

Southern Oregon University  
The Center for Social Ecology and Public Policy  
SSPC 401/501 or ES 401/501  
FIELD SCHOOL IN SOCIAL ECOLOGY AND PUBLIC POLICY

**Instructors**

Kevin Preister, Ph.D., (541) 488-6978; Cell: (541) 601-4797; [kpreister@jkagroup.com](mailto:kpreister@jkagroup.com)

Trish Malone, M.A., (808) 443-9445; [tmalone@jkagroup.com](mailto:tmalone@jkagroup.com)

James A. Kent, J.D., M.S., (970) 618-9240; [jkent@jkagroup.com](mailto:jkent@jkagroup.com)

Office Hours: By Appointment

**GOAL**

The goal of the CSEPP/SOU Ethnographic Field School Program is to foster competent generalists in applied social science who are capable of applying ethnographic and social ecology methods to a wide variety of policy areas.

The program offers a guided, intensive community fieldwork experience as the basis for understanding current conditions in a specific geographic area and relating these findings to implementation strategies for developing public policy. The policy focus areas will vary year to year. Possible foci include natural resource policy, community development, human service delivery, economic development, and urban/neighborhood policy. The program involves close coordination with local agencies and organizations with responsibility for creating and carrying out public policy.

Successful completion of this course will make students eligible for *Level Two Certification: Social Ecology Process* from the Center for Social Ecology and Public Policy. Students may elect to take this course for CSEPP certification, for twelve (12) undergraduate or graduate SOU academic credit hours, or both.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The Objectives of this course are to:

1. Understand informal systems of communication and caretaking present in community, as well as community archetypes, used to manage life and survival on a daily basis.
2. Develop practice in a social ecological process focused on student skills of listening with your whole nervous system, being a disciplined stranger and an expert reflector, and thus foster ability to comprehend unfamiliar cultural settings.
3. Understand the challenges and opportunities of working within ethical standards of social science disciplines.
4. Create strategies for policy development that foster citizen empowerment, policy developed from a cultural base, and alignment between informal and formal societal interests.

5. Through anthropological methods, foster a new paradigm of decision making that will enhance the formally-based system typically used by government.
6. Develop student capacity to work in a professional capacity in complex settings as well as create written products that are responsive to anthropological and public policy audiences.

## REQUIRED READINGS

Readings support ethnographic skill development and directly connect with concepts used in the fieldwork experience. They also provide the focus for daily team reflection. Weekly reading assignments are specified in the course outline below.

## FIELD SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

This course involves a team-based project in ethnography, social ecology and public policy development. Students are expected to devote 40 hours per week for four weeks, engaged in the process of community fieldwork and team reflection. Ideally, hours of fieldwork will be organized to effectively document the range of routines present in the community. While effort is made to accommodate personal schedules, the specific hours of fieldwork will be negotiated within the team setting. Whole-hearted participation in fieldwork and the daily team reflection is essential for a positive learning experience and for a successful project outcome. If students must break from this routine, close coordination with instructors is necessary to protect a student's good standing.

## GRADUATE STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

The Field School in Social Ecology and Public Policy is a split level course, allowing the student to earn either undergraduate or graduate credit as appropriate. To earn graduate credit, the student must fulfill all undergraduate course expectations as well as these additional requirements:

- Assume a leadership role in class settings and group learning situations.
- Undertake additional readings oriented to the professional application of the ethnographic experience to policy formation.
- Complete a writing assignment based on the course suitable for inclusion in a publication such as Practicing Anthropology.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participation in the CSEPP/SOU Field School in Social Ecology and Public Policy will provide students with a rich, dynamic and fulfilling learning experience. From this experience, it is expected that students will:

1. Gain confidence in the ethnographic fieldwork process, becoming more comfortable in "entering the routines" of a community, successfully engaging

community residents, and developing professional expertise in applied ethnographic process.

2. Learn community assessment skills grounded in knowledge discovered through the fieldwork experience, working with teammates to discover patterns and create social ecology-based models of how and why the community functions as it does.
3. Develop strategies for the development and implementation of public policy based on the ethnographic process which foster empowerment of individuals in their community setting and responsiveness to cultural routines and practices.
4. Graduate students particularly, through ethnographic practice and team reflection, develop professional capacity involving the application of ethnographic methods to public policy development in a variety of fields, thereby becoming more focused about career goals and opportunities.

While much academic learning will develop through a reflective process within the team setting, the instructors are also available for personal consultation and coaching on an as-needed basis.

## GRADING

Grading will be based on participation in the fieldwork experience, participation in daily team reflections, and the quality of the public policy product of the class.

Grading distinctions are drawn as follows:

- A** Quality of work is truly outstanding: oral and written contributions are accurate, detailed, comprehensive, intellectually sophisticated, well-written/clearly communicated, and highly engaged.
- B** Quality of work is good: oral and written contributions show considerable conceptual understanding and engagement but fall short of being truly outstanding.
- C** Quality of work shows evidence of effort but only partial comprehension and/or engagement, suffering marked problems in content, organization, interpretation, expression and/or participation.
- D** Quality of work is seriously flawed in terms of content and/or participation but represents some effort.
- F** Quality of work is unacceptable in terms of quality, content and/or engagement.

