

"How do we know there is a population-environment problem?"

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Critical thinking themes about environment, science, and society to be developed during the class:

- A. The analysis of causes and the implications of the analysis change qualitatively if uniform units are replaced by unequal units subject to further differentiation as a result of their linked economic, social and political dynamics.
- B. Preferences for certain social arrangements and actions are built into the ways nature and society are represented.

Questions for the audience posed during the lecture or left for homework:

0. What's your initial answer to the question?

1. On the basis of this science [population data & projections]:
What is to be done?

What more would you like to know than this science shows?

2. On the basis of these projections and given your position in society [on island B]:
What things might you do?

What more would you like to know than the science—the projections—show?

- 3a. What kinds of places could different people do something now in light of this history [of soil erosion in Oaxaca]?

- 3b. Pick one of these places/people and on the basis of this history and analysis:
What things might people in this place do?

What more would they like to know about the situation?

4. In what ways, if any, would your answer to 0. change in light of the above sequence of science and its interpretation?

Further material on critical thinking about environment, science, and society:

Program on Science, Technology & Values, <http://www.stv.umb.edu>
<http://www.faculty.umb.edu/pjt/popdialogue.html>

Taylor, P. J. (2003). "Non-standard lessons from the 'tragedy of the commons'," pp. 87-105 in M. Maniates (ed.) Encountering Global Environmental Politics: Teaching, Learning, and Empowering Knowledge. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.