SOCIETAL COLLAPSE ?:
RELATIONSHIPS OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN
RADICAL ADAPTIVE RECONFIGURATION

RELEVANCE: By the end of the 20th century loss of human life, property and livelihood was significantly exceeded by losses to natural disasters and environmental change. “Ecological Refugees” now comprise more than 25 million people and constitute an ever-growing portion of the World’s displaced people. Global Warming will exacerbate this deteriorating situation during your lifetime and provide support opportunities for applied research underpinning informed future policy decisions.

The topic is “hot,” witness Jeered Diamond’s recent popular best seller, “COLLAPSE: HOW SOCIETIES CHOOSE TO FAIL OR SUCCEED.” (that you are required to read before the first seminar meeting).

Concomitantly, some factions of the Anthropology community are shedding aspects of the traditional view of “culture as a super-organic phenomena” and post modernism to address radical environmental change and ensuing social stress is a positivistic mode. These works, just as Diamond’s, will guide our explorations and discussions of change. They include but are not limited to the following:

Bawen G. and R. Reycraft

Fagan, Brain


Oliver-Smith, A and S. Hoffman eds
1999 The Angry Earth: Disasters in Anthropological Perspective, , Routledge..

Susanna Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith eds
2002 Catastrophe & Culture, School of American Research, Santa Fe.
Prerequisites: Natural disaster and environmental change cross-cuts all disciplines and time frames. There is, of course a “time lag” framework, as with Hurricane Katrina. Thus, we look at the topic in hindsight, while striving for foresight.

In terms of recent hindsight on global warming you must read: The Climate of Man, by E. Kolbert, New Yorker May 9, 2005.

Do that and then talk to me about your chances of getting into the seminar.

The seminar is open to all students of any discipline interested in the topic.

Seminar Structure: This is largely an exploratory reading course intended to bring all concerned parties into awareness of growing social concerns and the relevant literature about the consequences of environmental change.

We will have a scheduled first meeting at the designated UF time and place and explore the convenience of meeting elsewhere at an early evening hour.

Because this is an exploratory seminar, I would like no more than 6-8 participants at a maximum. Thus, please contact me if you have interest in the course.

Written Work:

1) Weekly Assignments
2) Final Paper that should follow American Antiquity format with 2 references per page.

Grading: Class presentations, and Written work.