1.) DATE: 10/16/2011
2.) COMMUNITY COLLEGE: Maricopa Co. Comm. College District

3.) COURSE PROPOSED: Prefix: ASB Number: 226 Title: Human Impacts on Ancient Environments Credits: 3

CROSS LISTED WITH: Prefix: Number: ; Prefix: Number: ; Prefix: Number: ; Prefix: Number: ;

4.) COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATOR: SHEREEN LERNER PHONE: 480-461-7306
FAX: 480-461-7812

ELIGIBILITY: Courses must have a current Course Equivalency Guide (CEG) evaluation. Courses evaluated as NT (non-transferable are not eligible for the General Studies Program.

MANDATORY REVIEW:
☐ The above specified course is undergoing Mandatory Review for the following Core or Awareness Area (only one area is permitted; if a course meets more than one Core or Awareness Area, please submit a separate Mandatory Review Cover Form for each Area).

POLICY: The General Studies Council (GSC-T) Policies and Procedures requires the review of previously approved community college courses every five years, to verify that they continue to meet the requirements of Core or Awareness Areas already assigned to these courses. This review is also necessary as the General Studies program evolves.

AREA(S) PROPOSED COURSE WILL SERVE: A course may be proposed for more than one core or awareness area. Although a course may satisfy a core area requirement and an awareness area requirement concurrently, a course may not be used to satisfy requirements in two core or awareness areas simultaneously, even if approved for those areas. With departmental consent, an approved General Studies course may be counted toward both the General Studies requirements and the major program of study.

5.) PLEASE SELECT EITHER A CORE AREA OR AN AWARENESS AREA:
Core Areas: Social and Behavioral Sciences (SB) Awareness Areas: Select awareness area...

6.) On a separate sheet, please provide a description of how the course meets the specific criteria in the area for which the course is being proposed.

7.) DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED
☐ Course Description
☐ Course Syllabus
☐ Criteria Checklist for the area
☐ Table of Contents from the textbook required and/or list of required readings/books
☐ Description of how course meets criteria as stated in item 6.

8.) THIS COURSE CURRENTLY TRANSFERS TO ASU AS:
☐ DECA
☐ ASB
☐ prefix
☐ Elective

Current General Studies designation(s): SB

Effective date: 2012 Spring Course Equivalency Guide

Is this a multi-section course? ☑ yes ☐ no
Is it governed by a common syllabus? ☑ yes ☐ no District-wide course competency outline

Chair/Director: Sheeren Lerner Chair/Director Signature: Sheeren Lerner

AGSC Action: Date action taken: ☑ Approved ☐ Disapproved

Effective Date:
Proposer: Please complete the following section and attach appropriate documentation.

### ASU--[SB] CRITERIA

A SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE [SB] course should meet all of the following criteria. If not, a rationale for exclusion should be provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Identify Documentation Submitted</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Course is designed to advance basic understanding and knowledge about human interaction. Syllabus, readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Course content emphasizes the study of social behavior such as that found in: Syllabus, readings</td>
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<td>• ANTHROPOLOGY</td>
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<td>• ECONOMICS</td>
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<td>• CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY</td>
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<td>• HISTORY</td>
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<td>3. Course emphasizes: Syllabus, readings</td>
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<td>a. the distinct knowledge base of the social and behavioral sciences (e.g., sociological anthropological). OR</td>
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<td>b. the distinct methods of inquiry of the social and behavioral sciences (e.g., ethnography, historical analysis).</td>
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<td>4. Course illustrates use of social and behavioral science perspectives and data. Syllabus, readings</td>
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**THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF COURSES ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE [SB] AREA EVEN THOUGH THEY MIGHT GIVE SOME CONSIDERATION TO SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE CONCERNS:**

