

Curriculum Project
Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar 2010 ~ China: History and Culture

Title: China: Art and The Environment

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I. Introduction

I would like to thank the Fulbright-Hays Program, the National Committee on United States-China Relations, and the Department of Education for supporting my curriculum research in the seminar China: History and Culture, summer 2010. This project is a result of information gathered in the field and seminars, which will be used to augment and improve an art history course Art and the Environment originally offered in spring 2008. Although the course surveys a wide range of themes, artists, and disciplines, a four week unit will specifically focus on Chinese art, culture, and environmental issues. An important component of this course is a class project, which will directly engage students with the culture, ecology, and geography of China.

II. Curriculum Project Description

Course ARHA 4310 (spring semester 2011) will analyze a wide range of paintings, sculptures, installations, and monuments which focus on nature and man's relationship to it. An important component in the course will be a consideration of art works that convey China's artistic, social, and cultural attitudes or perceptions about nature and the environment. A four week unit China: Art and Environment will be included in the course. The unit will be included at the end of the semester in a section titled Global Considerations and the Impact of Developing Countries to allow students to incorporate previous material to consider environmental issues on a broader or global scale. The goal of this course is to expand student awareness of eastern art and culture, to expose students to ancient and contemporary works of art, and to engage them in a dialog about environmental issues on a local and global scale.

Much of China's ancient art has an intimate connection to nature which reflects the rich social and religious traditions of China. This unique cultural characteristic finds its way into the curving lines of a pagoda or into paintings such as *Nymph of the Luo River* by Gu Kaizhi (344-406). Contemporary artist Zhang Hongtu, a Chinese artist based in New York, confronts and critiques Chinese consumerism, industrial pollution, and human rights issues through inventive works which reference the past. Zhang uses historic and well-known Chinese art works to highlight significant environmental changes that have a human and global impact. For example, he reproduces an original 12th-century painting by Ma Yuan and reworks them to show the effects of agricultural pollution in his *Water Pollution Series*, 2009 (Fig. 1). Artists such as Zhang Hongtu among others, will be considered in class and provide students artistic models to construct and propose their own works for a virtual or imagined Chinese audience.

China's complex cultural and political past has informed its present, but like all societies this traditional and sometimes nostalgic past is challenged by innovation, change, and economic growth. Like the Boshan Lu incense burners which help to tell the story of nature and man's role in it and society, modern skyscrapers and engineering feats such as the Three Gorges Dam underscores the changing face of China. Students will consider questions such as: does China's ancient past provide a foundation for its future or does it merely serve as a backdrop for a new economic power? How did ancient artists address social or cultural concerns and how do subsequent contemporary artists confront their past and present? How will China address global political and environmental pressures and concerns?

The four week unit on the Chinese art from various periods will be included and include themes such as “art and nature, “society and nature,” and “China’s contemporary environment.” Students will learn about China through in-class lectures, visiting scholars, course readings, internet sources, and a screening of the film *Still Life*. Migration, population growth, politics, and economic factors play a role in the changing environment of China therefore the course will include a wide-range of disciplines. Students will be required to keep weekly journals in which they will summarize information given in class, reflect on readings, films, and document their art making process. Students will also work in small groups to propose an environmental art work based on their understanding of China’s art, history, culture, politics, and geography.

