The Honeybee and International Relations

SIS 419-002
Class meets in Mary Graydon Center 303 A
Thursdays, 11:45 AM-02:25 PM

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Office Hours (drop-in): Mondays, 1 PM – 2 PM, 5:15 PM – 6:15 PM, and Thursdays, 2:30 PM – 4:30 PM. Email bratman@american.edu to schedule an appointment, if needed.

Course Overview:
What does the humble honeybee tell us, behind its buzz? This course focuses on honeybees as both a metaphorical and pragmatic example through which to view broader international relations issues such as sustainable development, commodities and the global economy, labor and migration, and democratic processes. Throughout the course, students will develop their own significant research projects, based on a singular micro-level case study that explores and explains an international relations issue. The course is based on political and cultural geographic traditions that use a granular focus to examine big-picture issues.

Course Methodology:
This course will primarily be taught seminar-style: discussion is central to your learning process, and it is essential to come to class ready to talk about central ideas from the readings. As a professor in this course, my hope is that our classroom will provide a space in which your participation, critical thought, free exchange of ideas, and mutual learning is fostered. Classes will integrate lectures, discussions, and in-class exercises. Assignments are aimed at stimulating students’ abilities to think critically, to construct cohesive arguments, to develop and hone research skills, articulate their views in a variety of formats, and to make connections between concepts in the readings and real-life applications.

Learning Objectives:
1) Hone abilities to analyze and draw connections between a range of international relations problems through interdisciplinary analysis of agri-ecological dimensions of food systems and international politics. This will be assessed through class participation and the final paper.

2) Critically examine the role and importance of ecological metaphor as a means of orienting thought, and assess the conditions under which these may be effective in orienting thought and policy about different issues. This will be assessed through the metaphor assignment.
3) Critically analyze globalization and be able to explore the connections between economic, political and social processes shaping our globe. This will be assessed through the commodity chain assignment.

4) Understand and explore relationships between scientific knowledge, inequality, development, and environmental quality through case studies and theoretically-oriented readings, and gain familiarity with concepts and topical matter including but not limited to: ecological metaphor, the relationship between science and policy formation, livelihoods and rural development, commodity chains, ecological crisis and responses to ecological problems. This will be assessed throughout the course, and specifically through class participation and the final paper.

5) Hone skills of critical thinking, analysis, research, and verbal and written expression through assignments, classroom discussion, and written work. This will be assessed throughout the course.

COURSE POLICIES
Safe and Inclusive Classroom Statement
- As community, in this classroom and at American University, we value diversity and aim to foster a safe and supportive environment for our students. The classroom environment should be especially conducive to the productive exchange of ideas, especially including minority views.
- Topics may arise in class readings and discussion that may be sensitive to some class participants, including but not limited to issues of racism, disability, gender inequality, sexuality, and violence. In the interest of promoting the wellness of all students in the class, I will do my best to present "trigger warnings" for such content, and students should take due measures to protect their own sense of safety and wellness in the case of acute sensitivities.
- To facilitate our communication, if there is a particular name and/or pronoun you would like used, please let me know what it is and what pronoun you prefer.
- Students found responsible for sexual misconduct, in the classroom or outside of it, can face penalties that include suspension or expulsion from American University, and they may be subject to criminal charges.

Course Policies:
A few ground rules:
1. **Listen** thoughtfully before judging, and be considerate of your peers.
2. **Be present.** Come to class on time, come prepared for learning, and don’t get distracted. In that vein: absolutely no IM’ing, turn cell phones off, and please keep internet use to a bare minimum.
3. **Help each other.** We’re on a journey to learn together; the more you push each other to debate and discuss ideas, the more you'll all benefit. Respectfully disagree. If someone is nodding off, nudge them. Think of your classmates as allies, and your professor as facilitator, coach, and teacher.
4. **Remember humility.** Remember no one has all the right answers. Be open to new ideas. Challenge authority.

5. **Honor your learning process.** Challenge yourself. Clarify your educational goals early on. Take initiative to ask discussion questions. Forming study groups. Come in to office hours. Strive to indulge your curiosity, read ‘recommended’ readings, and hone your analytic skills. Respect the university’s honor code (especially, don’t cheat or plagiarize!), or face serious disciplinary consequences.

**Support Services:** If you are experiencing special difficulties in this course, please do not hesitate to let me know. In addition to resources at SIS, a wide range of services are available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements and to succeed as a student at American University.

The **Academic Support Center** (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities. Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the **Writing Center, Battelle 228**.

The **Counseling Center** (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.