- Courses with primarily fine arts, humanities, literary, or philosophical content.
- Courses with primarily natural or physical science content.
- Courses with predominantly applied orientation for professional skills or training purposes.
- Courses emphasizing primarily oral, quantitative, or written skills.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Prefix</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Designation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ASB</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>Human Impacts on Ancient Environments</td>
<td>SB</td>
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Explain in detail which student activities correspond to the specific designation criteria. Please use the following organizer to explain how the criteria are being met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria (from check sheet)</th>
<th>How course meets spirit (contextualize specific examples in next column)</th>
<th>Please provide detailed evidence of how course meets criteria (i.e., where in syllabus)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1                           | Interaction: The links between human actions and environmental consequences are often indirect and 'non-linear,' making them especially difficult to predict. Modern ecosystems are not static communities to be maintained or repaired, but are only the current manifestation of continuous and complex interactions among living and acting organisms—including humans—and between organisms and the abiotic (i.e., non-living) parts of their surroundings. These interactions stretch far back into antiquity, and the state of modern ecosystems is as much a product of their histories as it is current conditions. | - Explain how changes in human population affect human health and the physical environment  
- Describe methodologies employed in environmental and cultural reconstruction  
- Describe the impact of early hominids on their physical environments  
- Describe the impact of Paleolithic humans on their physical environments  
- Describe the origins of agriculture in the Neolithic period and its impact on the physical environment  
- Describe the impact of early agriculture on the environment  
- Concepts: long-term human-environmental interaction  
- The environmental impacts of urbanization  
- The causes and consequences of complexity  
- The epidemiology of civilization |
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<th>Anthropology: Archaeologists (and others interested in ecology of the past such as historical geographers, geomorphologists, paleontologists, and paleobotanists) are playing an increasingly important role in understanding the effects of humans on the earth. Only through studying the dynamic past of our planet’s ecosystems, and the ecological role of human society can we begin to understand what our future might hold.</th>
<th>-Identify and describe the subfields of anthropology. -Identify and explain common Western and non-Western attitudes about the physical environment -Identify and explain the theories and concepts that define some of the basic operating principles of nature -Identify and explain the interaction between humans and the environment -Why Ecology Needs Archaeologists and Archaeology Needs Ecologists -Human-induced changes in environment -The evolution of agricultural socioecosystems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social behavioral perspectives and data: The social and biophysical consequences of human-caused environmental change remain far from clear. The past few decades saw greater changes in some aspects of climate than have been recorded in over a millennium. How much this is a result of human activity and how much is due to non-human causes remains a matter of considerable debate. By learning the lessons of past human impacts—‘good’ and ‘bad’—we gain a better appreciation of the potential effects of our own activities today. By learning the lessons of past human impacts—‘good’ and ‘bad’—we gain a better appreciation of the potential effects of our own activities today</td>
<td>-Attitudes toward the environment -Concepts Related to Environment and the Past; Theoretical Orientations -History of Environmental Studies; approaches to environmental issues -Key issues in environmental change -Methods for Studying Past Environments: Stratigraphy, Paleoenvironmental reconstruction, Geoarchaeology, and Cultural Reconstruction -The Future of Domestication -Environmental degradation and early Mesopotamian civilization -Beyond sustainability: managed wetlands and water harvesting in ancient Mesoamerica -Lessons from the Past and Policy Issues.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Official Course Description: MCCCDD Approval: 12/14/04

ASB226 20052-99999

Human Impacts on Ancient Environments

Interrelationship between humans and their environments, using archaeological data and case studies beginning with early hominids. Uses of research to identify environmental change and distinguish between climatic and human-induced global change. Explores ways in which prehistoric people caused and responded to environmental changes. Prerequisites: None.

Go to Competencies  Go to Outline

MCCCDD Official Course Competencies:

ASB226 20052-99999 Human Impacts on Ancient Environments

1. Identify and describe the sub-fields of anthropology. (I)
2. Identify and explain common Western and non-Western attitudes about the physical environment. (II)
3. Identify and explain the theories and concepts that define some of the basic operating principles of nature. (III)
4. Identify and explain the interaction between humans and the environment. (IV)
5. Describe methodologies employed in environmental and cultural reconstruction. (V)
6. Describe the impact of early hominids on their physical environments. (VI)
7. Describe the impact of Paleolithic humans on their physical environments. (VII)
8. Describe the origins of agriculture in the Neolithic period and its impact on the physical environment. (VIII)
9. Describe the impact of early agriculture on the environment. (IX)
10. Explain how complex societies have affected the global environment. (X)
11. Describe how loss of habitat affects culture. (XI)
12. Explain how changes in human population affect human health and the physical environment. (XII)
13. Identify and analyze lessons learned throughout history about human impact on the environment. (XIII)

Go to Description  Go to top of Competencies

MCCCDD Official Course Outline:

ASB226 20052-99999 Human Impacts on Ancient Environments

I. Fundamentals of Anthropology
   A. Sub-fields of Anthropology: cultural, biological, archaeology
   B. Issues and recurring themes
II. Attitudes and Thinking About the Environment
   A. Western attitudes
B. Non-western attitudes

III. Theoretical Orientations
   A. Environmental Determinism
   B. Culture Area concept
   C. Cultural Ecology and Ecosystem
   D. Systems Theory

IV. Human-Environmental Interaction
   A. Abiotic and biotic components
   B. Ecosystems
   C. Components of the environment
   D. Human-decision making

V. Methodology
   A. Paleoenvironmental Reconstruction and GeoArchaeology
   B. Stratigraphy, Dating, Sampling
   C. Cultural Reconstruction-Diet, Land Use

VI. Early Hominds and First Impacts
   A. Large Mammal extinctions
   B. Development of modern humans and culture change

VII. Paleolithic Period and Impacts on Environment
   A. Cultural phases
   B. Faunal Data
   C. Carrying capacity

VIII. Origins of Agriculture
   A. Soils, plant systems and pollen analysis
   B. Neolithic and Near East examples
   C. Consequences of agriculture (e.g., sedentism, storage, etc.)

IX. Early Agriculture and its impacts
   A. Population growth and density, sedentism, environmental change
   B. Case Studies: Europe and Northern Mediterranean, Meso America, North American Southwest

X. Complex Societies
   A. Role of complex society in adaptation
   B. Cultural impacts on landscape
   C. Case Studies: e.g., Mesopotamia, Africa, Maya, Moche, Near East, China, India

XI. Loss of Habitat and Biodiversity
   A. Landscape change, faunal extinction, and settlement patterns
   B. Case Studies: e.g., Oceania, Greenland, Easter Island

XII. Demography and Population
   A. Population growth
   B. Changing community health
   C. Emerging industry
   D. New forms of government

XIII. Lessons from the Past
   A. Ecology in the long view
   B. Application to modern issues

Go to Description  Go to top of Competencies  Go to top of Outline
This syllabus is subject to further change or revision, as needed, to best realize the educational goals of the course. Necessary revisions will be announced in class or on course materials with fair prior notice.

Mesa Community College  
ASB 226  
HUMAN IMPACTS ON ANCIENT ENVIRONMENTS  
Instructor: Dr. Shereen Lerner  
Email: slerner@mesacc.edu  
Phone: 461-7306  
Office Hours: MWF 11:00-11:30 am and by appointment (SC58)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Humans have been an integral and active component of earth’s ecology for many thousands of years. This long history of interaction between humans and their environment has had both beneficial and deleterious results. This has critically important ramifications for those who would shape social and environmental policy. Archaeologists (and others interested in ecology of the past such as historical geographers, geomorphologists, paleontologists, and paleobotanists) are playing an increasingly important role in understanding the effects of humans on the earth. Only through studying the dynamic past of our planet’s ecosystems, and the ecological role of human society can we begin to understand what our future might hold. By learning the lessons of past human impacts—‘good’ and ‘bad’—we gain a better appreciation of the potential effects of our own activities today. Humans have always had an impact on their surroundings. The critical question facing us today is not whether we can avoid affecting our environment, but whether we can direct our impacts in ways that that permit us as a species survive and assure that earth will remain a planet worth living on.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Identify and describe the subfields of anthropology.
- Identify and explain common Western and non-Western attitudes about the physical environment
- Identify and explain the theories and concepts that define some of the basic operating principles of nature Identify and explain the interaction between humans and the environment
- Describe methodologies employed in environmental and cultural reconstruction
- Describe the impact of early hominids on their physical environments
- Describe the impact of Paleolithic humans on their physical environments
- Describe the origins of agriculture in the Neolithic period and its impact on the physical environment
- Describe the impact of early agriculture on the environment
- Explain how complex societies have affected the global environment
- Describe how loss of habitat affects culture
- Explain how changes in human population affect human health and the physical environment
Identify and analyze lessons learned throughout history about human impact on the environment.

REQUIRED TEXT

Other Readings assigned from a variety of sources.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS
(Topics, activities, videos, and order may change as needed)

Part 1: Introduction of basic concepts, terms and approaches

Introduction to course

Fundamentals of anthropology

Concepts: long-term human-environmental interaction

Environment and Ecology
Readings: Redman Chapter 1: Lessons from a Prehistoric “Eden”

History of Environmental Studies; approaches to environmental issues
Reading: Redman, Chapter 2: “Attitudes Toward the Environment”
Video: God’s Earth: A Call for Environmental Stewardship

Concepts Related to Environment and the Past; Theoretical Orientations
Reading: Redman, Chapter 3: “Concepts that Organize Our Thoughts”

Methods for Studying Past Environments: Stratigraphy, Palaeoenvironmental reconstruction, Geoarchaeology, and Cultural Reconstruction
Video: Guns, Germs, and Steel, Part 1
Part 2: First Impacts; Climate Pattern Change; Hunters and Gatherers Case Studies; The Impact of Domestication

Concepts: ecological decision-making

Human-induced changes in environment: Domestication Economies- Part 1
Reading: Redman Chapter 4: “Animal Exploitation: The Prehistoric Loss of Habitat and Biodiversity”

Human-induced changes in environment: Domestication Economies-Part 2
Readings: Redman Chapter 5: “The Impact of Agrarian Systems”

The Future of Domestication?

Case studies: the colonization of the Americas

Part 3: Case Studies: Origins and Consequences of Agriculture

The evolution of agricultural socioecosystems
Readings: Redman pages 81-117
Video: *Guns, Germs, and Steel, Part II*.

Case studies: The first farmers of southwest Asia

The arid Southwest of North America
Conceptual approaches to past human ecosystems – ‘good’ reasons for ‘bad’ decisions

Case studies: Forest farming in temperate Europe

Case studies: Swidden agriculture in SE Asia

Case studies: The Pacific

Part 4. Complex Society and Urbanism; Environmental Change and Collapse

The environmental impacts of urbanization
Reading: Redman Chapter 6: “The Growth of World Urbanism”

The causes and consequences of complexity
Reading: Redman Chapter 7: “Forces that Grew with Society”

Case studies: Andean civilization

Case studies: Mediterranean civilization
Case studies: Water management and urbanism in southeast Asia

Case studies: Mesoamerica

Part 5: Demography and Health
Case studies: ecology of human demography
Gage, T. B., & DeWitte, S. (2009). What Do We Know about the Agricultural Demographic Transition? *Current Anthropology, 50*(5), 649-655

Case studies: humans as habitat

Part 6: Lessons from the Past
Lessons from the Past and Policy Issues
Readings: Redman. Chapter 8: “The Past as Prologue”
Video: *America’s Stone Age*.

ASSESSMENT

I offer a number of different ways for you to earn points. All of these are required to complete the class. Late assignments will be accepted for partial credit if turned in within one week of the due date. Your grade will be based on the cumulative total of all projects and any extra-credit points you earn. You can estimate your grade by using the traditional standard of 90-100%=A; 80-89%=B, etc. The actual number of assignments
may vary. Your grade will be adjusted accordingly.

Readings:
Readings from the text and other articles (each article is worth 5-10 points):
While reading the material you are expected to answer questions about each article; the questions will be posted on WebCT. These questions are meant to aid you in comprehension of the material and to provoke discussion in class. Please complete these by the due date.

Quizzes: There will be three quizzes.

Current Events: The purpose of this assignment is to connect material learned in the classroom to a current event or situation. You will be expected to present, in class, a short summary and commentary of one current event article. You will be assigned a due date. Include a reference-the newspaper, date, etc. Most importantly, your summary should include a commentary for the article-how does it relate to the material we are learning in the class? All articles must have been published no later than AUGUST, 2012. Duplicates of previously presented articles will not be accepted. Articles can come from newspapers, magazines, journals or the Internet- be sure to include the reference.

