

**Course Code & No. - Section:** HIST 480 - Section 1  
**Course Title (Credits):** Revolutionary Eco-History (3)  
**Term & Year:** Spring / 2015  
**Course Ref. No. (CRN):** 10356

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**Office:** Prim Library 205  
**Office Hours:** by appointment

**Class Meeting Time:** TR 1 – 2:15 p.m.  
**Location:** TCES 106

**Prerequisites** (from Catalog): --  
**Corequisites** (from Catalog): --

### Course Description

This course probes into the ways in which economics is taught in the University system. By and large the teaching of economics in this system has become a hoax, but with devastating implications for our ecology and subjectivity, our ethics and our episteme as a whole. This is because University economics, based in a long-overdrawn tradition known as neo-classical theory, remains tied to outdated, outmoded, downright dangerous presuppositions about the nature and scope of economics. It has become an insider's economics, with all the crass, top-down, exclusionary and violent institutional and identitarian politics that support such insiderism, one that moreover breeds zombie half-wits, at best blinded to the outside of their ever-marginalized discipline and at worst perpetuating a suicidal logic of ecological devastation and economic plutocracy. The neo-classical tradition believes economic equality is to be had in the small domain where supply and demand meet, provided that presumably rational subjects extend their purchasing power on utility-driven standards, thus eliminating the questions of violence and desire. Such presuppositions never hold outside of rigid and narrow mathematical models, and ideological discourses, which argue for an equilibrium- always purely formal and never real- and a *util*, which forget scientific advances about the nature of complex systems that have been in play since the early 1900s. In this course we will set economics on non-regressive, firmer, less pathetic, and less virulent foundations. We will take up the banner raised by Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, founder of ecological economics and theorist of energetic analysis in economic flows. While Marx's turn to the metabolism between humans and nature and his analysis of soil reproducibility initiated the move toward ecology in economics, we will critique his notion of abstract labor and his theory of classes and historical stages. We will, following Georgescu-Roegen's formula, seek to embed the economy in an ecology of material flows, thus challenging what is stale in both liberal and Marxist varieties of political economy. Never has there been a more dire time for such work to be performed. Where the neo-classical paradigm and its University economics teaches us to pursue our own self-interest under the guise of a blind-hand, in our revolutionary approach we will see that our self-interest cannot be divorced from the interests of an eco-poiesis, the production of an eco-logy promising better criteria for healthy social organization. We will see that the blind-hand is a mask for the imperialist exploitation of labor (classes and individuals) and not a mechanism assuring the wealth of nations-states, states hell-bent on the pursuit of capital profits. In this course we will not take just what the ecology *is*, we will not take just what the subject *is*, we will not correlate capital and wealth- we will take none of this for granted. To embed the economy in the ecology we will ask difficult questions about, and provide new models of, these terms: economy, ecology, subject,

capital. We will ask, what is the ecology and is it not dark? – a field where production is everywhere and everything is the production of production, making it difficult indeed to offer harmonious assurances about the fate of humans and nature, making it difficult indeed to know where to place our responsibility when considering modes of anti-production (our actions, our catatonia, and our resistance)? We will ask, what if the subject is the (the non-Marxist) partial-object of an unconscious machinic desire, plugging itself into a much more complex circuit of flows (flows of sex, addiction, morning coffee and alcohol, automobile-driving, taking planes home to see mommy and daddy, the shadow banking system, the media, discipline, surveillance, and punishment) than humanist, conservative and liberal, orientations would have us believe we live our daily lives in? We will ask, what *is* capital and *how does it work* – how does it really work when thought outside of the slim calculations and brazen ideologies of University economics? We will view capital as a matrix of flows, more and less accelerated and dynamized through modes of regulating cyber-positive machinic desire (yes, desire just as much as the infrastructure), a matrix of flows, attractors, and control-mechanisms. We will ask whether the nature/culture division is not obliterated in such a system that seems to call us toward some deathly destruction from out of the future. We will ask whether and to what extent, then, that we *are* the virus of capital at the interface of its collision with life as we know it. This course will end with a serious reflection on how we begin to think our eco-systems anew. We will reevaluate our subjectivity in its intersections with capital so that we might pose new solutions to questions of critique, value, will, meaning, ethics, morality, and habits of living more generally, so that we might come to develop new thoughts about our eco-poiesis: the communal organization of our economic, social, political, and moral life.

