

SOC 399: FOREST FIRES AND SOCIETY
Spring 2020

Timothy Ingalsbee, Ph.D.
Class Room: 240-A McKenzie Hall
Class Hours: Tues. 6:00pm to 8:50pm
Instructor's Email: tingalsb@uoregon.edu

CRN: 36189
Office Room:
Office Hours: Tues. 5:00-5:50pm
Office Phone:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This environmental sociology course will explore the sociocultural, political, economic, and ecological aspects of forest fires. We will begin by rediscovering the primordial connections between homo sapiens and fire, arguing that the domestic and landscape uses of fire played an essential role in the development of human cultures and civilizations. Next we will review the history of fire management policies in the U.S., examining how policies were influenced by various societal "surpluses" of land, labor, information technology, and housing development. Then we will devote ourselves to learning some of the basics of fire science, fire ecology, and fire management. We will apply this knowledge to critical examinations of federal fire management policies and practices, looking specifically at the effects of industrial forestry and fire suppression on forest ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest. We will use the 1991 Warner Creek Fire and the Forest Service's proposed salvage logging timber sale as a watershed event in the "timber wars" of the 1990s, and a harbinger of the role that forest fires would play in policy debates over forestry and natural resource management. We will make connections between the "burning issues" that are causing increased frequency of wildfire disasters in the west: climate change, rural sprawl, and forest/fire management policies. Throughout the course, we will explore solutions to wildfire disasters by envisioning the kinds of societal changes necessary to recreate fire-adapted human communities living sustainably within fire-dependent forest ecosystems.

COURSE TEXTS

- Stephen Pyne; *World Fire: The Culture of Fire on Earth*
- Sara Jensen and Guy McPherson; *Living With Fire: Fire Ecology and Policy for the 21st Century*
- George Wuerthner (ed.); *Wildfire: A Century of Failed Forest Policy*
- *A reading packet of journal article--to be announced*

All readings should be completed by the date they are assigned, and students should be prepared to discuss material from the readings in class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be one midterm exam and a final exam. The midterm exam will cover required readings, lectures, films, guest presentations, and class discussions from Weeks 1 to 5 inclusive, and will be worth 30% of the total course grade. The final exam will be a comprehensive exam, but will emphasize the readings and lectures from Weeks 6 to 10 inclusive, and will be worth

40% of the total course grade. An individual research project will comprise 10% of the grade, and 20% of the total course grade will come from attendance, active participation in class discussions, and weekly small-group discussion exercises responding to films, guest speakers, or discussion prompts provided by the Instructor.

WIRELESS POLICY

While wireless devices (cellphones and laptops connected to the internet) have improved our lives in many ways, and can be powerful research and educational tools, they can also be highly distracting and disruptive to other classmates, and undermine learning in the classroom. Consequently, students should use wireless devices only during designated breaks or when needed during group project meetings.

COURSE OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Note: The following schedule of lecture topics, assigned readings, films and guest speakers may be subject to change at any time at the instructor's discretion.

SECTION ONE: FIRE AND CULTURE

WEEK 1: March 31

Topic: Introduction to the course, review syllabus

Film: "Fire Wars"

WEEK 2: April 7

Topic: Fire and Culture / Indigenous Cultural Burning

Guest Speaker: Ken Carloni, Ph.D., Professor, Umpqua Community College

Readings: Pyne: Ch.1: 3-8; Ch.2: 11-26; Ch.3: 29-44; Ch.5: 60-75

Jensen & McPherson: 1-8

Wuerthner: 24-31; 32-42

WEEK 3: April 14

Topic: Fire and Modern Society / Fire in the Media

Guest Speaker: Lance Robertson, Instructor, UO School of Journalism and Communication

Readings: Pyne: Ch.6: 76-94; Ch.7: 95-109; Ch.9: 129-148

Wuerthner: 54-66

SECTION TWO: FIRE POLICY AND FIRE SCIENCE

WEEK 4: April 21

Topic: Fire Management Policy / Fire Legislation and Economics

Guest Speaker: Alex Harris, Policy Analyst, Cascadia Wildlands

Readings: Pyne: Ch.12: 183-218; Ch.14: 238-255

Wuerthner: 3-12

Jensen & McPherson: Ch.1: 9-14

Ingalsbee: "The Rising Costs of Wildfire Suppression"

Film: "Evolution of Policy: From Fire Control to Fire Management"

WEEK 5: April 28 MIDTERM EXAM

Topic: Fire Science, Fire Ecology, and the Fire Environment

Readings: Jensen & McPherson: Ch.1: 14-34
Selection from the reading packet

Guest Speaker: George Wuerthner; Environmental Writer, Photographer, Ecologist

SECTION THREE: FIRE AND FUELS MANAGEMENT

WEEK 6: May 5

Topic: Fire Suppression and The Fire Industrial Complex

Readings: Pyne: Ch.13: 219-237; Ch.15: 256-268
Wuerthner: 43-53; 262-282
Jensen & McPherson: Ch.3: 61-74

Guest Speaker: Joe Fox, Ph.D., Smokejumper, U.S. Forest Service

Film: "Into the Firestorm"

WEEK 7: May 12

Topic: Fuels Reduction / Case Study: The Warner Creek Fire Recovery Project

Readings: Wuerthner: 203-212; 224-249
Selection from the reading packet

Guest Speaker: Samantha Krop, Grassroots Organizer, Cascadia Wildlands

Film: "Born in Fire: Warner Creek and the Politics of Salvage Logging"

SECTION FOUR: BURNING ISSUES

WEEK 8: May 19

Topic: Fire and Climate Change

Readings: Wuerthner: 178-190; 329-341
Jensen & McPherson: 40-45
Selection from the reading packet

Guest Speaker: Doug Gavin, Ph.D., Professor, UO Geography Department

WEEK 9: May 26

Topic: Rural Sprawl and Urban Wildfire Disasters

Readings: Wuerthner: 301-310; 311-316; 317-323
Selection from the reading packet

Guest Speaker: Alex Rahmlow, Fire Chief, Oregon Department of Forestry

Film: "Wildfire! Preventing Home Ignitions"

WEEK 10: June 2

Topic: Ecological Fire Management and Fire-Adapted Communities

Readings: Jensen & McPherson: Ch.5: 103-118; Ch.6: 119-135
Selection from the reading packet

Guest Speaker: Amanda Rau, Fire Manager, The Nature Conservancy

WEEK 11: June 9

*FINAL EXAM: 7:00pm to 9:00pm