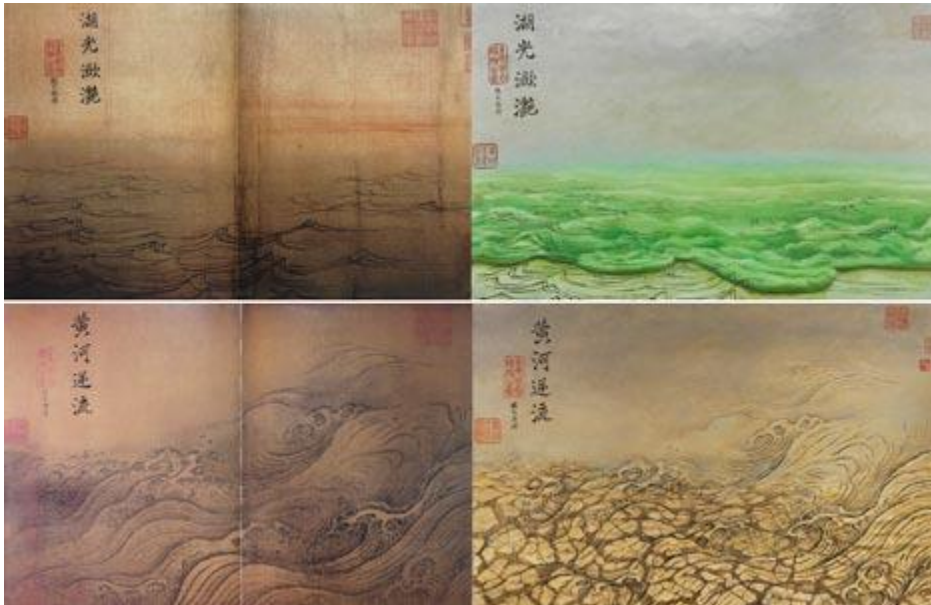


Figure 1. Zhang Hongtu, *Water Pollution Series*, 2009, oil on canvas, 50” x 72”

III. Unit Summary: China Global Considerations and the Impact of Developing Countries

Week One

China: Introduction to Chinese Landscape Painting and Ancient Art and Nature

Readings: Barnhart, et al. *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, (tba); Chetham, *Before the Deluge: The Vanishing World of the Yangtze's Three Gorges* (tba)

Artists: Boshan Xianglu, Fan Kuan, Qu Ding, Mu Youren, Wang Ming

Week Two

China: Modern China

Guest lecture by Dr. Jeff Kyong-McClain, Associate Professor of History, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Suggested reading: *Mao's War Against Nature*

Week Three

China's Modern Environment and Artistic Responses

Readings: Christina Larson, *China's Warhol Gets Dirty*

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/04/chinas_warhol_gets_dirty

Artists: Three Gorges Dam, artists, "Displacement: The Three Gorges Dam and Contemporary Chinese Art," Smart Museum of Art, Chicago, IL - Liu Xiaodong, Chen Qiulin, Yun-Fei Ji, Liu Xiaodong, and Zhuang Hui, Zhang Hongtu

Week Four

The Changing Environmental and Cultural Face of China

Film *Still Life* and class discussion

Readings: "Resettlement Programmes and Environmental Capacity in the Three Gorges Dam Project" in *China's Limits to Growth: Greening State and Society* (tba)

IV. Internet Resources

China Art History Sources and Museums

<http://www.art-and-archaeology.com/timelines/china/china.html>

The Palace Museum – Beijing

http://www.dpm.org.cn/www_oldweb/English/default.html

Chinese Landscape Painting

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/clpg/hd_clpg.htm

China Maps and Administrative Regions

Administrative Regions of China

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_admin_91.jpg

Agricultural Regions of China

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_agricultural_86.jpg

Northeast China map

<http://www.map-of-china.co.uk/maps/heilongjiang.gif>

China Environmental Issues

Chinafaqs

<http://www.chinafaqs.org/>

Chinaculture.org

http://www.chinaculture.org/gb/en_artqa/2003-11/05/content_44057.htm

China's Environmental Reform

<http://www.epa.gov/ogc/china/xin.pdf>

NPR China Environment

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=90413864>

Art and Installations

798 Art District Beijing

http://www.sustainable-everyday.net/hkpolytechnic_2007/?p=23

Three Gorges Dam, artists, "Displacement: The Three Gorges Dam and Contemporary Chinese Art," Smart Museum of Art, Chicago, IL - Liu Xiaodong, Chen Qiulin, Yun-Fei Ji, Liu Xiaodong, and Zhuang Hui.

