Master in Political Ecology  
Academic year: 2019-2020

**POLITICAL ECOLOGY**

**Instructors**

Marta Conde, PhD.  
Department of Political and Social Sciences, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona.  
[mcondep@gmail.com](mailto:mcondep@gmail.com)

Diego Andreucci, PhD.  
Department of Political and Social Sciences, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona.  
[diego.andreucci@gmail.com](mailto:diego.andreucci@gmail.com)

**Objectives**

The course offers a critical introduction to the interdisciplinary field of Political Ecology (PE), 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 into two main parts. In the first part, we 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. Case-study articles will be 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 PE research. It will do so by analysing how some key actors in global environmental governance - namely, capital, the state, development agencies, and social movements - “see” nature and seek to shape environment-society relations.

Each class’s **readings** consist of one required text (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 in them. All readings will be made available in digital format beforehand.
Classes will follow a seminar format with a combination of lecture and discussion of the assigned readings. This might also include discussion in small groups, debates, games, use of audiovisual material, and other activities.

Assignments and evaluation

This class does not require a final exam. Students will be evaluated on two assignments based on the readings and lectures, and of a final group-written review and oral presentation.

1. Assignments

Two assignments will be asked after the two main lecture blocks (after the 5th and 9th class). For each assignment you will respond to three questions, 250 words each, covering the material of lectures. The assignments will be sent to you by email at the end of each block and you will have one week to complete the assignment and email it back to us. The assignments will be assessed and count towards the final grade (60% of the overall grade). All assignments will be returned corrected at the end of the course.

2. Group presentations and book reviews

The course will require reading and critically reviewing a book. The class will be divided into four groups; students in each group will choose a book from the list below (first come, first served), read it and discuss it among themselves. Each group will a) write collectively a book review; and b) give a 20 minute presentation of the book to the class (last session). Both the review and the presentation will be evaluated and count towards the final grade (20% and 20% respectively). Instructions for writing the review and preparing the presentation will be provided in advance.

Programme outline

1. Introduction to Political Ecology (Marta & Diego)

Required readings:


Further readings:

Part one: Key themes in PE (Marta Conde)

2. Capitalism and the commodity frontiers

Required readings:


Additional readings:


3. Feminism and feminist political ecologies

Required readings:


Additional readings:


4. Constructivism in PE

Required readings:

**Additional readings:**


**5. Politics of science and knowledge**

**Required readings:**


**Additional readings:**


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**Part two: Ways of seeing and making nature (Diego Andreucci)**

**6. Capital: Nature and dispossession**

**Required readings:**


**Additional readings:**


7. The State: Regulation and environment-making

Required readings:


Additional readings:


8. Development institutions: Governmentality and nature’s legibility

Required readings:


Additional readings:


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

Required readings:


Additional readings:


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10. **Group presentations**

Books suggested: