

EVST 285

Political Ecology:

Nature, Culture and Power

-DRAFT, August 2, 2009-

Credit Hours: 3
Time: Tuesdays 1:30-3:20
Location: TBA
Instructor: Dr. Amity Doolittle
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This is an undergraduate seminar on the relationship between society and the environment, specifically focusing on literature from the growing field of political ecology. Political ecology is based on the belief that environmental conflicts and management cannot be studied without careful examination of the pertinent political, economic, cultural and historical factors. The field of political ecology has grown in response to other phases in the scholarship surrounding mankind's place in the environment. Specifically political ecology draws on the scholarship from the fields of human ecology and political economy. Rather than focusing on the supposedly closed relationship between a society and their ecosystem (as human ecologists tend to) or solely on events occurring in the larger political economy and their effect on the environment, practitioners of political ecology try to explain environmental conflicts in terms of the particularities of place, culture and history. The nuances of local level details are set in relation to larger events occurring in the broader political economy since both local and non-local factors influence the decisions of a resources user. The field is predicated on the assumption that our environmental problems are often common, but their causes are complex and changing therefore solutions must be specific to time and place.

Seminar Statement:

This seminar is designed to be a shared intellectual experience in which the instructor and students learn from each other in an open and critical discussion. Ideally, the instructor operates as a tutor providing students

with directions to their inquiry. Students who expect an instructor to provide them with “**the answer**” will find the class frustrating, for there is no one correct or definitive answer to the complex problems we explore. The success of the course entirely depends on student preparation and engagement in class discussions. It is taken as a given that all assigned readings will be read and reflected upon **BEFORE** the class session. An important goal in the course is to learn how to discuss divergent view points and to be able to respectfully critique scholarship by highlighting the strengths and weakness of the readings.

Key to success: Active preparation for class and full participation in discussion.

Course requirements:

1. Discussion leader: 2 classes, total of 20%
2. Reading responses: 10 paragraph-length response or reaction to the readings, accompanied by a minimum of 2 discussion question, total of 10 responses are 20% of your grade.
3. Seminar participation, total of 20%
4. Final research paper, total of 40%

PARTICIPATION (20%): You are expected to complete all **readings** before class in preparation for class discussion. **Discussion** is an important part of this course and 20% your grade will be based on your participation in discussion section. Regular **attendance**, therefore, is essential. I will take attendance and will deduct points from your participation grade for each class missed. Because we will be covering a good amount of material in the course, it is imperative that you keep up with the readings. Please speak with me if you would like advice on what aspects of the readings you should be focusing on, reading strategies, or if you are falling behind.

RESPONSE PAPERS (10 at 2% each): Each **MONDAY** evening by 8pm (excepting the first week) you will post a paragraph-length response on the readings to the classes server for a total of 10 times. The objectives of these responses are to ensure that you are keeping up with and comprehending the reading material and to generate discussion

questions/ issues. For each response, you articulate at least two questions or issues that you would like to raise for discussion. Discussion leaders should use the responses to organize Tuesday's discussion.

DISCUSSION LEADERS (2 at 10% each): Sign up for 2 weeks.

Using the responses, a student will choose a theme from a week's readings and will lead discussion on that topic during Tuesday's discussion section. The discussion leader's role will be to raise questions about the readings, to challenge others to think about the readings in a new way, to compare and contrast different author's positions, or to critique the arguments of the authors. The discussion leaders may, for example, list questions and/or issues for the whole group to discuss, break the class into small groups, lead the class in an exercise that demonstrates a particular point, organize a debate, play a game, etc. Be creative. I would highly recommend that discussion leaders meet with me before Friday to go over your ideas.

EXTRA CREDIT: Will be given to any students who bring in a news article that is relevant to the week's discussion. (2% each).

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER (40%): Write a **12-15 page** (double-spaced, 12 point font). Final papers are due May 14th, 2007. This paper will be worth 40% of your grade. Final papers will be evaluated on the following criteria:

Required Text will be on **reserve at the F&ES library and** available for purchase at: **Labyrinth Books, 290 YORK STREET, NEW HAVEN, CT 06511. PHONE: 787-2848**

3 Required Books

Robbins, Paul. 2004. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK

Forsyth, Tim. 2005. *Critical Political Ecology: The politics of environmental science*, NY Routledge Press.

Paulson and Gezon. 2004. *Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales and Social Groups*, eds. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Most articles are available as pdfs on the class website

PART I: INTRODUCTION

September 8th: INTRODUCTION

What is culture and what are natural resources?

How do culture and natural resources intersect?

What does it mean to manage a natural resource?

September 15th. What is Political Ecology?

The disciplinary heritage of political ecology: Cultural Ecology was the first framework for studying cultures and natural resource management.

What was wrong with it?

Robbins, Paul. 2004. Ch 1: The Hatchet and the Seed. Pp. 1-17

Paulson and Gezon and Gezon. Ch. 2: Politics, Ecologies, Genealogies. Pp. 17-41.

Zimmerer K, and Bassett. 2003. Ch 1. Approaching Political Ecology: Society, Nature and Scale in Human Environmental Studies. Pp. 1-28 in Zimmerer and Bassett. *Political Ecology: An Integrative Approach to Geography and Environment-Development Studies*. Guilford Press, New York.

67 pages

September 22nd. Defining Nature: Social and Cultural Influences on Understanding Nature

Forsyth, Ch 1: Political ecology and the politics of environmental science. Pp.1-22

Robbins, Paul. 2004. Ch 2: A Tree with Deep Roots. Pp. 17-40

Cronon, William. 1996. The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature, *Environmental History*, Vol. 1(1): 7-28.