<http://www.absolutearts.com/artsnews/2008/10/02/35218.html>

Zhang Hongtu - Water Pollution Series

<http://www.treehugger.com/files/2010/08/famous-chinese-artist-paints-polluted-waters.php>

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/04/chinas_warhol_gets_dirty?page=full

Plastic Bag installation

<http://www.inhabitat.com/2008/06/21/recycled-plastic-environmental-art-installation-by-mslk/>

<http://inhabitat.com/2008/01/14/china-bans-plastic-bags/>

Mural Painting

<http://1990institute.org/projects/CAEPs>

http://www.e-planet.org/cncc_MuralGarden.html

Environmental Art (children's art)

<http://www.e-planet.org/thecaep.html>

V. Course Syllabus

ARHA 4310 and 5310 ART AND THE ENVIRONMENT Wednesday 1:40-4:20

Dr. Laura M. Amrhein
e-mail: lmamrhein@ualr.edu
phone: 569-3165

Office: 264
Hours: TH 12:00 -1:30
and by appointment

“If success or failure of the planet and of human beings depended on how I am and what I do... How would I be? What would I do?”
-- Buckminster Fuller

Course description: Fuller’s questions above will serve as a point of departure for this course, since his sentiments underscore individual (ultimately collaborative) efforts in shaping the course of our world and environment. In this class, students will explore ecologically motivated art such as earthworks, land projects, performance and ephemeral works and ecofeminist works among others. Since environmental or eco artists typically collaborate with landscape architects, urban planners, local officials and experts in other disciplines, such as ecologists, geographers, and anthropologists, students will be expected to consider a wide range of disciplines. Sustainability through grass roots efforts, industry and governmental institutions will also be helpful in framing class discussion. A specific unit on China will analyze divergent art works from different periods to illustrate China’s relationship to nature and its changing environment and global environmental concerns.

Readings: Assigned readings are given for each class meeting – see course schedule. Supplemental books and resources should be consulted for journal entries and group projects.

Grading:

Attendance and Participation	10%
Journal	20%
Art Proposal for China	25%
Group Art Project	30%
Group Presentation	15%

Attendance and participation is expected. More than three unexcused absences will lower your grade substantially. Students will be expected to arrive prepared to discuss outside readings and associated artists and artworks. Please respect the atmosphere of the classroom and your fellow peers by arriving on time and turning off cell phones.

Journal:

Students will keep a weekly journal with critical analysis of readings and in-class discussion. This collection of thoughts should also include information about group projects – such as preliminary plans, logistics, meetings with officials, and illustrations. Use this journal as a way to document your art making process and group efforts. Additional topics for journal entries are listed with class topics and assigned readings.

GROUP PROJECTS

Students will collaborate in small groups to design and create one art project that will be implemented. The second project will not be implemented, but will be a proposal for an environmental art work based on understanding of China's art, history, politics, and culture.

Project I: Art Proposals - China

Students will choose an appropriate art work such as land art, earthwork, or installation to address China's environmental issues. An appropriate site either in China or in another country will be chosen. It is important to consider the political and social atmosphere of your chosen country in determining the subject matter and location.

Where will your group locate or perform your art work and why?

To answer this question, it will be necessary to research China's history, politics, and geography. Consider that land art and earthworks require collaboration between the artists, landscape architects, local officials and local people; therefore it is necessary to consider these factors into your proposals.

Proposals should include a written essay or description (5 pages) of your proposed art project describing how your project relates to China, a map and description of the group's chosen site, permission request from a governmental agency, museum, or other institution, an approximate budget, and a to scale sketch or outline of the work. If a video piece, an outline of content must be included.

Project II: Art Project

Students will work in groups of three or four to design, create and implement an artwork using natural or recycled materials or other ecologically minded creative medium. Works may be sculptural (more or less permanent) and/or ephemeral works.

