

**Master in Political Ecology**  
**Academic year: 2020-2021**

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**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.  
International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands. [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**

Through key debates and empirical case studies, the course will start to discern central methodological tools and strands of PE. The course is broken into two main parts. In the first part, we will introduce post-structuralist and feminist perspectives in PE that explore and question the power-laden discourses and practices through which knowledge is produced and enacted. The second part will provide an overview of the main concepts and ideas mobilised within the materialist and political economy traditions of PE. It will do so by critically 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 article or academic book chapter) as well as additional (suggested) readings. The additional readings are meant to clarify key concepts, expand on relevant debates and provide further empirical illustrations. While we do not expect you to read all of the suggested readings, we will address some of the 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, use of audiovisual material, and other activities.

### **Assignments and evaluation**

This class does not require a final exam. Students will be evaluated on the basis of two short essays, and of a final group book review and oral presentation.

#### 1. Responses to the readings

At the end of each block of classes (week 5 and week 8), you will have to write a short, individual assignment/essay on the readings for these classes. These will count towards the final grade (70% of the overall grade, 35% each). Feedback will be provided on each assignment. 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 groups of 3-4. Students in each group will choose a book (from a list we will provide the first day of class; first come, first served), read it and discuss it among themselves. Each group will then *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 (30% and 10% 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:

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

Robbins, 2012 "Political versus apolitical Ecologies" (Ch. 1). In: *Political Ecology. A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell

##### Further readings:

Robbins, 2012 Part I, "What is Political Ecology?". In: *Political Ecology. A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 9-100.

Bridge, McCarthy, and Perreault, 2015, "Editors' Introduction" (Ch. 1). In: *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, edited by Tom Perreault, Gavin Bridge, and James McCarthy. New York, Routledge.

Astrid Ulloa, 2015, "Environment and Development from Latin America," in the Routledge PE Handbook.

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## ***Part one: Marta Conde***

### **1. Constructivism in PE**

#### Required readings:

Sletto B, 2008, The Knowledge that Counts: Institutional Identities, Policy Science, and the Conflict Over Fire Management in the Gran Sabana, Venezuela *World Development* **36**(10) 1938-1955

#### Additional readings:

Robbins, P. (2012) Challenges in Social Construction. (Ch 6). In: *Political Ecology. A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell

Escobar, A. (1998). Whose knowledge, whose nature? Biodiversity, conservation, and the political ecology of social movements. *Journal of political ecology*, vol. 5, no 1, p. 53-82.

### **2. Feminist political ecologies I**

#### Required readings:

Veuthey, S., & Gerber, J. F. (2010). Logging conflicts in Southern Cameroon: a feminist ecological economics perspective. *Ecological economics*, *70*(2), 170-177.

#### Additional readings:

Elmhirst, R., (2015). Feminist Political Ecology. In Perreault, T., Bridge, G. and J. McCarthy (Eds). Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology, *Chapter 40*

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.

Elmhirst, R. (2011b) "Migrant pathways to resource access in Lampung's political forest: gender, citizenship and creative conjugality". *Geoforum*, vol. 42: 173-183.

Truelove, Y. (2011) "(Re-)conceptualizing water Inequality in Delhi, India through a Feminist Political Ecology framework". *Geoforum*, vol. 42, no. 2: 143-152.

### **3. Feminist Political Ecologies II**

#### Required readings:

González-Hidalgo, M., & Zografos, C. (2017). How sovereignty claims and “negative” emotions influence the process of subject-making: Evidence from a case of conflict over tree plantations from Southern Chile. *Geoforum*, 78, 61-73.

De La Cadena, M. (2010). Indigenous cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual reflections beyond “politics”. *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no 2: 334-70.

#### Additional readings:

González-Hidalgo, M. and Zografos, Christos. (2019). Emotions, power, and environmental conflict: Expanding the 'emotional turn' in political ecology. *Progress in Human Geography* in press.

Farhana Sultana, 2020, “Political ecology 1: From margins to center”. *Progress in Human Geography*.

### **4. Politics of science, knowledge and activism**

#### Required readings:

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

#### Additional readings:

S. Funtowicz and J. Ravetz, (2003) *Post normal science*.

Forsyth, T. (2015). Integrating science and politics in political ecology. In *International handbook PE*, Bryant (Ed.),.

Wisner, B. (2015). Speaking truth to power. A personal account of activist political ecology. In Perreault, T., Bridge, G. and J. McCarthy (Eds). *Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*. (Chapter 3)

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### ***Part two: Diego Andreucci***

### **2. Capital: Nature and dispossession**

#### Required readings:

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

#### Additional readings:

Harvey, D. (2003) "Accumulation by dispossession" (Ch. 4). In: *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bakker, K. (2015) "Neoliberalization of Nature". In: *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, ed. by Tom Perreault, Gavin Bridge, & James McCarthy. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Alimonda, H. (2015) "Mining in Latin America: Coloniality and degradation". In: Bryant, R. (ed). *The International Handbook of Political Ecology*. Cheltenham, UK, Edward Elgar.

## **7. Development institutions: Governmentality and nature's legibility**

### Required readings:

Goldman, M., (2004), "Eco-governmentality and other transnational practices of a 'green' World Bank". In, Peet, R. and Watts, M. *Liberation Ecologies* (chapter 6, pp. 153-178).

### Additional readings:

Foucault, M., 2007, *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan (chapter 4, pp. 87-114).

Valdivia, G. (2015) "Eco-governmentality". In: *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, Ed. by Tom Perreault, Gavin Bridge, y James McCarthy, pp. 467-80. New York: Routledge.

Andreucci, D., & Kallis, G. (2017). Governmentality, development and the violence of natural resource extraction in Peru. *Ecological Economics*, 134(C), 95-103.

## **8. The State: Regulation and environment-making**

### Required readings:

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

### Additional readings:

Whitehead, M., Jones, R. and Jones, M. (2007) *The Nature of the State. Excavating the Political Ecologies of the Modern State*. Oxford, OUP. Chapter 2.

Simon, R. (1991) *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, chs. 1 (Introduction) and 9 (Civil Society, the State and the Nature of Power.)

Robertson, M. "Environmental governance: Political ecology and the state". In: *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, ed. by Tom Perreault, Gavin Bridge, & James McCarthy. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Asher, K., & Ojeda, D. (2009). Producing nature and making the state: Ordenamiento territorial in the Pacific lowlands of Colombia. *Geoforum*, 40(3), 292-302.

D'Alisa, G., & Kallis, G. (2020). Degrowth and the State. *Ecological Economics*, 169, 106486.

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

### Required readings:

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.

### Additional readings:

Simon, R. (1991) *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, chs. 2 (Gramsci's Concept of Hegemony), 3 (The Relations of Forces) and 5 (National-popular).

Vela-Almeida, D., et al (2020). "Imagining Plural Territories of Life: A Feminist Reading of Resistance in the Socio-Territorial Movements in Ecuador." *Journal of Latin American Geography* 19.2: 265-287.

Wolford, Wendy and Sara Keene, "Social Movements". In: *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, Ed. by Tom Perreault, Gavin Bridge, y James McCarthy. New York: Routledge.

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## **10. Group presentations**