Class Activities and Videos: Our time in class will consist of discussion and activities that relate to the readings and videos. Occasionally, we might watch a video in-class—but expect our class time to be active learning. Everything we do in class will count for credit so if you miss a class, you lose the points associated with that activity. I reserve the right to increase/decrease the number of activities over the course of the semester thus modifying the grading structure.

Your grade will be based on the cumulative total of all projects and any extra credit points you earn. You can estimate your grade by using the traditional standard of 90-100%=A; 80-89%=B, etc. The actual number of assignments may vary. Your grade will be adjusted accordingly.

Current Event: 10 points
Readings (per article): 5-10 points each
Additional Homework: (up to) 50 (points)
Video Questions: 5-10 points each
In-class activities: 5-15 (varies by activity)
Three Quizzes: 50 points each

Experiential Learning Activity: You will be given the opportunity to substitute an experiential learning project for one assignment or as extra-credit. The idea of experiential learning is to provide you with the opportunity to apply your classroom based knowledge to a "real world" experience. Examples of experiential learning projects will be discussed in class; you must have my prior approval of any project you propose.
Extra-Credit Opportunities: Throughout the semester there will be opportunities to earn extra-credit, either through experiential learning (see above), or attending outside events or lectures. I will discuss these opportunities in class.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

For your own protection, you should keep a copy of everything you hand in, and you should keep your graded assignments at least until grades are finalized at the end of the semester, and in the event you wish to contest any grades.

Final Grades
For privacy and security reasons, instructors are advised NOT to give grades over the telephone or via email. Students are advised to check their final grades online after the semester ends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-89.9%</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79.9%</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69.9%</td>
<td>Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60%</td>
<td>Failure</td>
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Incomplete "I" Grades
Incomplete grades will be given by discretion of the instructor, and only in extreme circumstances. The student must a) have completed three fourths of the semester’s work, and b) ask for the Incomplete in writing- by XXX.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Class Conduct
Students are expected to maintain and contribute to a respectful atmosphere for this class. Telephones and other electronic devices must be turned off. Laptop computers may only be used to take notes for the class. Students are expected to follow the MCC Code of Conduct.

Class Preparation, Attendance, and Policies
Students are expected to read the materials assigned for each class BEFORE coming to class. Class lectures and activities will cover some of the material in the readings, but the time in class will complement the topic. Students are expected to attend class and participate in discussions.

To do well in the class you MUST attend class, listen, and participate in class discussions and activities and take useful notes. A sign-up sheet will be available at the beginning of each class period. Failure to sign your name on the list represents an absence. If you must miss class, please notify me in advance by email or phone. If I do not hear from you, your absence will be recorded as "unaccounted." If you miss more than 3 classes, you may be withdrawn from the course. If you have a pattern of missing classes, even though
you have called in advance, you may also be withdrawn from the class. I prefer not to withdraw anyone so please let me know if there are problems so we can try to resolve them. Either way, absences will adversely affect your grade.

All information given out in class and on WebCT is testable, and is the responsibility of the student. All written assignments are due on the day assigned in the syllabus. Late work will be accepted up to one week following the due date with an automatic fifty percent reduction in point total.

Academic Integrity
All work done for this class must be on your own, unless otherwise noted. For some assignments (as stated in the assignment directions), you may use work from books and other materials if properly cited. Copying from any source without proper reference is considered plagiarism. Plagiarism may result in failure of an assignment or the entire course. Please refer to the Student Handbook for guidelines and possible penalties.

Readings
Students are expected to do all readings on time and to take notes on the material. It is crucial that you bring these notes to class so that we can have productive and interesting discussions together.

Discussions
Active listening, open minds, and respect for fellow students are imperative for a good discussion. As an anthropology course, this class requires that you set aside preconceived notions and prejudices. You must be receptive to others points of view. We will talk more about this in class, but please be aware that we want to create a safe space in which everyone feels comfortable sharing their opinions, even if you don’t agree with them.