Each group will also choose a location to place each sculpture or to undertake a happening or ephemeral work. Students will choose one location, which will be either the grounds of the Fine Arts Building (area directly around the building extending to Coleman Creek) or Dunbar Gardens (<http://www.auger-ar.org>). Additional sites will be considered, however, students must arrange permission from any authorities or institutions such as our Department Chair, Win Bruhl, UALR's Department of Public Works, or Damian Thompson of Dunbar Gardens.

The location choice may affect the design and subject of your artwork. If your artwork will be on campus you must see the Department Chair, Win Bruhl and present a brief proposal for your project. If Professor Bruhl approves, you will then submit your proposal to the Department of Public Works. If Dunbar Garden is your preference, you will need to contact Damian Thompson.

The grade for this project will reflect all stages of the process, so journal documentation is important. Even if your project is denied because of its subject, size, or medium, this will not necessarily lower your grade.

Note: works must be scheduled according to dates in the course schedule so that they may be viewed. A sign-up sheet will be posted early in the semester. Dates must be pre-arranged so that the class and professor may view your work or be present for ephemeral works.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January

- 19 Introduction
- 26 Ecology as Consciousness: What is Environmental Art?
Readings: Gablik, "Making Art as if the World Mattered," 96-114;
Kastner, *Land and Environment*, 11-17; Spaid, *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies*, 1-52.
Journal idea: consider the relationship between the individual (self) and nature

February

- 2 *An Inconvenient Truth* – Framing the Problem: A Global Perspective.
- 9 Guest Speaker, Dr. Beth McMillan, Department of Earth Sciences
The role of the state, Arkansas and UALR
Coleman Creek Project – www.ualr.edu/colemancreek

16 Ecology as Consciousness: What is Environmental Art? continued ... Readings: Gablik, "The Ecological Imperative: A New Cultural Coding," 76-95. Suggested, Ponting, *A Green History of the World*.

23 Framing Art: Openness to Others and a Different Model. Readings: Gablik, "Deconstructing Aesthetics," 59-75; Kaprow, 97-109; Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* (tba). Artists: Kaprow, Yoko Ono - *Cut Piece*, Joseph Beuys, Richard Serra, R. Murray Schafer *Tuning of the World*
Journal topic: Consider the traditional model of art – how does this model change in the 1960s and after?

March

2 Histories, Journeys, and Maps.
Readings: Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (tba); Lippard, *Lure of the Local*, 4-20; Thoreau, *Walden* "Solitude"; Robert Smithson, "Yucatan is Elsewhere" on Robert Smithson's *Hotel Palenque*,
<http://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/palenque.htm>

Recommended: Bourdon, *Designing the Earth: The Human Impulse to Shape Nature* (tba); Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, 267-276.

Artists: Richard Long (*Mapping the Terrain*), Smithson, John Ammirati, Urban and Rural projects: The Power of Shadow, Christo and Jeanne Claude

Journal Assignment: Write a short story that involves a journey and tell how this journey changes people, places or ideas.
To be read in class on March 9.

9 **Storytelling - Journeys and Maps**

16 Performance, Ephemeral and Ritual Explorations
Readings: Bourdon, *Designing the Earth: The Human Impulse to Shape Nature* (tba); Goldsworthy, *A Collaboration with Nature* (tba); Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies*, 74-79.

Burning Man

http://www.burningman.com/art_of_burningman/bm07_theme.html

Artists: Mary Beth Edelson's rituals, Andy Goldsworthy, Basia Irland, *Gathering of Waters*, Mierle Ukeles, *Walking and Shaking*.

Arkansas native Irland, *Gathering of Waters*

http://greenmuseum.org/content/artist_index/artist_id-80.html

Journal topic: Write a story considering the idea of transformation – for example, write about a place and how it has changed over time or a personal transformation.

