

Master in Political Ecology
Academic year:2018-2019

POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Instructors

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Objectives

The course offers a critical introduction to the interdisciplinary field of Political Ecology, the study of the ways in which power affects socio-environmental relations and processes. The course will offer a global view of the current ecological crisis and its political, economic, cultural and epistemological dimensions and interconnections.

Drawing from a range of critical approaches, the course will examine key concepts and theoretical frameworks that underlie the contemporary political ecological critique of capitalism and development. Students will learn to think politically about environmental problems, and to critically engage with “apolitical” approaches that explain environmental issues in terms of population, bio-physical, or human-behavioural drivers.

Structure

The course is broken in three parts. In the first part of the course will focus on key themes that have been critically studied from a PE perspective, starting to discern central premises and main strands of PE through central debates. A published case-study article will be also used to illustrate how this analysis is ‘put to work’ in a real case. The second part will introduce key concepts and ideas that are mobilised in political ecology research. It will do so by analysing how key actors in global environmental governance - namely, capital, the state, development agencies, and social movements - “see” nature and seek to shape environment-society relations. The third part will require the reading of a selected book (see list below). The class will be divided into groups (3-4 per group), where each group will choose a book, read it and discuss it among themselves. Each group will a) write a book review, a blog or a commentary about the book and b) give a presentation of the book to the class (last session).

Each week’s **readings** consist of one or two required readings (journal articles or academic book chapters). There are also additional (suggested) readings for most

topics. While we do not expect you to read all additional readings, we will address some key ideas raised by them. All readings will be made available in digital format beforehand.

Classes will follow a seminar format with a combination of teaching by the instructor and discussion in class of assigned readings. This might also include discussion in small groups, games, use of audiovisual material, and other activities.

Program outline

1. Introduction to Political Ecology (Marta & Diego)

Robbins, 2012 "Political versus apolitical Ecologies" and "A Tree with Deep Roots." **OR** "The Critical Tools" In *Political Ecology. A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell

Part one: Key themes in PE - With Marta Conde

2. Extractivism and commodity frontiers

Héctor Alimonda, Mining in Latin America: Coloniality and Degradation, 149-162 In International handbook PE

Commodity Frontiers, Conde and Walter. Degrowth Vocabulary.

Additional reading:

Patel, R., & Moore, J. W. (2017). *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet*. Univ of California Press. (Introduction)

3. Politics of science and knowledge

S. Funtowicz and J. Ravetz, Post normal science, <http://isecoeco.org/pdf/pstnormsc.pdf>

Topçu, S. (2008). Confronting nuclear risks: counter-expertise as politics within the French nuclear energy debate. *Nature + Culture*, 3(2), 225.

Additional reading:

Conde, M. (2014). Activism mobilising science. *Ecological economics*, 105, 67-77.

4. Feminism and feminist political ecologies

Carney, J. (1993). Converting the wetlands, engendering the environment: The intersection of gender with agrarian change in the Gambia. *Economic Geography*, 69(4), 329-348.

Additional reading:

Elmhirst, R., 2016. Feminist Political Ecology. In Perreault, T., Bridge, G. and J. McCarthy (Eds). Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology, Chapter 40

Aya H. Kimura, Understanding Fukushima: Nuclear Impacts, Risk Perceptions and Organic Farming in Feminist Political Ecology Perspective, 260-273. International Handbook of Political Ecology

5. Climate change: Anthropocene and capitalocene (J. Moore, etc).

Moore, J. W. (2017). *The Capitalocene, Part I: On the nature and origins of our ecological crisis*. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 44(3), 594-630.

Part two: Ways of seeing and making nature - With Diego Andreucci

6. Capital: Nature and dispossession

Harvey, D. (2003) "Accumulation by dispossession". In: *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Perreault, T. (2013). Dispossession by Accumulation? Mining, Water and the Nature of Enclosure on the Bolivian Altiplano. *Antipode* 45, 5: 1050-69.

7. The State: Regulation and environment-making

Parenti, C. (2015). The Environment Making State: Territory, Nature, and Value. *Antipode* 47, 4: 829-48.

Andreucci, D. (2017). Resources, regulation and the state: Struggles over gas extraction and passive revolution in Evo Morales's Bolivia. *Political Geography* 61: 170-80.

8. Development institutions: Governmentality and nature's legibility

Li, T. M. (2007). *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, Chapter 1.

Goldman, M. (2001). Constructing an Environmental State: Eco-Governmentality and Other Transnational Practices of a 'Green' World Bank. *Social Problems* 48, 4: 499-523.

9. Social movements: From 'environmental conflicts' to counter-hegemony

Simon, R. (1991) *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, Selected chapters.

Karriem, A. (2009) The rise and transformation of the Brazilian landless movement into a counter-hegemonic political actor: A Gramscian analysis, *Geoforum* 40, 3: 316-25.

Part three: Reading groups

10. Group presentations

Books suggested:

1. Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State*, 1997
2. Bailey, S., & Bryant, R. *Third World Political Ecology*, (2005)
3. S. Barca, *Enclosing Water. Nature and Political Economy in a Mediterranean Valley* (White Horse Press, 2010)
4. N. Peluso, *Rich forests, poor people: Resource control and resistance in Java* (Univ of California Press, 1992)
5. Erik Swyngedouw, *Liquid modernity. Contested Hydro-Modernities in 20th Century Spain* (The MIT press, 2015)
6. Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference* (2008)
7. Michael Goldman, *Imperial Nature* (2005)
8. Tania M. Li, *The Will to Improve* (2007)
9. Tania M Li, *Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier* (2014)
10. Christian Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos* (2012)
11. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the poor*, (2011)
12. Tim Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy* (2011)
13. Susanna B. Hecht, Alexander Cockburn, [The Fate of the Forest: Developers, Destroyers, and Defenders of the Amazon, Updated Edition](#) (2004).
14. Julie Guthman, [Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism](#) (2011)
15. Mike Davis, [Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World](#) (2004)
16. Agrawal, A., & Bauer, J. (2005). *Environmentality: technologies of government and the making of subjects*
17. Rocheleau, Dianne, Barbara Thomas-Slayter, and Esther Wangari. *Feminist political ecology: Global issues and local experience*. Routledge, 2013
18. Bryant, R. L. (Ed.). (2015). *The international handbook of political ecology*. Edward Elgar Publishing.