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W H O O W N S E A R T H ?

A Global Survey of Economic Geography

This course is designed to give the student (viewer) a basic insight and some general information on the issue that underlies most contemporary world problems: the value and distribution of access to the land and natural resources of the planet. Concerns such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, migration and environmental destruction, can all be sharpened and illumined by an understanding of economic geography visually enhanced by the television medium.

The course will be given at the senior college level but will have no prerequisites, although some understanding of economics will be helpful. An interdisciplinary social science approach with an emphasis on regional illustrations should appeal to the intelligent layman as well as the more serious and moderately advanced scholar. Since this is a survey course, references will be given for more specific exploration of the materials and areas as they are covered, in the following sessions:

1. The significance of land and natural resources and their role in providing human needs relative to other factors of production-labor, capital, technology and information-introduces the subject. The scope of land values and the extent of ownership-some sense of magnitude-is illustrated at the local, national and international levels. This will serve to frame the entire course which will likewise relate the geographic span from the immediate and regional to the continental and global.

2. A cultural and historic perspective on the role of land tenure will amplify the geographic. The Western concepts of "real property", titles and rights will be compared with the Native American, African and Asian, both in their derivations and current manifestations. These conceptual distinctions will serve to define the theoretic boundaries of the entire course.
3. The local approach to land in the contemporary community, urban, suburban and rural, will be outlined in all its political and economic implications. Housing and development, zoning, public works, taxation, preservation and the role of the land in each will be emphasized.
4. The City--This session explores the relation between land ownership and urban development. Who gets to build what, where and when. Why real estate professionals talk about the bases for value as "location, location and location." New York City will be the major example in this session with supplementary material from other great metropolitan centers of the world.
5. Country--Land as the central organizing fact of rural life, both public and private. The relative values of farmland in terms of fertility and access. Concentration of ownership, how much of a problem and for whom? Illustrations will be taken mostly from the United States but comparisons will be made with farmland distribution patterns elsewhere.
6. Suburbia--The conflicts of changing land use and ownership. Speculation and sprawl, leapfrog and planned development--who benefits and who loses in land values. Urbanizing patterns will be viewed in several American, European and Asian regions with their consequences for both agricultural loss and housing gains, where appropriate.

7. National and Natural Resources--Distribution of public lands in the U.S. Relative concentration of resources--timber, coal, oil and gas. Grazing and other rights to land. Water, transportation, infrastructure, the wealth of land and nations. The distinction between natural and man-made land values and their impact on both private sector and government will be highlighted here.

8. Rich Countries, Poor People and the Converse--Paradoxes in national wealth and human condition, as portrayed in varied forms of distribution of land and resources. Examples will be shown in the U.S. (Appalachia and the Southwest desert), Japan, India, Brazil. The significance of the access and not of the intrinsic resources will be illustrated. This session will also serve to introduce the regions to be surveyed in greater depth.

9. The Americas--Comparing the U.S. with its neighbors, north and south. The role of land ownership in Canada, Mexico and our own history. Conflicts and commonalities that transcend borders. Political divisions and economic ties in land.

10. Slums and Estates--The relation between large land holdings and too rapid urbanization as illustrated by the giant ranches and teeming hillsides surrounding the Latin America cities. Some development projects that destroy the land in order to make it "productive" and others that preserve the environment.

11. Too Little Land or Too Many People--Contrasts in land tenure and access between small, productive Japan and India (China, if film available.) Some valuable lessons in land policy from some of the most crowded islands on earth--Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong. A side trip to Australia and

New Zealand, where good cities are encouraged by land tax policy.

12. Too Much Land or Too Few People?--Deserts, mountains, forests and jungles once supported greater populations than they do today. How does access--physical as well as political--to these vast "marginal lands" impact their future use?

13. Land and Sea, Air and Space--How much land can be "owned"--how far down into earth, how high in the air can we extend property rights for individuals, companies, countries. If there is to be a treaty governing the "Law of the Sea" and another universal compact on the use of space, can we ignore their implications for owning land as well?

14. Sharing Rights and Resources--Some attempts to redistribute resources more fairly. Cooperatives, collectives, parcelization and how well they overcome tenancy, migrancy and other aspects of landlessness. The promise and reality of land reform, as illustrated by projects the world over.

15. Who Owns Earth--Present and Future--A summary of the current known facts about land and natural resources and the gaps remaining to be filled. Towards some new definitions of ownership and value that reflect stewardship and beneficial use and methods to achieve them.