Introduction

In an era marked by climate change, rapid urbanization, and new geographies of resource scarcity, Environmental Studies has emerged as an important scholarly arena for engaging pressing questions in an interdisciplinary way. *Environment and Society: A Reader* traces an intellectual genealogy of the field while connecting its core themes to central issues and debates for the twenty-first century. This volume assembles canonical and contemporary texts about environment and society, constituting a systematic survey of central concepts and issues. These include questions about social mobilization on behalf of environmental objectives; the relationships among human population, economic growth, and stresses on the planet's natural resources; debates about the relative effects of collective and individual action; and unequal distribution of the social costs of environmental degradation. The parts are organized around a set of themes, which together constitute the core concerns of the field. Through the collection of central papers, each part simultaneously explores the theme and maps the genealogy of debates related to that theme. The aim of the volume is to acquaint readers with the essential history of Environmental Studies while demonstrating how its uniquely interdisciplinary intellectual arena affords meaningful engagement with the critical issues of the present.

*Environment and Society: A Reader* balances breadth and depth by covering a wide range of central questions for Environmental Studies while focusing on cases and specific challenges. It covers both theoretical and applied dimensions. It engages readers to fully consider how society shapes the environment, how the environment shapes society, why it matters, and what can be done in response.

All of the coeditors have taught the course “Environment and Society” at New York University. This course is one of the two gateway courses in the Department of Environmental Studies at New York University. This anthology is intended to serve as a textbook for this course and for comparable courses in other universities and colleges and is structured for this purpose. The aim of this anthology is to promote an analytical approach to understanding the environment and environmental movements. We feature both canonical and contemporary selections that are interdisciplinary within the social sciences and humanities. *Environment and Society: A Reader* is organized around six categories—ideas, movements, population, public goods, values, and controversies—and offers an intellectual genealogy of the field of Environmental Studies that connects its
core themes to central issues and debates about the environment. While these themes are applicable to problem solving and resource management, they also engage the major theoretical tensions within Environmental Studies.

*Environment and Society: A Reader* covers a broader historical range, from the early environmental movement to today. The texts are selected to highlight the recurring questions that have arisen concerning human interactions with the environment. It offers a wider range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary texts (as a result of the breadth of expertise of the coeditors) and emphasizes major conceptual challenges for the field of Environmental Studies. The selections are essential readings engaging central questions about the environment, supplemented by coauthored introductions, discussion questions, and suggestions for further readings. *Environment and Society: A Reader* is broadly interdisciplinary, inclusive of both historical and contemporary texts, and designed to engage central questions and concepts in Environmental Studies.

We have edited some entries and have maintained spelling customs of the original texts.