23

Spring Break

30

Ecofeminism, Spiritual Ecology and the Garden

Readings: *Sculpture*, “Plant Art,” 6/03, 46-51; Orenstein, “The Greening of Gaia: Ecofeminist Artists Revisit the Garden,” 102-111; Susan Griffin, “Can Imagination Save Us,?” *Utne Reader*, Jul/Aug, 1996; Hamerman, “Roberto Burle Marx: The Last Interview.”

Artists: Susan Leibovitz Steinman, Dominique Mazeaud, Betsy Damon and the *Living Water Garden*, Betty Beaumont, *Ocean Landmark* – Underwater Garden, Roberto Burle Marx, Agnes Denes

http://greenmuseum.org/content/artist_index/artist_id-111.html

Mazeaud

<http://www.burlemarx.com.br/ingles.htm>

Burle Marx

Journal topic: How do you connect to “place?”

April

6

Global Considerations and the Impact of Developing Countries

China: Introduction to Chinese Landscape Painting and Ancient Art and Nature

Readings: Barnhart, et al. *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, (tba); Chetham, *Before the Deluge: The Vanishing World of the Yangtze’s Three Gorges* (tba)

Artists: Fan Kuan, Qu Ding, Mu Youren, Wang Ming

China: Modern China

Guest lecture by Dr. Jeff Kyong-McClain, Associate Professor of History, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Suggested reading: *Mao’s War Against Nature*

13

China's Modern Environment and Artistic Responses

Readings: Christina Larson, *China's Warhol Gets Dirty*

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/04/chinas_warhol_gets_dirty

Artists: Three Gorges Dam, artists, "Displacement: The Three Gorges Dam and Contemporary Chinese Art," Smart Museum of Art, Chicago, IL, USA United States of America - Liu Xiaodong, Chen Qiulin, Yun-Fei Ji, Liu Xiaodong, and Zhuang Hui, Zhang Hongtu

20

The Changing Environmental and Cultural Face of China

Film *Still Life* and class discussion

Readings: "Resettlement Programmes and Environmental Capacity in the Three Gorges Dam Project" in *China's Limits to Growth: Greening State and Society* (tba)

Presentations: April 27, May 4 and 11

Bibliography (*required readings)

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- Beardsley, John. *Earthworks and Beyond*. 3rd ed., New York: Abbeville Press, 1998.
- Boettger, Suzaan. *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- *Bourdon, David. *Designing the Earth: The Human Impulse to Shape Nature*. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1995.
- Crosby, Alfred W. *Ecological Imperialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Francis, Mark and Hester, Randolph. *The Meaning of Gardens*. MIT Press, 1990.
- Fuchs, Rudy. *Richard Long*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986.
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- *Goldsworthy, Andy. *A Collaboration with Nature*. New York: Abrams, 1990.
- *Griffin, Susan. "Can Imagination Save Us?" *The Utne Reader*. No 76 (July 1, 1996): 42.
- Henri Adrian. *Total Art: Environments, Happenings and Performance*. New York: Praeger, 1974.
- *Kaprow, Allan. *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings*. New York: Abrams, 1966.
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- Korp, Maureen. *Sacred Art of the Earth: Ancient and Contemporary Earthworks*. New York: Continuum, 1997.
- Lacy, Suzanne. *Mapping the Terrain*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995.
- *Lippard, Lucy. *The Lure of the Local*. New York: The New Press, 1997.

- *Matilsky, Barbara. *Fragile Ecologies*. New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1992.
- *Orenstein, Gloria Feman. "The Greening of Gaia: Ecofeminist Artists Revisit the Garden." *Ethics and the Environment* 8, no. 1 (2003): 103-111.
- Ponting, Clive. *A Green History of the World*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.
- *Rapaport, B.K. "Plant Art: Is There Room to Grow." *Sculpture*, vol. 22, part 5 (2003): 46-51.
- Scarry, Elaine. *On Beauty and Being Just*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
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- *Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- *Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. New York: Viking, 2000.
- *Spaid, Sue. *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies*. Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center, 2002.
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- Stor, Kate and Cameron Sinclair., editors. *Design Like You Give A Damn*. New York: Metropolis Books, 2006.
- Sturgeon, Noel. *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- *Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition*. Edited by Jeffrey S. Cramer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Zimmerman, Michael E. "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics." *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 9, 1987.