Please note: If you are in need of academic support because of a disability, you may be eligible for academic accommodations through Disability Services. Please contact the Student Access Center in the lower SU, phone 552-6213, to schedule an appointment.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Week One

- Readings:
  1. Larsh, Ed, as told by James Kent, “Mack and the Boys as Consultants,” IN Doc's Lab: Myth and Legends of Cannery Row, Monterey, California: PBL Press, 1995. <http://www.jkagroup.com/methods/mackandtheboys.html>.
  2. Herbert Gans, The Urban Villagers, selected reading
  3. Roy Oldenburg, The Great Good Place, selected reading
- Orientation to the fieldwork experience
- Logistics and Team Schedule
- Community Fieldwork
- Identification of public policy parameters
- Daily team reflection and strategy development
- Thursday movie night, Selected portions of films relevant to the concepts and methods of Social Ecology.

Key Concepts	Expected Learning Outcomes Students are able to:
Social Ecology Productive Harmony Bio-Social Ecosystems Geographic Democracy Social Capital The Discovery Process™ Informal Networks Citizen Issues Gathering Places Caretakers/Communicators, & other community archetypes Social and Economic Trends	Define social ecology and its relation to public policy Participate in the reflective process to enhance skills in the Discovery Process Understand the ways in which informal networks are the means of survival at the informal level of community

### Week Two

- Readings:
  1. Preister, Kevin, “Social Ecology and Public Policy,” 2004, on the website of the Society of Applied Anthropology, <http://www.sfaa.net/committees/policy/policy.html>.
  2. Preister, Kevin and James A. Kent, “Social Ecology: A New Pathway to Watershed Restoration.” In Watershed Restoration: Principles and Practices, by Jack E. Williams, Michael P. Dombeck and Christopher A. Wood, Editors. Bethesda, Md.: The American Fisheries Society, 2004. [http://www.jkagroup.com/Docs/KPreister\\_PathwayToWatershedRestoration.pdf](http://www.jkagroup.com/Docs/KPreister_PathwayToWatershedRestoration.pdf)
  3. Two additional articles focused on public policy.
- Community Fieldwork
- Assessment of formal levels of community: agencies, organizations, institutions
- Daily team reflection and strategy development

- Thursday movie night, Selected portions of films relevant to the concepts and methods of Social Ecology.

Key Concepts	Expected Learning Outcomes Students are able to:
Seven Cultural Descriptors Empowerment The Life Cycle of Citizen Issues Management Concerns Themes versus Issues Cultural Alignment Human Geographic Mapping Issue Resolution Standards of Ethical Practice	Articulate local informal networks and how they operate Give examples of how gathering places function with populations they serve Provide examples of emerging, existing, and disruptive issues, showing how they have influenced agency organizations Identify examples of management concerns Show how the degree of integration of citizen issues and management concerns influences responsive public policy Understand how to work within ethical standards of social science disciplines

### Week Three

- Readings:
  1. Preister, Kevin and James A. Kent, "Using Social Ecology to Meet the Productive Harmony Intent of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)," Hastings West-Northwest Journal of Environmental Law and Policy, Volume 7, Issue 3, Spring, 2001, Berkeley, CA. Hastings College of the Law. [http://www.jkagroup.com/Docs/KPreister\\_UsingSocialEcology.pdf](http://www.jkagroup.com/Docs/KPreister_UsingSocialEcology.pdf).
  2. John Steinbeck, The Moon is Down, East of Eden, Tortilla Flat, Sweet Thursday, selected readings
- Community Fieldwork
- Characterization of communities using Seven Cultural Descriptors
- Daily team reflection and strategy development
- Thursday movie night, Selected portions of films relevant to the concepts and methods of Social Ecology.

Key Concepts	Expected Learning Outcomes Students are able to:
Social Capital Generation National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Integrated Resource Management Productive Harmony Assessment Collaborative Action Responsive Policy Development	Articulate seven cultural descriptors of their area Draw a human geographic map using descriptors from fieldwork Reflect on opportunities to realize productive harmony intent of NEPA Reflect on community archetypes and the geography of networks Identify institutional barriers that hamper responsive management practices Develop a strategy for policy and program development using the Discovery Process to identify issues, trends, and opportunities

**Week Four**

- Readings:
  1. Paolo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, selected reading
  2. Colfer, C.J.P. 2008. From understanding to action: building on anthropological approaches to influence policymaking In: Walters, B., McCay, B. J., West, P., Lees, S. (eds.). Against the Grain: the Vayda Tradition in Human Ecology and Ecological Anthropology. 273-285. Lanham, MD, USA: AltaMira Press.
- Completion of community fieldwork
- Assembly of public policy strategy
- Certification awards.

Key Concepts	Expected Learning Outcomes Students are able to:
Human Geographic Issue Management System™ Policy Development Responsive Policy Formation	Define the elements of social capital Articulate seven levels of human geography Define and integrate the physical, biological, social, cultural, and economic elements of an issue Define how organizational structure may shift to accommodate an empowerment approach Develop a strategy to affect public policy formation using social ecology principles that is responsive to the culture that descriptors reveal