**Survivors of Sexual Assault** have numerous resources (on- and off-campus) available for support. These resources can be found at: [http://www.american.edu/.../sexual-assault-resources.cfm/](http://www.american.edu/.../sexual-assault-resources.cfm/)

**Disability Support Services** (x3315, MGC 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical, or psychological disabilities.

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please notify me in a timely manner with a letter from the Academic Support Center or Disability Support Services so that we can make arrangements to address your needs.

**Academic Integrity:** Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University’s Academic Integrity Code, and will be strictly adhered to. For details, see [http://american.edu/handbook/policies_guidelines.htm](http://american.edu/handbook/policies_guidelines.htm).

**Plagiarism:** To plagiarize is to use the work, ideas, or words of someone else without attribution. Plagiarism may involve using someone else’s wording without using quotation marks—a distinctive name, a phrase, a sentence, or an entire passage or essay. It may also involve misrepresenting the sources that were used. If in doubt as to whether you are at risk of plagiarism, the best precaution is to cite your sources whenever possible.

**Emergency Preparedness:** In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. I will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-
mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/college-specific information.

Assignment Logistics: All papers are due at the start of class. All papers should be sent in electronically, to bratman@american.edu, with the file saved as YOURLASTNAME_PaperWhatever.docx. Please save files as .doc, .odt, or .docx format – not as PDFs. I will return your paper to you electronically, with comments in track-changes.

Missed Deadlines (late work): I strongly discourage you from handing in work late, but it will be accepted. Papers handed in late will drop 3 points per day (or one grade), unless permission is granted otherwise, prior to the assignment due date. “Late” starts at the beginning of class; in other words, if class starts at 11:30 AM, emailing your work at 12:00 PM will incur a late penalty.

For example, an otherwise paper A (95) would drop to an A- (92) if it is one day late, and then from an A- to a B+ the second day late, etc. Plan ahead! And remember, it's always better for your grade to turn in something rather than nothing at all. No late work will be accepted after our last class meeting.

Performance Measurement/Evaluation Standards:

95-100 A Excellent
91-94 A- Very Good
87-90 B+ Good, competent
83-86 B Satisfactory, acceptable
79-82 B- Adequate, fair quality

75-78 C+ Acceptable, shoddy quality
71-74 C Lacking competency, below standard
67-70 C- Inadequate, very poor quality

Also consider: A year, and five or ten years from now, which will you value more highly - your learning experience in this course or a letter on your college transcript? You will only get out of your education as much as you put into it. The most successful students ask lots of questions, engage their peers, are curious, and seek help and learning opportunities whenever possible. I hope you will all be successful students in this course!

Assignments:
20% Attendance and in-class participation (and quizzes)
15% Final Product Proposal: Abstract, Outline, and Bibliography
20% Ecological Metaphor Assignment
20% Commodity Chain Assignment (written / visual)
25% Final Product (8,000 word paper, documentary, or other, see instructor)
Honeybees and International Relations Readings List

Week 1: Sustainability, Pedagogy, and Syllabus Review

Week 2: Ecological Metaphor: What can we Learn from the Bees?

Week 3: Beecology: Science, The Precautionary Principle, and Saving the Bees
Ecological Metaphor assignment: due today (see separate assignment description and rubric).

Week 4: Food Systems: Pollination, Forage, and Harvest

Week 5: Of Bees and Farmworkers: Migratory Labor and Modern Agribusiness


Week 6: Overcoming the Tragedy of the Commons

Final Paper product proposal due: Abstract, Bibliography, and Outline


Week 7: Political Systems: Swarms and Security


Week 8: Money, Honey: Honey Laundering and Commodity Chains

Commodity Chain assignment – due today


Week 9: Livelihoods: Bees for Development


Week 10: “Alternative” Beekeeping, and Alternative Development


• Spikenard Farm. "Spikenard Farm Honeybee Sanctuary." https://spikenardfarm.org/.

Week 11: Sustainable Cities and Urban Beekeeping


Week 12: Glocal Issues: Local Responses and Global Problems
Week 13: Socio-Ecological Futures


Week 14: Presentation of Final Papers

(and possible field day with the bees).

Suggestions for Further Reading:

Bee-related:

- Frisch, Karl Von. (1953). The Dancing Bees: An Account of the Life and Senses of the Honey Bee, Harvest Books New York. * Frisch’s early studies of bees are a delightful account of simple studies in behavioral biology and were foundational in bee entomology.

Critical Geography and Political Ecology:


**Environmentally-related, global and local:**