquity* 46(2): 364-377.

Denevan, William 1998 Comments on Prehistoric Agriculture in Amazonia. *Culture & Agriculture* 20: 54-59.

Lathrap, Donald 1973 The Antiquity and Importance of Long-Distance Trade Relationships in the Moist Tropics of Pre-Columbian South America. *World Archaeology* 5(2):170-186.

Roosevelt, Anna C. 1993 The Rise and Fall of the Amazon Chiefdoms. *L'Homme, Année* 33(126): 255 – 283.

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Michael J. Heckenberger, Afukaka Kuikuro, Urissapa Tabata Kuikuro, J. Christian Russell, Morgan Schmidt, Carlos Fausto and Bruna Franchetto 2003 Amazonia 1492: Pristine Forest or Cultural Parkland? *Science* 301: 1710-1714.
http://courses.washington.edu/war101/readings/Heckenberger_2003.pdf

Heckenberger Michael, Petersen J. B. and Neves E. G. 1999 Village Size and Permanence in Amazonia: Two Archaeological Examples from Brazil. *Latin American Antiquity* 10

4. Feb. 7:

Toward the Making of the Contemporary Amazon: The Colonial Encounter.

Despite the long-held view, now fortunately in decline, that Amazonian societies could be looked upon purely in cultural terms, without significant reference to historical or material context, few parts of the Basin were untouched, directly or indirectly, by the ascendancy of European colonialism. In this section, you will be introduced to certain aspects of the legacy of that historical background and explore the many facets of transition from Amerindian to peasant livelihoods.

Reading:

Ross, Eric B. 1978 The Evolution of the Amazon Peasantry. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 10(2): 193-218

Markham, Clements (Translator and Editor) 1859 *Expeditions into the Valley of the Amazons, 1539, 1540, 1639*. London: Hakluyt Society.
<http://books.google.co.uk/ebooks/reader?id=IQFjAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader>

Tootal, Albert and Sir Richard Francis Burton 1874 *The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse in A.D. 1547-1555 Among the Wild Tribes of Eastern Brazil*. London: The Hakluyt Society.
<http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=7QUVAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader>

Wagley, Charles 1976 *Amazon Town: A Study of Man in the Tropics*. Chapter 3 (“Making a Living in the Tropics”) and Chapter 8 (“A Community in an Under-Developed Area”)

5. Feb 14: Where is Human Nature? Debates on the Dynamic and Significance of Amazon Warfare

This section explores the extent to which the study of Amazon societies may contribute to some major conceptual issues in anthropology and, more broadly, in contemporary social policy, by helping to illuminate what is often called “human nature.” We will especially consider methodological and conceptual issues associated with research on Amazonian warfare, focusing on the specific case of the Yanomami of Venezuela and Brazil.

Reading:

Chagnon, Napoleon 1988 Life Histories, Blood Revenge, and Warfare in a Tribal Population. *Science* 239(4843): 985-992.

_____ and Raymond B. Hames 1979 Protein Deficiency and Tribal Warfare in Amazonia: New Data. *Science* 203(4383):910-913

Eric B. Ross, Jane Bennett Ross, Napoleon A. Chagnon, Raymond B. Hames 1980 Amazon Warfare. *Science* 207(4431):590+592-593

Lizot, Jacques 1977 Population, Resources and Warfare among the Yanomami. *Man* 12: 497-517.

Sponsel, Leslie 1998 Yanomami: An Arena of Conflict and Aggression in the Amazon. *Aggressive Behavior* 24:97-122.

_____ 2010 Into the Heart of Darkness. Rethinking the Canonical Ethnography on the Yanomamo. In Joam Evan Pim (ed), *Nonkilling Societies*. Honolulu, Hawaii: Center for Global Nonkilling. Pp. 197-240.
http://anthroniche.com/darkness_documents/0555.pdf

Colchester, Marcus 1984 Rethinking Stone Age Economics: Some Speculations Concerning the Pre-Columbian Yanoama Economy. *Human Ecology* 12(3): 291-314.

Ramos, Alicia 1987 Reflecting on the Yanomami: Ethnographic Images and the Pursuit of the Exotic. *Cultural Anthropology* 2(3):284-304.

