

The Basel Lectures:

International Trade, Resource Use and the Environment
(17691-01, 3 Credit Points)

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This short course of 8 lectures investigates the links between international trade, natural resource use and the environment. The lectures will attempt to answer five key questions. These are

1. Why are natural resources difficult to manage? What is the underlying market failure requiring government involvement? What is the solution?
2. What are the impacts of international trade on a country with weak or poor management of its natural resources? Is there evidence that international trade has led to severe overuse of natural resources?
3. Do countries with weak protection for the environment have a natural cost advantage in world markets? Is there evidence that international trade is a common driver of resource overuse worldwide?
4. Can trade and globalization hasten extinction? Are these extinctions more likely to come from over-harvesting or via habitat destruction? Could globalization usher in a mass extinction event?
5. Does access to international markets make the governance and regulation of natural resource industries easier or harder for governments?

This course is offered by the Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Basel and is part of the “Guest Professorship of Globalization – Internationalization of the Economy”.

1. Method

These questions are addressed and answered in a series of 8 lectures. I will introduce a very simple general equilibrium model of resource use and employ it, and its variations, throughout. It will be used initially to demonstrate just how differently an economy with existing externalities responds to shocks such as technological progress or the ability to trade internationally. Next, I will discuss the conditions under which trade can harm resources and present two case studies – one historical and one ongoing – where trade has been identified as key to resource overuse. I will also discuss the relationship between globalization and extinction using our two case studies and introduce new sources of data for us to discuss. While international trade can create difficulties it also provides opportunities for countries to improve resource management given the income gains it provides. If time permits, I will discuss

conditions under which property rights enforcement can be expected to improve with changes in technologies or the value of resources, and end with a discussion of empirical work evaluating whether trade improves or worsens the state of resources across many countries.

The strength of the lectures comes from employing one unifying framework within which to discuss the issues, and the integration of empirical work directly on point to help answer key questions that cannot be resolved by theory.

A set of readings for the course is given below. Some changes – additions and deletions - may be made to speed up or slow down the pace of the course. All the necessary (bolded) readings will be provided on the course web site (ADAM); and, to the extent possible, lecture slides will also be made available to students.

2. Grading

There will be a final exam plus a paper requirement.

The final exam will be scheduled in the first lecture of the class and be posted thereafter. I will take place **towards the end of May 2024**. It will consist of both analytical questions and an essay question covering the course material.

The paper is a short critical analysis of a scholarly or popular article discussing some issue with regard to the economy's interaction with the environment. Your discussion and critique must use, at least implicitly, the tools and logic developed in the course. The papers should not be longer than 8 pages (without bibliography).

The paper and the final exam will be graded and each counts 50% of the final grade.

In all cases students must check with the instructor as to the suitability of the article they propose to examine, before starting to write their paper. The paper is **due June 30th**, approximately one month after the final exam.

References

Anything in bold will necessarily be covered in class and should be read.

The other articles are listed for your convenience in choosing a paper topic. Students can choose freely from this list, but still need to check with the instructor to ensure no overlap and suitability.

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