MODULE TITLE: Sustainability and Collapse in Past Societies

CREDIT VALUE: 15

MODULE CODE: ARC3123

MODULE CONVENER: Prof. José Iriarte

DURATION: TERM 1 2 3
WEEKS: 11

Number Students Taking Module (anticipated): 20

DESCRIPTION – summary of the module content (100 words)

Can we learn any lessons for sustainable futures by studying human-environment relationships in ancient societies? Although we often envisioned the world of ancient people as a land of pristine natural beauty and untouched environments, the study of past coupled human environmental systems show us that this was not always the case. On the contrary, many past societies had heavily impacted their environments and/or have been impacted by catastrophic natural events to the extent that social and political systems need to be transformed or ultimately collapsed. Drawing on a wide range of interdisciplinary case studies from all around the world –from El Niño events in the Pacific coast in pre-Columbian Peru to the Little Ice Age in Medieval Europe– in this module we are going to examine the impact that past societies had on their world. More importantly, we will discuss if there are any valuable lessons from the past that can inform future sustainable land-use policies.

MODULE AIMS – intentions of the module

The module aims to provide an inter-disciplinary understanding for the study of human environmental relations in past societies. It will introduce you to the concepts of cultural collapse, resilience and sustainability by looking at a wide range of case studies around the world. The module will mainly focus on the diversity of human responses that were triggered by human-induced and natural climatic changes, including catastrophic events. We will pay particular attention to the ecological vulnerability of different socio-political systems within particular environments, human resilience to change and the regeneration of complex societies after collapse.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES (ILOs) (see assessment section below for how ILOs will be assessed)

On successful completion of this module you should be able to:

Module Specific Skills and Knowledge:

1. Understand fundamental anthropological and ecological concepts that are critical for analysing past coupled human environment systems including cultural collapse, resilience and sustainability

2. Understand methodological aspects of commonly used environmental techniques to investigate how humans impacted past environments and how natural climatic fluctuations and catastrophic events have triggered a diversity of cultural responses

3. Discuss a selection of coupled human environment systems examples and their relationship to contemporary sustainability issues

Discipline Specific Skills and Knowledge:
4. Demonstrate knowledge of, and ability to reflect on, contrasting archaeological perspectives
5. Have a competent overview of the use and acquisition of practical data
6. Interpret a variety of information forms and assimilate/manage numerical and graphical data
7. Demonstrate comprehension and detailed knowledge of complex issues through essay-based coursework

**Personal and Key Transferable/ Employment Skills and Knowledge:**
8. Demonstrate techniques of locating, organizing and digesting material to produce, to a deadline, a piece of coherent analysis
9. Acquire a range of observational and analytical skills which are applicable in the wider world.
10. Contribute to group discussions, ask pertinent questions and co-operate with and learn from peers

**SYLLABUS PLAN – summary of the structure and academic content of the module**
The syllabus plan should not be provided on a week-by-week basis unless the delivery pattern can be guaranteed

1. Key concepts and approaches in sustainability
2. The archaeology of collapse, transformation and resilience
3. Environmental Archaeology methods to study human-environment relationships
4. Human responses to El Niño in the Central Andes
5. Amazonia: Untouched forest or manufactured landscape?
6. The 1492 Columbian Encounter
7. The impact of agrarian systems in the Near East
8. The Norse colonisation of Greenland: Failed experiment?
9. The Little Ice Age in Europe
10. Seminar presentations
11. Seminar presentations

**LEARNING AND TEACHING**

**LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS (given in hours of study time)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Hours of study time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled learning and teaching activities</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11 scheduled classes will be 2 hours long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided independent study</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>Independent study to include reading, preparation for classes and assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement/study abroad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DETAILS OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS**

**ASSESSMENT**

**FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT** - for feedback and development purposes; does not count towards module grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Assessment</th>
<th>Size of the assessment e.g. duration/length</th>
<th>ILOs assessed</th>
<th>Feedback method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (% of credit)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coursework</th>
<th>Written exams</th>
<th>Practical exams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DETAILS OF SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT**
**Form of Assessment** | % of credit | Size of the assessment e.g. duration/length | ILOs assessed | Feedback method
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Essay | 60% | 2000 words | 1-9 | Mark and written comments
Oral presentation | 40% | 20 minutes | 1-10 | Mark and comments

**DETAILS OF RE-ASSESSMENT** (where required by referral or deferral)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original form of assessment</th>
<th>Form of re-assessment</th>
<th>ILOs re-assessed</th>
<th>Time scale for re-assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>Refer/Defer period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Printed copy of presentation</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>Refer/Defer period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RE-ASSESSMENT NOTES** – give details of how re-assessment will be calculated. This section can also be used to indicate where re-assessment is not available

**RESOURCES**

**INDICATIVE LEARNING RESOURCES** - The following list is offered as an indication of the type & level of information that you are expected to consult. Further guidance will be provided by the Module Convener.

Basic reading:


**ELE** – College to provide hyperlink to appropriate pages

**CREDIT VALUE** | 15 **ECTS VALUE** | 7.5
**PRE-REQUISITE MODULES** | None **CO-REQUISITE MODULES** | Not taking ARC3123 **NQF LEVEL (FHEQ)** | 4 **AVAILABLE AS DISTANCE LEARNING** | NO **ORIGIN DATE** | March 2013 **LAST REVISION DATE** | **KEY WORDS SEARCH** | Societies, Archaeology, Sustainability

Module Descriptor Template Revised October 2011