

2008-2009 Prize Lectureships in Environmental Studies

PGE is pleased to congratulate the winners of the 2008-2009 Prize Lectureships in Environmental Studies, Andrew Bauer and Trevor Pearce. The Prize recipients' official course descriptions are reproduced below, with details about their academic background and research interests.

The Prize Lectureships are awarded to advanced graduate students who specialize in environmental topics, regardless of academic discipline, and affords them the opportunity to gain valuable teaching experience. Successful course proposals reflect the interdisciplinary focus of the Environmental Studies major, and span diverse environmental topics including environmental economics and policy, development, globalization, environmental history, landscape studies and human ecology, and environmental ethics, philosophy, and representation. Winners of the lectureship are appointed by the Social Sciences Collegiate Division as Environmental Studies Prize Lecturers for the academic quarter in which the course will be offered.

Agriculture and the Social Ecology of Food Production

22503. Agriculture and the Social Ecology of Food Production. This course explores the social strategies and ecological consequences of agriculture in socio-historical contexts. It is not intended to be a general course on agronomy or policy, but rather a sustained discussion on the social relations and cultural practices and logics of food production in historical-ecological contexts. The overall objective of the course is to provide students with a critical awareness of the plurality of interrelationships between social environments and the ecological transformations of agricultural production. This will be achieved primarily through in-depth explorations of historical case studies – both archaeological and contemporary – that illustrate different configurations of socio-economic relations, cultural practices of land use, and environmental-ecological contexts. A. Bauer. Spring 2009.

Andrew Bauer is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at University of Chicago, expected to receive his PhD in 2009 with the approval of his dissertation, 'Socializing Environments and Ecologizing Politics: The Production of 'Nature' and Social Differentiation in Iron Age northern Karnataka.' His research addresses landscape history and the interface of human environment relations as mediated through cultural logics and socio-political strategies. For example, Andrew's dissertation research has partly documented how consumption practices during the Iron Age in south India reproduced social inequalities while concurrently dramatically altering soil distributions and the vegetation history of the region.

As a graduate student he has presented his work at numerous professional conferences and authored or co-authored multiple articles and edited book chapters, including "Towards a Political Ecology in Early South India" (2007, Asian Perspectives), "Producing Places and Producing 'Nature'" (2008, Antiquity), and "Agrarian Change, Elite Cuisine, and Forest History in Southern India" (with Dr. Kathleen Morrison). In addition to his scholarship on ancient India, Andrew has conducted archaeological research on ancient agricultural practices in southwest Asia, and as an environmental consultant also studied the impacts of neo-liberal policy shifts on agriculture in southeast Asia and the United States. Andrew has previously served as a lecturer and teaching assistant in the social science core curriculum series Power, Identity and Resistance and instructed graduate students and undergraduates in other courses on early complex societies, archaeological method and theory, and environmental science.



Environmental Philosophy

22502. Environmental Philosophy. This course is designed to encourage critical reflection on the relationship between humans and the natural world through a historical survey of (mainly American) philosophical perspectives on the environment. We will begin by exploring the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, and the American pragmatists. The course will then focus on the origins and development of modern environmental ethics, investigating such topics as the tension between social and environmental activism, the idea of intrinsic value, the ethical status of animals, the goal of sustainability, and the relation between the natural and the built environment. Throughout, we will discuss the frequent conflicts between scientific results, philosophical positions, and social policies. T. Pearce. Winter 2009.



Trevor Pearce is a fifth-year PhD student in the Committee on Conceptual and Historical Studies of Science. He has degrees in Metals and Materials Engineering and in the Humanities (English-Philosophy-Music) from the University of British Columbia in Canada. At the University of Chicago, he has received Master's degrees in both Philosophy and Evolutionary Biology, the latter for his work on the attachment strategies of marine bivalves. His dissertation project focuses on historical and philosophical problems surrounding the idea of organism-environment interaction. Historically, the project looks at the rise of the idea itself and its influence on turn-of-the-century American philosophy and psychology; philosophically, it explores the role of organism-environment interaction in macroevolution, e.g. ecosystem engineering, constraints on form, 'empty' niches, etc. In Spring 2008, he taught the seminar "Nature as Technology – A Philosophical and Historical Investigation" in the HIPS program.