Early Alert Referral System (Student Success): Mesa Community College is committed to the success of all our students. Numerous campus support services are available throughout your academic journey to assist you in achieving your educational goals. MCC has adopted an Early Alert Referral System (EARS) as part of a student success initiative to aid students in their educational pursuits. Faculty and Staff participate by alerting and referring students to campus services for added support. Examples of campus services include counseling, tutoring, childcare services, and a host of other options that may help students succeed. Students may receive a follow up call from various campus services as a result of being referred to EARS. Students are encouraged to participate, but these services are optional. The Early Alert Web Page with Campus Resource Information can be located at: http://www.mesacc.edu/students/ears or at the “Early Alert” selection at the mymcc link from MCC’s home page.

Disabilities: Reasonable accommodations will be made for any student with a disability, including learning disabilities. Please notify me of your needs outside of class. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact the Disability Resources and Services Office at 461-7447, in Building 37, Student Services Complex, to obtain an “Instructor Notification Form.”
Sharing: I am willing to listen to all comments, complaints, and suggestions regarding the class. The best way to have a good class is to work together. I believe in sharing experiences that relate to the class, and if you participate, the class will be more rewarding. I am also willing to assist you in advising if you have questions about registration, courses, and in particular, anthropology as a major.

You may audiotape class lectures if you wish. Please TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES during the class period. I reserve the right to answer the phone if it rings.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR MCC STUDENTS**

**Honors Program**
Continuing and transfer students may apply for the Honors Achievement Award Program after having accumulated a minimum of 12 credits with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.250. Any student receiving money from either scholarship are required to take a minimum of one – three credit honors class. All scholarship recipients are automatically admitted into the Honors Program at MCC.

**Global Citizenship Academic Certificate**
This is a 15 credit interdisciplinary academic certificate that will enhance your resume and for which you may easily plan. Completion of the certificate is recorded on your transcript. For more details contact me.

**ASB 282**
Experiential learning, or “learning by doing” is an excellent way to gain experience in anthropology outside of the classroom. For students who are interested in doing a service option or practicum requirement, a one, two, or three credit 282 class gives you that opportunity. If you are interested, please go to the Center for Service Learning in the Kirk Center or speak to me regarding further information. You may download forms for this 282 class from www.mc.maricopa.edu/servicelearning.

**Study Abroad**
There are many opportunities for study abroad in Mexico, Jordan, England, Ireland, Czech Republic, and more. Brochures are usually available in the Cultural Science Dept. You may also go to the Office for International Education on MCC campus for more details or go to MCC web site for “study abroad”.

**Student Clubs**
We have an Anthropology Club that offers speakers, career planning, and field trips—if interested in participating, please let me know. Student government offers many opportunities for students to become involved in campus life, see Student Services in the Kirk Center for more details.

**Americorps**
This is an excellent opportunity to add hours to your service learning and receive scholarship monies and a stipend. See the Center for Service Learning in the Kirk Center for more details.

*Course content may vary to meet the needs of this class. Continued enrollment in this course implies that you have read and accepted the conditions listed in this syllabus.*
HUMAN IMPACT ON ANCIENT ENVIRONMENTS

"This is a book that had to be written, and that must be read."
-Jared M. Diamond

CHARLES L. REDMAN
The past few decades have seen greater changes in some aspects of climate than have been recorded in over a millennium. How much this is a result of human activity and how much is due to non-human causes is a matter of considerable debate—especially as we are now learning that major climate change can happen with frightening swiftness even without human intervention. Two decades ago, demographers were predicting a world population exploding at an ever-increasing rate with dire consequences for the earth. Today, world population growth is unexpectedly beginning to slow down, and population is even declining in many industrialized nations. For much of the twentieth century, we have tried to protect areas of forest from wildfires. Now it appears that this effort has made forests even more susceptible to destruction by fire. The links between human actions and environmental consequences are often indirect, 'non-linear' ones that are difficult to predict. And many of the effects of our actions today will not be felt for many years or perhaps even centuries. In this course we will examine ancient societies and ecosystems and the impacts that occurred. We will examine the connections to modern ecosystems and learn that they are not static communities to be maintained or repaired, but are only the current manifestation of continuous and complex interactions among living and acting organisms—including humans—and between organisms and the abiotic (i.e., non-living) parts of their surroundings. The critical question facing us today is not whether we can avoid affecting our environment, but whether we can direct our impacts in ways that that permit us as a species to survive and to assure that earth will remain a planet worth living on.