

ENVS 158, Summer 2020

Political Ecology and Social Change

Class Meeting Times: Mon/Wed 1:00-4:30pm

Location: Online, via ZOOM

Instructor: J. Alejandro Artiga-Purcell

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Office hours: Tues. / Thurs. 10:30-11:30am (or by appointment) via zoom.

Course Description

Political Ecology examines the relations between politics, economics, culture and environmental change. It privileges questions of power, inequality and difference as they intersect with global capitalism, local politics, and material environments. This course provides an introduction to Political Ecological thought, theory and research, tracing its intellectual origins, evolution, challenges and future avenues. A primary goal of the course will be to explore and problematize overly simplistic and apolitical narratives of environmental change and to better understand the complex spatial configurations that often affect human-environment relations. To do so, we will examine an array of environmental issues like deforestation, famines, conservation, urbanization, climate change, gold mining, and agriculture as they relate to colonial histories, neoliberal development, gender inequality, and identity formation. This course aims to provide students with the critical thinking skills needed to engage, question, and propose alternatives to contemporary socio-ecological problems. This is a research seminar with a high reading load. The course will be given synchronously, online via zoom.

Course Learning Objectives

- Foster a more complex understanding of the socio-political, economic and cultural relations inherent in environmental problems.
- Enhance awareness of critical theoretical approaches focused on environment-society relations and specific topical areas of interest.
- Strengthen critical analytical abilities, research abilities and writing skills.

Required Tools

Due to the extraordinary circumstances of the current pandemic, this class will meet synchronously via zoom. Students must have access to the necessary technologies (e.g. computer or tablet and internet) to attend zoom meetings and access the course canvas site.

Recommended Texts (not required)

There is NO REQUIRED BOOK for this class. All readings will be available on the course canvas page.

The following text is NOT REQUIRED, but highly recommended to supplement mandatory class readings and deepen your understanding on a range of key themes in Political Ecology. It is available as an eBook through the UCSC library. Be sure to get the second edition.

- Paul Robbins, 2012, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Wiley Blackwell Publishers, SECOND EDITION

Evaluation

Your final grade will be made up as follows:

- Attendance, Participation, and Reading notes (35%)
 - Attendance (10%)
 - Participation (10%)
 - Reading notes (15%)
- Critical Review (10%)
- Product biography (5%)
- Climate Change Design (5%)
- Class Project (45%)
 - Class Presentation (15%)
 - Final paper (30%)

Attendance, participation, and reading notes (20%)

Attendance: I expect you to attend class and will be taking attendance. You should be in class unless you are sick or have some kind of emergency. Please let me know (in advance) if you are not attending class for a university approved reason and I will do my best to accommodate you. If unable to give advanced notice, please contact me as soon as you can afterwards in order to be excused. More than one unexcused absence will affect your grade.

Participation: This class is structured as a reading and research seminar. This means that I will not be lecturing during every class period, but rather the course readings and materials will be our primary focus. Consequently, the reading load is high. You should only take this class if you will be able to **complete the required readings before every class period** and be prepared to discuss them in detail. I expect you to participate in class discussion, breakout groups and other exercises.

Reading Notes: Seminars require that you do the readings thoughtfully, reflecting on the author's main arguments and the evidence they provide. You are required to prepare short "reading notes" for each class that include the **key take-home point(s) from the readings and one question to share with the class**. This will demonstrate that you have done the reading and will facilitate our discussions. Reading notes should be typed and **posted to our class's online canvas page, under the "Discussions" section, by 10am the day of class**.

Critical Review (10%)

You will submit a critical review of the following reading:

- Di Chiro, G. 2017. "Welcome to the white (m)Anthropocene?: A feminist-environmentalist critique". In S. MacGregor (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Environment*, London: Routledge, pp. 487-505.

In your review you will: **1)** describe the major idea in the reading (what is the primary argument or thesis?); **2)** identify its significance regarding key themes in political ecology (how does the argument relate to class discussion and your understanding of Political Ecology? Here you might

unpack how the author understands social-environmental change and power relations), **3**) offer critical reflections and questions about the main arguments, assumptions, and consequences (do you agree or disagree with the author? How? Why?). **4**) remember to cite the reading and any other sources you draw on. Your critical review should be a brief 500 words, meaning you must be concise and direct in writing. Your critical review will be typed and **submitted via canvas by 5:00pm Wednesday July 8.**

Product biography (5%)

During our week on Extraction and Manufacture Landscapes, you will select any extracted “product” that you use for this course and write a brief biography of it. The biography should briefly cover where the object came from (e.g. where its components were extracted, processed, manufactured, transported...etc.) and how it got to you. Pay attention to the people, environments, and interest groups that made your selected object possible. Explain how its journey to you was “political”. Your product biography should be 300 words typed. Submit the assignment via canvas **before class on Wednesday, July 15.**