FILM: The Feast (T. Asch)

5. Feb. 21: Hunting and its Evolutionary Impact and Implications

Much of the critical variation in Amazonian societies hinges on the interplay of horticulture and hunting. In this section, primary attention will be given to the latter, with special attention to the influence of hunting on other aspects of cultural behavior, from warfare to settlement size and stability, from sexual relations to “tribal” identity. Emphasis will be on how different indigenous communities cope with the challenges and contradictions of achieving hunting success.

Reading:

Gross, Daniel, R., Eiten, G., Flowers, N. M., Leoi, F. M., Ritter, M. L., Werner, D.W. 1979 Ecology and Acculturation among Native Peoples of Central Brazil. *Science* 206 (4422): 1043-50.

Siskind, Janet 1973 Tropical Forest Hunters and the Economy of Sex. In Daniel Gross (ed.) *Peoples and Cultures of Native South America*. Garden City, NY: Natural History. Pp. 226-240.

Gross, Daniel 1975 Protein Capture and Cultural Development in the Amazon Basin. *American Anthropologist* 77: 526-49.

Dufour, Darna 1992 Nutritional Ecology in the Tropical Rain Forests of Amazonia. *American Journal of Human Biology* 4(2):197-207.

Berlin, Elois Ann and Edward Markell 1977 An Assessment of the Nutritional and Health Status of an Aguaruna Jivaro Community. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition* 6(2):69-81.

Gregor, Thomas 1973 Privacy and Extra-Marital Affairs in a Tropical Forest Community. In Daniel Gross (ed.) *Peoples and Cultures of Native South America*. Garden City, NY: Natural History. Pp. 242-260.

MacQuarrie, Kim 1994 *The Spirit Hunters* (film) Discovery Channel.
<http://www.cutv.ws/play/6155/The-Spirit-Hunters>

6. Feb. 28: Food Taboos: Cultural Norms or Subsistence Strategies?

The subject, significance and explanation of food taboos sums up many of the challenges of anthropology in the Amazon and, indeed, poses many salient questions for the discipline as a whole about the very nature of cultural variability. This session offers an opportunity for students not only to explore differences in dietary preferences and avoidance in the Neotropics, but to consider the implications of contrasting explanatory paradigms--principally that of human or cultural ecology which posits a strategic material relationship between taboos and survival and that of symbolic, structuralist or semiotic perspectives which argue for diet as a system of meaning independent of

material reality. The implications for operationalizing the meaning of human cultural life are enormous.

Reading:

Ross, Eric B. 1978 Food Taboos, Diet and Hunting Strategy: The Adaptation to Animals in Amazon Cultural Ecology. *Current Anthropology* 19(1): 1-36

Milton, Katherine 1997 Real Men Don't Eat Deer. *Discover* 18(6): 46-53.

<http://discovermagazine.com/1997/jun/realmendonteatde1151>

7. March 7: Squaring the Circle: Measuring Livelihoods

Analysis of anthropological data in terms of a number of finite questions assumes methods of data collection that are theoretically informed and capable of yielding testable and comparative generalization. Having said that, data collection in the Amazon presents special challenges. In this session, students will explore the nature of some of those challenges and the potential and limits of alternative lines of field inquiry as a means of resolving certain problems of culture and development.

Reading:

Johnson, Allen 1975 Time Allocation in a Machiguenga Community. *Ethnology* 14(3): 301-310.

_____ 1982 Reductionism in Cultural Ecology: The Amazon Case. *Current Anthropology* 23(4): 413-428

SPRING BREAK

8 March 21: Naturalists, Explorers and Non-Anthropological Voices

It would be as unrealistic as it is unnecessary to limit our knowledge of the Amazon peoples to what is known through recent anthropological research. There is, in fact, a voluminous literature, dating from the mid-19th century, which embraces work by European naturalists, European and North American explorers and even, more recently, outsiders who have, rarely, been adopted into indigenous society. All of these accounts add immeasurably to our cumulative understanding of the nature of the Amazonian world, in its human and non-human dimensions. Through a discussion of such material, students will acquire not only an appreciation of the opportunities that such resources

provide, but a sense of the intellectual challenge they present to integrate such disparate sources into a coherent and theoretically lucid picture.