Denevan, W. M., 1992. The pristine myth - The landscape of the Americas in 1492, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 82(3): 369-385.

82 pages

PART II: The Scale and the Politics of Knowing

September 29th Communities and Protected Areas

Paulson and Gezon, Ch. 1 Place power and difference. Pp1-16

Robbins, Paul. Ch 5: The Destruction of Nature: Human Impact and Environmental Degradation . Pp. 87-106

Agrawal, Arun and Clark Gibson.1999. Enchantment and Disenchantment: The Role of Community in Natural Resource Conservation. *World Development* 17 (4): 629-649.

Berkes, Fikret. 2004. Rethinking community-based conservation. *Conservation Biology* 18(3):621-630.

Adams, W and J. Hutton. 2007. People, Parks and Poverty: Political Ecology and Biodiversity Conservation. *Conservation and Society*, 5(2): 147-183.

90 pages

October 6th Local knowledge

Look at this website: United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies, Traditional Knowledge Initiative <http://www.unutki.org/>

Forsyth, Ch. 5: The co-production of environmental knowledge and political activism. Pp 103-133.

Forsyth, Ch. 8: Democratizing environmental explanations. Pp. 199-226

Robbins. Ch 6: Constructions of Nature: Environmental Knowledges and Imaginaries. Pp. 107-126

76 pages

October 13th Reading Indigenous Transformations

Alcorn, Janis. 1981. Huastec Noncrop Resource Management: Implications for Prehistoric Resource Management, *Human Ecology* 9 (4): 395-417

Agrawal, Arun. 1995. Dismantling the Divide between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge, *Development and Change* 26 (3): 413-439

Fedick, Scott. 2003. In Search of the Mayan Forests. Pp133-166 in Candace Slater, et al. *In Search of the Rain Forest*. Chapel Hill: Duke University.

83 pages

October 20th Environmental Science as Science

If science has politics, who is seeking the truth?

Forsyth, Ch. 2 Environmental science and myths. Pp. 23-50

Forsyth, Ch. 4 Social Framings of Environmental Science. Pp 77-101

Hugh, Raffles. 2001. "The Uses of Butterflies". *American Ethnologist*, 28 (3):. 513-548

81 Pages

October 27th : Environmental Science as Social Science

Forsyth Ch. 4, Social framings of environmental science. Pp 77-102

Paulson and Gezon, Ch. 7, The Political Ecology of Consumption. Pp 113-135

Paulson and Gezon, Ch. 9, Symbolic Action and Soil Fertility. Pp. 154-173

66 pages

PART III: AUTHORITY AND CONFIGURATIONS OF POWER

November 3rd Conservation as government

Robbins, Paul. 2004. Ch 8: Conservation and Control. Pp. 147-171

Grove, Richard. 1993. Conserving Eden: The (European) East India Companies and their Environmental Policies on St. Helena, Mauritius and in

Western India, 1660-1854, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35 (3): 318-351

Chapin, Mac. 2004. A Challenge to Conservationists. *Worldwatch Magazine*, Nov./Dec.:17-31.

Flavin, Chris, et al. 2005. A Challenge to Conservationists: Phase II. *Worldwatch Magazine*, Jan./Feb.:15-20.

75 pages

November 10th Resource Control, Conflict and Resistance

Robbins, Paul. 2004. Ch 9: Environmental Conflict. Pp. 172-186.

Neumann, Roderick. 1992. The Political Ecology of Wildlife Conservation in the Mt. Meru area of Northeast Tanzania, *Land Degradation and Rehabilitation* 3: 85-98.

Peluso, Nancy.1993. Coercing Conservation: The Politics of State Resource Control, *Global Environmental Change* 3 (2): 199-218.

Dowie, Mark. 2005. Conservation Refugees: When Protecting Nature Means Kicking People Out. *Orion* November/December 2005, 8 pages.

65 Pages

PART IV: SEQUESTERING NATURE: ECONOMICS OF RESOURCE CONTROL

November 17th Enclosures and Privatizations: Property rights as a theoretical framework

Forsyth Ch. 6, Enforcing and contesting boundaries: boundary organizations and social movements. Pp. 133-164

McCarthy, J. 2007. Privatizing Conditions of Production: trade agreements and neo-liberal environmental governance 38-50 in Heynan,

McCarthy, Prudham and Robbins, eds. *Neoliberal Environments: False Promises and Unnatural Consequences*. Routledge, New Jersey

Bridge, Gavin. 2007. Acts of enclosure: Claiming stake and land conversion in Guyana's gold fields 74-89 in Heynan, McCarthy, Prudham and Robbins, eds. *Neoliberal Environments: False Promises and Unnatural Consequences*. Routledge, New Jersey

58 pages

December 1st No class

PART V: NEW CRITIQUES: EQUITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL?

December 8th Make Up Class in reading period

Focus on Social Justice and Equity

Forsyth, T. 2008. Political ecology and the epistemology of social justice. *Geoforum* 39: 756-764

Raghuandan, D., 1987, Ecology and Consciousness, Economic and Political Weekly XXII:13 March 28 pp 545-549.

Ashish Kothari, Saloni Suri and Neena Singh, People and Protected Areas, *The Ecologist* September/October 1995.

Corbera, Esteve; Brown, Katrina; Adger, W. Neil. 2007. The Equity and Legitimacy of Markets for Ecosystem Services. *Development and Change*, 38(4): 587-613.

Hillman, Mick. 2006. Situated justice in environmental decision-making: Lessons from river management in Southeastern Australia. *Geoforum* September: 695-707.

Robbins, P and K. Bishop. 2008. There and back again: Epiphany, disillusionment, and rediscovery in political ecology. *Geoforum* 39: 747-755

86 pages