Redesigning Climate Change (5%)

Drawing from the readings for this class, and using your artistic flare and creativity, design (draw, paint, photograph, describe in detail, make poetry about...etc.) a political ecological “logo” to convey the challenge/threat/consequences of climate change. More specific guidelines will be given before the assignment is **due in class on July 20.**

Class Project (45%)

The main component of this course is a research project on the “Political Ecologies of Santa Cruz.” Drawing upon the themes, theories and concepts from the course you will critically examine the human-environment relations and power dynamics of a “local” Santa Cruz issue of your choice. We will discuss the projects potential themes/logistics/goals/etc. the second week of the course. You will conduct your research throughout the quarter individually. As part of this project, you will give an oral presentation in class, and write a research paper:

Class Presentation (15%): During the **last week of class**, you will present your findings to the class. Presentations will last 10 and will be accompanied by PowerPoint, Prezi, or other slides. Your presentations should be compelling and polished. We will go over the oral presentation rubrics in class.

Research Paper (30%): In addition to the presentation, your research project will culminate in a final 1,500 word paper (~6 pages double spaced) on the same topic. The paper will include 1) a research problem statement, 2) a research question, 3) a statement linking your question to a political ecological theory/concept, 4) a methods section, 5) findings, 6) conclusions, and 7) a bibliography. This paper will be written individually and submitted via canvas. I expect your papers to be of the very highest quality. The final paper is **due the last day of class, July 22.**

Course Policies

Difficult content and classroom interaction: Many of the readings for this class touch on issues of racial, gender, or other forms of inequality that may be painful for those who have experienced them. Such complex topics can evoke strong feelings and differences of opinion. While I encourage discussion and passion, I also expect each of us to be respectful and kind to

one another, to listen actively, and to foster curiosity and a safe learning space. I will do my best to facilitate discussions so as to hear all perspectives and encourage participation and inclusivity. I hope that you will come and talk to me if at any point the class conversation makes you uncomfortable.

Technology: As class meetings will take place via zoom, students must have access to zoom compatible technologies (e.g. computer/tablet/internet...etc.). During class, please use these technologies only for class purposes (e.g. note taking, in class research exercises, participation...etc.). Please refrain from non-class related use of the internet, cell phones...etc.

Missed classes and Late work: As noted above, unexcused absences will negatively impact your participation grade. Unexcused late work will also negatively impact your grade. Procrastination can cause high stress and lead to plagiarism (whether intentional or unintentional). For this reason, and for quality of work, I suggest you start your projects early. If you feel you have a viable need for an extension, do not hesitate to contact me.

Special Accommodations: If you are a student who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, within the first two weeks of the quarter. At this time, we can also discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. We encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu. Any other special accommodations, questions, or situations should be directed to me the first week of the course.

Principles of Community, Academic Integrity, and the Student Honor Code: The University has established codes concerning proper academic conduct, honesty, and the consequences resulting from improper behavior. Please be aware of these policies and codes, which can be found at the following web locations: Principles of Community (<http://www.ucsc.edu/about/principles-community.html>); Academic Misconduct (https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct); Student Handbook and Policies (<http://deanofstudents.ucsc.edu/student-conduct/student-handbook/index.html>). Unfortunately, students sometimes commit plagiarism accidentally (i.e. by reusing portions of a paper that you wrote for another class or by failing to use quotation marks correctly). It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the rules of plagiarism and of correct citation. Please go to <http://www.plagiarism.org/> and refresh yourself on how to paraphrase and cite the work of others.

Trigger Warnings, Micro-aggressions, and Life as a UCSC Student: This class is committed to promoting a diverse, just, open, and caring community. As such, the course discussions and lectures will strive to support these principles as well as avoid everyday verbal and nonverbal microaggressions that include axes of difference related to citizenship, identity, race, class, gender, criminality, and/or sexual preference, among others. If you are concerned about any of these issues, please raise your concern in class or with the course instructor so that it may be effectively addressed, hopefully ameliorated, and provide a foundation upon which we might successfully commit to further engage in our learning experience. Finally, I am aware of the many pressures that we all face as members of the UCSC community, as colleagues in the Department of Environmental Studies, and as fellow human beings moving through the unique and spectacularly beautiful space that we call campus. Please remember that we are all members of the same campus village, that your course instructor is here to help you to the best of their ability, and that there are many useful campus services that are here to help everyone along the way, including academic advising in the Department of Environmental Studies (<http://envs.ucsc.edu/>), the Student Health Center <http://healthcenter.ucsc.edu/>, and Campus counseling and psychological services <http://caps.ucsc.edu/>.

Course Schedule

*The course schedule may change. Readings may be added or removed, and dates could shift. Changes will be announced in class and via email.

