

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Terms and concepts to know:

“Tragedy of the Commons”	Ecosystem
Carrying capacity	Population explosion
Malthusianism	Sustainable development
Anthropocentrism	Contempocentrism
Market failure	“Greenhouse Effect”
Ozone depletion	Deforestation (biodiversity)
Desertification	“Acid rain”

Study and discussion questions:

1. What is the “tragedy of the commons?” How does it serve as a metaphor for the fate of the earth?
2. What accounts for the world’s population explosion? Describe its most likely consequences. What measures have been taken to slow population growth? Are these enough?
3. Describe how the world’s environmental problems are interrelated. Are you relatively optimistic or pessimistic about humanity’s ability to overcome these problems? Why?
4. At one point in Sasha Lilley’s interview with Jason W. Moore she asks: “What form did the ecological crisis take that helped end feudalism and fed the emergence of early capitalism?” His answer is fascinating. Do you see elements of what is happening in the U.S. and the world now in his answer? What are the similarities or differences?
5. Victor Wallis’s article draws distinctions between both capitalist and socialist responses to contemporary ecological thought. Examine his argument and discuss your position on his arguments.
6. Many activists (such as Wallis) are skeptical of Hawken’s “natural capitalism” approach. What do you think of Hawken’s ideas and of the notion of “free market environmentalism” in general?
7. Discuss the film *Planet of the Humans*. Why do you believe so many prominent left environmentalists criticized this documentary? What do you think are fair criticisms and which appear to be unfair?

Readings:

WEB – Readings from the “Global Environment” links.

Video:

Planet of the Humans.