Reading:

Up De Graff, Fritz *Headhunters of the Amazon: Seven Years of Exploration and Adventure*. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/7107838/Action-Adventure-Head-Hunters-of-the-Amazon-Graff>

Bates, Henry Walter 1863 *Naturalist on the River Amazons*. London: John Murray. http://books.google.com/books/reader?id=k2Dr_zbu00C&printsec=frontcover&output=reader

Spruce, Richard 1908 *Notes of a Botanist on the Amazon and the Andes*. London: Macmillan and Co. (Spruce's book, published after his death, was based on his travels in Peru and Ecuador, 1849-64) London: Macmillan and Co. <http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=zAgNAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader>

Biocca, Ettore 1996 *Yanoama: The Story of Helena Valero, A Girl Kidnapped by Amazonian Indians*. New York: Kodansha International.

PBS Lost in the Amazon [A British documentary about the explorer Colonel Percy Fawcett, who disappeared in the Brazilian Amazon in 1925, while searching for what he called the Lost City of Z] <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/episodes/lost-in-the-amazon-watch-the-full-episode/829/>

9 March 28: Investing in Destruction: The World Bank, and the Development of the Amazon.

This session focuses on how and why the World Bank and the other Bretton Woods institutions have played a major role in the implementation of Western development strategies, favoring the immediate interests of multinational capital over the long-term needs of local communities and their livelihood-focused patterns of resource use. Students will appreciate the nature of the protracted conflict between development, as defined in Western discourse, and strategies of local autonomy.

Film: *Banking on Disaster* (Adrian Cowell)

Reading:

Stephen Corry 1993 The Rainforest Harvest: Who Reaps the Benefit? *The Ecologist* 23(4):148-153. Also available as: Corry, Stephen 1993 'Harvest Moonshine' *Taking You for a Ride*. Survival International.

Kaimowitz, D., P. Pacheco and G. Thiele 1999 Effects of Structural Adjustment on

Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Lowland Bolivia. *World Development* 23(3): 505–20.

Kaimowitz, D. et al and *Hamburger Connection Fuels Amazon Deforestation*. Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

Mahar, Dennis J. 1989 *Government Policies and Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon Region*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

World Wildlife Fund The Madeira River: Life Before the Dams.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mY-3Bfx6qqU&feature=related>

10. APRIL 4: The Geo-Politics and Impact of Extractive Industries

The emphasis in this session will be, not so much as on individual detail as on trying to construct a broader picture of contemporary social and environmental trends and patterns associated with various extractive industries, from the days of the rubber boom to more recent multinational projects. Students will, in the end, be able to situate local and regional trends within a broader historical and global context, integrating anthropological insight with a world-system perspective, striving toward theoretical generalization.

Film: *Crude* (Joe Berlinger)

Reading:

Weinstein, Barbara 1983 Capital Penetration and Problems of Labor Control in the Amazon Rubber Trade. *Radical History Review* 121-140.

Langewiesche, William 2007 Jungle Law. May.
<http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/05/texaco200705>

Sixty Minutes (CBS) 2009 Amazon Crude. 3 May. <http://chevrontoxico.com/news-and-multimedia/2009/0503-60-minutes-amazon-crude.html>

Film: *Sky Chief* (Scott Robinson) <http://www.antropologiavisual.net/2007/sky-chief/>
[Please don't neglect to view this short film, now 40 years old. It may not be available on-line forever.]

Murphy, Robert F. and Julian Steward 1956 Tappers and Trappers: Parallel Process in Acculturation. *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 4:335-353.

S. Brian Burkhalter & Robert Murphy, 1989 Tappers and Sappers: Rubber, Gold

and Money among the Mundurucu. *American Ethnologist* 16(1):100-116

Pearson, Henry 1911 *The Rubber Country of the Amazon*. New York: The India Rubber World.

<http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=vTEKAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader>

Fifer, J. Valerie. 1970 The Empire Builders: A History of the Bolivian Rubber Boom and the Rise of the House of Suárez. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 2(2):113-46.

Hearn, Kelly 2006 Exclusive: Selling the Amazon for a Handful of Beads. Altnet January 17. <http://www.altnet.org/story/30657>

Widener, Patricia 2007 Oil Conflict in Ecuador. *Organization and Environment* 20(1): 84-105.