WEEK 1: ORIGINS OF POLITICAL ECOLOGY

- Mon. Jun. 22** Introduction: Moving Beyond Apolitical Ecologies
- Robbins, P. 2012. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. (Intro & Chapter 1, pp. 1-24)
 - Ieven, B. & Overwijk, J. 2020. We created this beast: The political ecology of COVID-19. Eurozine, 23 March.
<https://www.eurozine.com/we-created-this-beast/>
- Wed. Jun. 24** Political Ecology's Theoretical Underpinnings
- Robbins (2012), Chapters 2-3, (pp. 25- 81).
- *In-class exercise – mapping political ecologies.

WEEK 2: EARLY POLITICAL ECOLOGIES

- Mon. Jun. 29** Natural Disasters & Environmental Degradation
- Davis, M. 2004. The Political Ecology of Famine: The origins of the Third World. In, *Liberation Ecologies, Second Edition: Environment, development, social movements*. Peet, R. and Watts, M. (Eds). New York, NY: Routledge: 48-63.
 - Fairhead, J. and M. Leach. 1995. False forest history, complicity social analysis: Rethinking some West African environmental narratives. *World Development*, 23(6): 1023-1035.

OPTIONAL/Helpful Podcasts:

- David Harvey's Anti-Capitalist Chronicles, 2019 episode 15 "Primitive or Original Accumulation", May 8; & episode 16 "Accumulation by Dispossession", May 23.)

- Wed. Jul. 1** Conservation & Control
- Neumann, R. 1995. Ways of seeing Africa: Colonial recasting of African society and landscape in Serengeti National Park. *Ecumene*, 2(2): 149-169.
 - Duane, D. "Goodbye, Yosemite. Hello, What?" *New York Times, Opinion*. September 2, 2017. Available at:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/02/opinion/sunday/goodbye-yosemite-hello-what.html>

Project Team Meetings

*In-class exercise – exploring potential group projects.

WEEK 3: ANTHROPOCENE, CAPITALOCENE AND PATRIARCHOCENE

Mon. Jul. 6

Neoliberal Natures and the Anthropocene

- Fletcher, R. 2012. Using the Master's Tools? Neoliberal Conservation and the Evasion of Inequality. *Development and Change*, 43(1): 295-317.
- Kull, C., Arnauld de Sartre, X., & Castro-Larrañaga, M. 2015. The political ecology of ecosystem services. *Geoforum*, 61: 122-134.

Wed. Jul. 8

Feminist Political Ecologies

- Sultana, F. 2007. Water, Water Everywhere, But Not a Drop to Drink. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 9(4): 494-502.
- Di Chiro, G. 2017. Welcome to the white (m)Anthropocene?: A feminist-environmentalist critique. In S. MacGregor (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Environment*, London: Routledge, pp. 487-505. ***Critical Review***

OPTIONAL/Helpful reading:

- Rocheleau, D., Thomas-Slayter, B. and Wangari, E. 1996. Gender and Environment: A feminist political ecology perspective. In, *Feminist political ecology: Global issues and local experience*. Rocheleau, D., Thomas-Slayter, B. and Wangari (Eds). London: Routledge, pp. 3-23.

*******CRITICAL REVIEW DUE*******

WEEK 4: EXTRACTION & MANUFACTURED LANDSCAPES

Mon. Jul. 13

Urban & First World Political Ecologies

- Brechin, G. 1999. *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (pp. xxi-xxvi, 71-85, 108-117).
- Schroeder, R., Martin, K., and Albert, K. (2006). Political ecology in North America: Discovering the Third World within? *Geoforum*, 37(2): 163-168.
*In-class movie: *Manufactured Landscapes*

Wed. Jul. 15

Extractivism & Subterranean Struggles

- Willow, A. 2019. *Understanding ExtrACTIVISM: Culture and Power in natural Resource Disputes*. New York, NY: Routledge. (Chapter 1-2, pp. 1-24).

*******HOMEWORK DUE: Product biography*******

WEEK 5: SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Mon. Jul. 20

Climate Change or Social Change?

- Klein, N. 2014. This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster (Chapter 1, pp. 1-28).
- Guha, R. & Martinez-Alier, J. 1997. Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South. London: Earthscan Publications. (Introduction, pp. xi-xxiii).

OPTIONAL/Helpful readings:

- Forsyth, T. 2014. Climate justice is not just ice. *Geoforum*, 54: 230-232.
- Moses, M. “Why the Polar Bear is an Indisputable Image of Climate Change”, *The New Yorker*, June 23, 2019.
<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-appearances/why-the-polar-bear-is-the-undisputed-image-of-climate-change>)

*******HOMEWORK DUE: Designing Climate Change*******

Wed. Jul. 22

The Hatchet and the Seed

- No readings

*******STUDENT ORAL PRESENTATIONS*******

*******FINAL PAPER DUE*******