### Student Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a basic grasp of neo-classical economical foundations and its critique. The critique part is especially important, even if one wishes to defend neo-classical economic foundations or methods. Critique does not mean inarticulate disagreement.
2. Understand basic historical problems of economics leading up to post-neo-classical economics with a concentration on macro-economic depictions of the capital system;
3. Develop a systemic and structural understanding of history, economics, and philosophical problem-posing and apply that understanding consistently to questions of economics, politics, society, and ecology;
4. Recognize any serious gaps in his/her general grasp of the course contents, but especially gaps in critical reflection, discussion, and writing.

### Methods of Assessing Student Outcomes

Student outcomes will be assessed using the following:

1. Classroom participation leading up to a midterm and a final exam;
2. A minimum of two five page papers (though more can be submitted for my scrutiny), replete with critical analysis and engagement with course contents or relevant outside scholarship and a longer term paper;
3. A brief end of the year argumentative presentation haggling over one or more of the class topics.

### Instructional Strategies

This course will be a combination of lecture and discussion based upon close reading of the texts. Discussion will become increasingly important as we move further into the material.

### Required Texts

William Ophuls. *Plato's Revenge: Politics in the Age of Ecology*.

### **Recommended Texts**

See me privately about this since, with a course so multi-disciplinary and ambitious in its design, there will be multiple books in specialized fields you may want to consult.

### **Attendance**

Attendance in this kind of discussion-oriented class will be especially important. Any missed classes must be made up in order to pass the course, but not all classes missed can be made up. Depends on the excuse, the reason, the circumstance. If you miss 6 classes, you fail the course, regardless of standing academic performance. If you miss five courses, you will drop a letter grade. As well, regular tardiness is basically equivalent to an absence in class (2 x tardy = 1 absence). Once class begins, all members of the class will be expected to remain for the duration of the class.

### **Class Requirements**

Food will not be permitted in this class. Always come prepared with your textbooks and necessary materials to take notes. I strongly discourage the use of computers for note-taking. If you **need** to use a computer to take notes, please first ask for permission. In addition, there will be **no use of cell phones during class**, including texting. If you are seen using a cell phone for any reason without prior permission, you will be asked to leave the classroom for the session. We will be using our texts frequently in class; therefore, please bring them to each meeting.

### **Prim Library Resources**

Using the library's resources effectively (not just the internet) contributes to developing each of SNC's core themes by exposing students to high quality academic resources, diverse opinions, new ideas, and a future that includes building on a liberal arts education. In this course, you will be expected to utilize the library's resources (either onsite or remotely) as you complete your assignments.

Prim Library has many resources which are helpful for your research. You may find the following information helpful:

Electronic databases (for peer-reviewed research articles, reviews, newspaper and magazine articles): Electronic databases most likely to include articles related to your research are EBSCO, Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, and ProQuest.

Lib Guides: <http://Libguides.sierranevada.edu> These web pages contain instructions about how to use resources available at Prim Library, how to evaluation the appropriateness of information from the Internet for a research paper, how to cite sources, and other topics related to finding and using information.

For any books not housed at SNC, you can use inter-library loan (ILL) to borrow books from major university libraries, free of charge. Speak with someone at the front desk at the Prim Library for help.

### **Sanctions for Cheating and/or Plagiarism**

## **The Honor Code**

The faculty of SNC believes students must be held to high standards of integrity in all aspects of college life in order to promote the educational mission of the College and to encourage respect for the rights of others. Each student brings to the SNC community unique skills, talents, values and experiences which, when expressed within the community, contribute to the quality of the educational environment and the growth and development of the individual. Students share with members of the faculty, administration and staff the responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment conducive to learning and personal development, where actions are guided by mutual respect, integrity, responsibility and trust. The faculty and students alike must make diligent efforts to ensure high standards are upheld by their colleagues and peers as well as themselves. Therefore faculty and students accept responsibility for maintaining these standards at Sierra Nevada College and are obligated to comply with its regulations and procedures, which they are expected to read and understand.

## **Consequences of Violating the Student Honor Code**

SNC students and faculty share the responsibility for maintaining an environment of academic honesty. Thus, all are responsible for knowing and abiding by the SNC Faculty/Student Honor Code published in the current SNC Catalog. Faculty are responsible for presenting the Honor Code and the consequences of violating it to students at the start of their classes AND for reporting all incidences of academic dishonesty to the Provost. Students are responsible for knowing what constitutes CHEATING, PLAGIARISM and FABRICATION and for refraining from these and other forms of academic dishonesty. Violations of the Honor Code become part of a student's academic record.

1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Student receives a zero for assignment/exam and counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.

2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Student fails course and receives counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.

3<sup>rd</sup> Offense: Student is expelled.

## **Grading Policy**

Grading will be based upon written work, presentations, the midterm and final exam, and classroom participation. Although exams will be the primary means of grade assessment, improvement from the midterm to the final can be very important in terms of the final grade. A simple average of the grades from the exams, presentations, and participation will be the baseline for the final grade.

## **Grading Scale**

Exams = 70% of course grade  
Presentation = 20%  
Participation = 10%

100 – 98 % = A+  
97 – 90% = A  
89 – 88% = B+

87 – 80% = B

And so on...

### ADA Accommodations

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students with a documented disability are eligible for support services and accommodations. If a student wishes to request an accommodation, please contact the Director of Academic Support Services, Henry Conover, at (775) 831-1314 x7534, [hconover@sierranevada.edu](mailto:hconover@sierranevada.edu), office in Prim Library: PL-304. I want to add by way of emphasis that I am more than happy, and more than willing, to do whatever I can to help students out who feel that they could use my assistance where health and disabilities occur.

### The SNC Email System

The SNC email system is the official communication vehicle among students, faculty members and administrative staff and is designed to protect the confidentiality of student information as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 Act (FERPA). Students should check their college email accounts daily during the school year.

Students have a right to forward their SNC e-mail to another e-mail account (for example, @hotmail or @gmail). However, confidentiality of student information protected by FERPA cannot be guaranteed for SNC e-mail forwarded to an outside vendor. Having email redirected does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with official communication sent to his or her SNC email account.

### The Sierra Nevada College Mission Statement

Sierra Nevada College graduates will be educated to be scholars of and contributors to a sustainable world. Sierra Nevada College combines the liberal arts and professional preparedness through an interdisciplinary curriculum that emphasizes entrepreneurial thinking and environmental, social, economic and educational sustainability.

### The Core Themes

Liberal Arts	Professional Preparedness
Entrepreneurial	Thinking Sustainability

**Class Schedule- This will remain tentative and, until the end, incomplete as this is a brand new course I am still developing. I know the broad outlines, but not all of the details yet. Indeed, this is a good thing, to my mind. It's not that it's easier on me- in fact, it's not. But because not all of the details will be filled in, YOU/we have a chance to push the course in certain desired directions that I'd be much less amenable to with a completely developed syllabus.**