Lu, Flora and Ashley Carse 2007 Community Contradictions: Petroleum Exploration, Development, and Huaorani Sociality." Paper presented at Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar, "The Changing Nature(s) of Land: Property, Peasants and Agricultural Production in a Global World." http://74.125.93.132/search?q=cache:X_HAPMhB014J:www.unc.edu/courses/2007fall/geog/804/001/Oil%2520and%2520Sharing%2520MS%25209-17-2.doc+lu+carse+huaorani&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us

Davis, Shelton 1980 Mining Projects Endanger Amazon's Yanomamo Tribe. *Multinational Monitor* 1(1).

<http://www.multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1980/02/davis.html>

Rohter, Larry 2006 Of Rubber and Blood in Brazilian Amazon. Nov. 23. *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/23/world/americas/23brazil.html>

International.

Hardenburg, Walter 1913 *The Putumayo: The Devil's Paradise*. London: T. Fisher Unwin. <http://www.archive.org/stream/putumayodevilspa00hardrich#page/n7/mode/2up>

11. April 11: The Force and Fate of Development in Amazonia

A major factor in the recent development of Amazonia, in terms of its environmental resources and indigenous peoples, has been the expansion of commercial interests, especially ranching and cash crop production. This session compares and contrasts the characteristic impacts of these different activities and, in so doing, helps to situate the Amazon within the context of a changing world economy. At the same time, it must be realized that not all of the people who exploit the Amazon are profiting from its

destruction; some, such as charcoal makers, are themselves human victims of a larger system. These virtual slave workers make the charcoal that is needed to produce the pig iron that is exported to the United States, where it is a strategic ingredient of the steel industry that is essential to automobile manufacturing. Of equal concern, as a long-standing and recurrent feature of development in the Amazon has been the exploitative, if not genocidal treatment of indigenous peoples. Though this was perhaps at its worst in the days of the rubber boom, there is no doubt that it continues.

Reading:

Philip Fearnside 2001 Soybean Cultivation as a Threat to the Environment in Brazil. *Environmental Conservation* 28 (1): 23–38.

Hecht, Susanna, R. B. Norgaard and C. Possio 1988 The Economics of Cattle Ranching in Eastern Amazonia. *Interciencia* 13(5): 233–40.

Hecht, Susanna 2005 Soybeans, Development and Conservation on the Amazon Frontier. *Development and Change* 36(2): 375–404.

Thiele, G. 1995 The Displacement of Settlers in the Amazon: The Case of Santa Cruz. *Human Organization* 54: 273–82.

Swami, S. N. et al 2009 Charcoal Making in the Brazilian Amazon: Economic Aspects of Production and Carbon Conversion Efficiencies of Kilns. <http://www.css.cornell.edu/faculty/lehmann/publ/Swami%20et%20al.,%202009,%20Springer.pdf>

Smith, Michael and David Voreacos 2007 BRAZIL: Enslaved Workers Make Charcoal Used to Make Basic Steel Ingredient. *CorpWatch* <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=14328>

Film: *The Charcoal People* (Nigel Noble)

13 April 18: Discussion of Paper Topics

14. April 25: Protecting Nature, Indigenous Livelihoods and New Social Movements

From the arrival of Europeans in the 16th century, there has been conflict between indigenous groups and outsiders and new forms of hostility among Amerindian communities, under the influence of outside, chiefly market, forces. Today, indigenous communities increasingly struggle to create a sustainable livelihood in the face of environmental destruction by powerful commercial interests. This final session explores the different strategies of resistance and liberation from global market

hegemony that are bringing new forms and purposes of resource use to the fore. Students will appreciate that these new developments are not unique to the Third World, but are occurring throughout what is now known as “the Global South.”

Campbell, C.E. 1997 On the Front Lines But Struggling for Voice: Women in the Rubber Tappers’ Defence of the Amazon Forest. *The Ecologist* 27(2): 46-54.

Bruce, A. 1992 Indian Lands, Environmental Policy, and Military Geopolitics in the Development of the Brazilian Amazon: The Case of the Yanomami. *Development and Change* 23(1): 35-70.

Conklin, B. & Graham, L. R. 1995 The Shifting Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-politics. *American Anthropologist* 97(4): 695-710.

Fisher, W. H. 1994 Megadevelopment, Environmentalism, and Resistance: The Institutional Context of Kayapo Indigenous Politics in Central Brazil. *Human Organization* 53(3): 220-232.

Weinberg, Bill 2009 Peru: Veteran Guerilla Fighter Hugo Blanco Speaks on Amazon Struggle. *World War 4 Report*. <http://ww4report.com/node/7756>