Nature and Environment of New York City
PGEOG 383.57 & 701.81
Fall 2006, 15:10-17:25

Instructor: William Solecki
Office: 1003 North Building
Telephone: 212 772 4536
Email: wsolecki@hunter.cuny.edu
Office Hours: Monday 1:00-2:00pm; Wednesday 11:00am-noon, or by appointment

Nature and Environment of New York City

The objective of this course is to understand and explain the nature and environment of the New York City metropolitan region, and the drivers behind their transformation in the past, present, and possibly in the future. Among many drivers, the course will explore the role of science and technology in defining, degrading, reconstructing, restoring, and sustaining the natural resource base and environment of the City. It is particularly exciting to be studying these issues because the character of the physical environment of the City is going through a tremendous transformation as settlement intensification, climate change, and beginning attempts at sustainability planning are proceeding concurrently. These topics will be reviewed through an analysis of background readings, presentations by outside experts, and a fieldtrip. The class will draw heavily from the geographic scholarly tradition and perspectives include an analysis of spatial change and distribution, human-environment interactions, and mapping and GIS products and techniques. The content for the course will be divided into three interconnected sections: 1). Natural base line – reality and myth; 2). Constructed and degraded environment; and, 3). Emerging nature and sustainable environments.

Grading: Your grade will be based on the following set of assignments and responsibilities.

If you are an undergraduate student

Term paper – 25%
Class participation- 10%
Mid-Term exam - 25%
Final exam - 25%
Assignment - 15%

If you are a graduate student

Term paper – 30%
Class participation- 30%
Mid-Term exam - 25%
Assignment - 15%
Class attendance and class participation are a critical part of the semester grade. This means that you must be prepared to discuss the readings assigned for the day. At the beginning of each meeting for the week, each student will submit a written question or issue pertaining to the readings of the week. These will be collected and used to structure our discussion for the week.

If you are a graduate student, in addition to the discussion, reaction papers will be due every week in response to each week’s reading assignment. These papers should very briefly present the key themes of the reading and should then present some of your thoughts and reactions in response to the readings. The papers should be approximately 1 to 1.5 pages long (i.e., about 3–4 paragraphs; 1 paragraph to summarize the reading and introduce your thoughts and 2–3 paragraphs to develop your thoughts).

Other specifics about the assignment, exams, and term paper will be discussed in class. Late assignments will receive a reduction in grade. No grades of "incomplete" will be given except in cases of extreme circumstances.

Required Texts:
Texts for purchase - These books are available at the Hunter College bookstore or for purchase online.


Other weekly readings will be assigned and will be either available via specific websites or the class website. The readings are to be read for the week they are listed.
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<thead>
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<th>TOPIC AREA</th>
<th>WEEK</th>
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<td><strong>Natural baseline – reality and myth</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Definitions - New York, nature, and environment</td>
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<td>2. Geology and soils</td>
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<td>3. Flora and fauna</td>
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<td>4. Climate and hydrology</td>
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<td><strong>Constructed and degraded environment</strong></td>
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<td>5. Water supply</td>
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<td>6. Parks and ecosystems</td>
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<td>7. Waste and pollution</td>
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<td>8. Built environment and sprawl</td>
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<td>9. urban climates and climate change</td>
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<td><strong>Emerging nature and sustainable environments</strong></td>
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<td>10. Aliens and returnees – plant and animals</td>
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<td>11. Promoting nature in the city – planning, restoration, and action</td>
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<td>13. Green buildings and green design</td>
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<td>14. The ecological city</td>
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<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
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<td>15. Group project presentations</td>
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<td>16. Group project presentations</td>
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