Date	Topic	Homework Due
T 1/20	Introduction : Some basic propositions of the course ; Critique and Cartography	Written reply to basic propositions
R 1/22	The ontology of economics and ecology, systems and subjects old	Bryant, Dark Ecology ; Article Packet on Ecocatastrohe

	and new	
T 1/27	Foundations of Neo-Classical Economics : subject and system	Arnsperger/Varoufakis, 'What is NeoClassical Economics'
R 1/29	Foundations of Neo-Classical Economics, cont'd : method	Arrighi, Adam Smith in Beijing <b>Quiz on neoclassical econ</b>
T 2/3	The influence of neo-classical economics today	Michael Hudson selections
R 2/5	Critique of Neo-Classical Economics and Its Alternatives : heterodox and radical ; critique of the util in liberalism and Marx	Capital As Power, Bichler/Nitzan,
T 2/10	Critique of Neo-Classical econ and its offshoots, liberalism	Capital as Power, critique of liberalism sections
R 2/12	Critique of Marxist tradition, the concept of abstract labor	Capital as Power ; <b>Quiz on critique of neo-classical and liberal econ</b>
T 2 /17	Marx and the Ecological Turn, Georgescu-Roegen and the MR School	Selections from Georgescu-Roegen, MR's John Bellamy Foster, and Jason Moore
R 2/19	Marx and the Systems-Ecological Turn ; Robert Biel	Cont'd, same reading ; Biel selections
T 2/24	Biel and Imperialism as Systems Critique of Neo-liberalism	Selections from Biel and King
R 2/26	What is Capital ? : the Structural Approach and its Critique	Selections from Deleuze and Guattari, lectures on capitalism, Anti-Oedipus
T 3/3	Intro to Capital Dynamics: Desire and the Infrastructure, Toward a Theory of Flows	Same Reading, Cont'd ; Dan Smith essay on Flows ; Kliman selections on capital destruction ; Meszaros on obsolescence
R 3/5	Radical or Dark Ecology Within the Human and Without: Ontology of economics and ecology revisited	Midterm Practice Test on Capital Dynamics
T 3/10	Cont'd material from last 2 sessions; Midterm Review	The Ecological Thought, Timothy Morton
<b>R 3/12</b>	<b>MIDTERM</b>	<b>MIDTERM</b> <b>First 5pg Paper Due*****</b>
<b>T 3/17 – R 3/19</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
T 3/24	Capital Dynamics as Thermo-Flows	Georgescu-Roegen, Deleuze and Guattari's AO- selections for both
R 3/26	New Theory of the Subject ; partial objects and flows	King paper
T 3/31	Subject and Social Organization: Ophuls View of Law and Virtue; How to Construct Law and Virtue on a Theory of Flows in a Dark Ecology	Begin Ophuls, Chapter 1 Law and Virtue;
R 4/2	Examining Ophuls View of Systems and Ecology	Ophuls, Chapter 2 <b>Quiz on Ophuls Ch. 2</b>
T 4/7	Ophuls on Physics & Psychology :	Ophuls, Chapters 3 & 4 ; Notes on

	How to Construct a Theory of Subjectivity Within a Shadowy Partial Object World ?;	Lacan
R 4/9	If We do Live in a Shadow World, How do We Construct a Viable Paideia and Politeia ?	Ophuls, Chapters 5 & 6, Cont'd <b>Quiz on Ophuls Ch. 3-4</b>
T 4/14	Capital Dynamics and the State: Liberal and Fascist Poles of Desire	Litaker Paper selections ; Clastres, Society and the State, selections <b>Second 5 Page paper due*****</b>
R 4/16	A More Experienced and Wiser Savage: Critique of Ophuls. Is Democracy Feasible?	Fascism and Schizophrenia or Subject and Capital <b>Quiz on Ophuls Chapters 5 &amp; 6</b>
T 4/21	Is Resistance Outmoded? If So, How So? If Not, What is To Be Done?	Be Ready to Discuss
R 4/23	Discussion Cont'd	Be Ready to Discuss
T 4/28		Contemporary World Events and Issues ; Michael Hudson, Mike Whitney on Oil
R 4/30		Contemporary World Events and Issues, Soft Power and War ; Nick Land selection
T 5/5	Final Review	Final Review
<b>R NO CLASS</b>	<b>READING DAY</b>	<b>READING DAY</b>
Finals Week	<b>EXAM</b>	EXAM; 15-20pg paper due. Let's attempt to publish these. I'll work with any and all of you to accomplish this.