

**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP
SPRING 2008 WORKSHOP AGENDA**

**HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE
WORKSPACE SITE**

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**Crown Plaza Hotel St Louis Downtown, Conference Room #305
Wednesday May 28- Sunday June 1, 2008**

This is the first of two workshops designed to help students prepare cogent and fundable dissertation proposals in their chosen field. The two goals of the first workshop are (1) to map the research field with respect to contributing disciplines, methods, sources, and area knowledge; and (2) to help prepare fellows for their pre-dissertation summer research. (The goal of the second workshop will be to focus on the mechanics and methods of writing a dissertation proposal). The two goals stand in close relation to each other: through a sustained and structured discussion of student proposals and their component parts, we hope to contribute to the mapping of the research field itself.

Global environmental changes—such as climate change, land change, and biodiversity loss—are worldwide biophysical changes resulting from a combination of human activities and natural processes. The field of human dimensions of global environmental change (HDGEC) engages in research on human activities responsible for these global environmental changes, the underlying socioeconomic forces underlying and driving those activities, the consequences of global environmental changes for human systems, and the human responses to contemporary and anticipated global environmental changes. HDGEC draws from and integrates the traditional social science disciplines of anthropology, economics, geography, political science, psychology, sociology, and more. This interdisciplinary field of research is essential for understanding global environmental change and informing public policy.

The diverse disciplines contributing to HDGEC research require an inclusive array of social science methodologies to understand the causes and consequences of global environmental change. Practitioners rely on approaches ranging from agent-based models, econometric models, and geographic information systems to surveys, focus groups, interviews, participant observations, ethnography, and archival research. Practitioners regularly apply quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods analytical techniques to primary data they gather themselves and to secondary data they obtain from local, state, national, and international sources. Despite the word “global” in HDGEC, much of the research focus is local because all global environmental changes originate in a place, and people feel the impacts of global environmental changes locally.

WORKSHOP READINGS AND RESOURCES

Research Field resources will be placed on the relevant Workspace websites. Students will receive separate explanations and detailed instructions about the access and use of the DPDF digital platform.

WORKSHOP ASSIGNMENTS

Complete explanations of the following capsule workshop assignments are available on the DPDF HDGEC workspace.

- **[May 9] Due on DPDF Workspace site on May 23:** Fellows will post three short discussion papers of 250-500 words each to the DPDF website. This assignment will give Fellows an opportunity to think about some common questions that will serve as a foundation for developing each of your individual research projects. All fellows will read these discussion before the first Session.
- **[May 9] Due by workshop.** Fellows will read three chapters from NRC (1992) and all of NRC (1999). These documents will be fundamental to the discussion at Session 2 and the subsequent days' work.
- **[May 9] Due at workshop:** Fellows will assemble a small packet (ten or fewer pages) of maps, images, graphs, and tables from your proposed research to help stimulate and guide discussion. We will use these documents at Sessions 3 and 4.
- **[May 13] Due at workshop:** Fellows will read two readings on ethics, which will provide a basis for discussion with Nancy Tuana during Session 6.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

ARRIVAL, Wednesday, May 28: Reading handouts / packets will be distributed at registration along with other materials.

Wednesday Evening: *Reception, 6-8 pm.*

Session 1: Introduction and Purpose of Workshops

(Thursday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

Session 2: Introduction to the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change (HDGEC)

(Thursday, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

The session will start with introductions, followed with an overview of the workshop sessions and their aims. Students next will present brief (two- to three-minute) sketches of their research. A presentation based on two essential publications provided before the workshop will follow that focuses on the conceptual framework used to understand HDGEC (NRC, 1992) and key scientific questions in HDGEC (NRC, 1999). Then, in an open discussion, students will situate their research in this framework and these questions. This session, therefore, will lay both the conceptual foundation and practical basis for subsequent sessions.

Session 3: Developing Research Problems I

(Friday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

The goal of Sessions 3 and 4 is to help students understand and identify several fundamental elements of all research proposals: problems, purpose statements, goals and objectives, and questions and hypotheses. At the same time, these sessions will lead students through important decisions they must make when framing a research problem, including how to: scale the scope of the research appropriately; select among data types (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed) and data collection methodologies (field, laboratory, and model); and assess the ethical dilemmas involved in human-subjects research. Students will have started to grapple with some of these basic elements of research design in the first pre-workshop assignment. Introducing this fundamental material will take half of the morning session.

To give students an opportunity to develop research problems, three students will go through the following process during the remainder of Session 3: (1) she/he will present a ten-minute overview of her/his research; (2) for 20 minutes, all students will discuss that student's research, attempting to draw out the research problem, develop research goals and questions, and recognize important decisions inherent in the project. Student presenters will have brought material relevant to their research, including maps, images, graphs, and tables to help stimulate and guide discussion.

Session 4: Developing Research Problems II

(Friday, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

Session 4 continues the process of working through research problem development for three students (at 30 minutes per student). Please note that only half of the students will have the opportunity to present and discuss their proposed research at Sessions 4 and 5. The other half will present their research in the context of the positioning exercise undertaken in Sessions 5 and 6. We will select students for Sessions 3 and 4 and for Sessions 5 and 6 randomly, so all students should be prepared to present in both contexts.

During the last half of Session 4, the class will meet Jodi Emel, Professor of Geography at Clark University. There are two purposes for meeting Jodi: to meet with an experienced HDGEC research to discuss how she developed the research problems associated with her research, and to introduce a feminist perspective to the workshop discussion.

Session 5: Positioning Research in the Literature

(Saturday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

The aim of Session 5 and the first part of Session 6 is to help students develop the skill of positioning their research in the broader literature. This skill is particularly germane to the field of HDGEC, which falls at the intersection of the biophysical and social sciences and links several social science disciplines. Thus, HDGEC researchers need to position

their work within several literatures, as well as the specialized HDGEC literature. Moreover, HDGEC researchers often rely on mixed methodologies, further broadening the array of literatures they must address. The first hour will encompass a presentation and discussion on this topic. Next, a total of six student presenters will give a ten-minute summary of their research, and for the following 20 minutes first will identify the literatures they think they need to address for the theoretical and methodological development of their problem, and then will discuss how their project relates to the readings in the workshop bibliography. Four students will lead these interactive discussions during the morning session.

Session 6: Positioning Research in the Literature and Research Ethics

(Saturday, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

In the afternoon session, two more students will lead half-hour discussions aimed at positioning their research in the literature. Most of the afternoon, however, will be devoted to a discussion of ethical considerations associated with research and publishing in HDGEC, which will be led by Nancy Tuana, Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Rock Ethics Institute at Penn State. Before the workshop and after reading two pieces on the topic, students will prepare a list of possible ethical considerations associated with their research, including issues involved in literature use, human subjects consent, data and analysis manipulation, and reporting and publishing.

Session 7: Looking Back, Looking Ahead

(Sunday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

This session will start with summaries and discussions of four things to have come out of the workshop: (1) perspectives on the field of HDGEC; (2) elements of a good dissertation proposal; (3) strategies for linking to the diverse literatures required in HDGEC research; and (4) common research and ethical pitfalls to avoid. The session will conclude with a discussion of what will happen over the summer, including how to prepare for the fall workshop.