

## **Global Environments: Interactions of Culture and Nature in a Changing World**

Gary J. Martin, in his role as Senior Fellow at the Rachel Carson Center (RCC), is developing a course on *Global Environments: Interactions of Culture and Nature in a Changing World* that will be proposed as an annual course of the Munich International Summer University, or MISU<sup>LMU</sup> starting in August 2011.

In preparation for the annual course, which will be open to students from around the world, he will deliver a pilot series of eight seminars for RCC research fellows from 20 August – 6 September 2010. The theme of these seminars will be: “From the global to the local: planetary boundaries and community based management of environmental challenges”.

We will take as a launching point six of the nine planetary boundaries proposed by Johan Rockström and colleagues [*Nature* 461, 472-475 (24 September 2009)]: land system change, biodiversity loss, biogeochemical flows, global freshwater use, ocean acidification and climate change. We will explore how diverse communities could be impacted by each of these proposed boundaries, with a particular focus on how they adapt to, mitigate and manage the resulting environmental challenges at local and regional scales. The seminar series will end with an exploration of the emergent multidisciplinary field of biocultural diversity, which proposes an intrinsic and geographically overlapping relationship between biological, cultural and linguistic diversity. A consistent theme across the seminars will be the potential contribution of community-based efforts to resolving planetary challenges. In keeping with the mission of the Rachel Carson Center, we will explore the role of humanities and social science perspectives in current political and scientific debates about the environment.

The seminars will have a mixed format of short lectures, discussion of selected journal articles, video viewing, exploration of policy implications, presentation of creative viewpoints and open dialogue that will seek common ground on controversial concepts and definitions. In keeping with the exploratory approach of the series, participants are invited to propose perspectives and materials (articles, books, videos, etc.) that could be incorporated in the annual MISU<sup>LMU</sup> course.

While the geographical scope will be global, specific case studies will be drawn from the following regions: Amazonia (focus on northern Bolivia), Mesoamerica (focus on southeastern Mexico), Middle East and North Africa (focus on Morocco), Southeast Asia (focus on Malaysian Borneo) and southern Africa (focus on Botswana and Namibia). These are regions where Gary Martin, as Director of the Global Diversity Foundation, has current or proposed applied research projects on biocultural diversity. Selected articles on community based management of environmental challenges from other regions (Central Asia, East Africa, Oceania, West Africa) may also be included.

One output of the course will be a detailed syllabus for the annual MISU<sup>LMU</sup> course, including synopses of each seminar topics, annotated bibliography of selected articles, reviews of relevant videos and suggestions of supplementary readings.

All seminars are planned from 10 am – 12 noon in the RCC seminar room according to the following schedule:

Friday 20 August: The Anthropocene comes of age (Overview of planetary boundaries, ecosystem health and community based management of environmental challenges)

Monday 23 August: Cultural landscaping of intricate mosaics (Land system change)

Wednesday 25 August: Fighting extinction, exclusion and inequity (Biodiversity loss)

Friday 27 August: Permaculturing of local farmers (Biogeochemical flows)

Monday 30 August: Thinking water north of the future (Global freshwater use)

Wednesday 1 September: Fishing out of locally managed marine areas (Ocean acidification)

Friday 3 September: Dreaming of carbon rich communities (Climate change)

Monday 6 September: Boundaries of the ethnosphere (Biocultural diversity)

To maintain a tradition in GJ Martin's courses, we propose participatory ethnobotany breaks instead of coffee breaks. Participants will bring something to share chosen from their culinary traditions or 'foodways', emphasizing slow whole food while minimizing the load of air miles, refined flour and sugar and water consumption. Each person will describe what he or she has brought, how it is prepared and its cultural significance.

Optional 'brown bag' sessions will be held from 12 noon to 2 pm on Tuesday 24 August, Thursday 26 August, Tuesday 31 August and Thursday 2 September to capture any 'overflow' discussion from the seminars, and to view additional videos or consider supplementary articles and books.