China

- *Barnhart, Richard M., et al. . *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
- *Ho, Peter and Eduard B. Vermeer editors, *China's Limits to Growth: Greening State and Society*. Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006.
- *Kelley, Jeff and Tsuruta, Kaz. *The Three Gorges Project: Paintings by Liu Xiaodong*. Asian Art Museum, 2005.

Websites

China Art History Sources and Museums

<http://www.art-and-archaeology.com/timelines/china/china.html>

The Palace Museum – Beijing

http://www.dpm.org.cn/www_oldweb/English/default.html

Chinese Landscape Painting

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http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_admin_91.jpg

Agricultural Regions of China

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_agricultural_86.jpg

Northeast China map

<http://www.map-of-china.co.uk/maps/heilongjiang.gif>

China Environmental Issues

Chinafaqs

<http://www.chinafaqs.org/>

Chinaculture.org

http://www.chinaculture.org/gb/en_artqa/2003-11/05/content_44057.htm

China's Environmental Reform

<http://www.epa.gov/ogc/china/xin.pdf>

NPR China Environment

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=90413864>

Art and Installations

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<http://www.absolutearts.com/artsnews/2008/10/02/35218.html>

Zhang Hongtu - Water Pollution Series

<http://www.treehugger.com/files/2010/08/famous-chinese-artist-paints-polluted-waters.php>

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/04/chinas_warhol_gets_dirty?page=full

Plastic Bag installation

<http://www.inhabitat.com/2008/06/21/recycled-plastic-environmental-art-installation-by-mslk/>

<http://inhabitat.com/2008/01/14/china-bans-plastic-bags/>

Mural Painting

<http://1990institute.org/projects/CAEPs>

http://www.e-planet.org/cncc_MuralGarden.html

Environmental Art (children's art)

<http://www.e-planet.org/thecaep.html>

Films

Morning Sun: A Film and Website about Cultural Revolution

<http://www.morningsun.org/>

Artists

http://greenmuseum.org/content/artist_index/artist_id-63.html

Agnes Denes

http://greenmuseum.org/content/artist_index/artist_id-111.html

Mazeaud

http://greenmuseum.org/content/artist_index/artist_id-80.html

Irland

Robert Smithson, "Yucatan is Elsewhere" *Hotel Palenque*,

<http://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/palenque.htm>

<http://www.richardlong.org/>
Richard Long

http://www.morning-earth.org/ARTISTSNATURALISTS/AN_Goldsworthy.html
Goldsworthy

<http://www.nyu.edu/classes/beaumont/collaboration/>
Betty Beaumont

<http://www.alansonfist.com/>
Alan Sonfist

<http://greenmuseum.org/c/aen/Issues/ukeles.php>
Mierle Ukeles – *Flow City*

Monumental and Land Art

<http://ww.daringdesigns.com/earthworks.htm#SUNTNL>

<http://ludb.clui.org/tag/Land+Art/>

Projects

<http://www.auger-ar.org>
Dunbar Garden

www.ualr.edu/colemancreek
UALR

Events and Organizations

http://www.burningman.com/art_of_burningman/bm07_theme.html
Burning Man

<http://www.globalstewards.org/calendar.htm>
Calendar of Global Environmental Events

<http://www.environmental-expert.com/events.aspx?>
Meetings, Conferences, and Workshops

<http://www.enviroliteracy.org/index.php>
Environmental Literacy Council

http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php
Kyoto Protocol

General Interest

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/plasma-converter4.htm>

How Stuff Works

<http://consciouschoice.com/index.html>

Archive of Relevant Conscious Choice Articles