

Political Ecology, Discourse and Power: Understanding Contemporary Environmentalism

GEOG 4670/ENVR 4000/GEOG 7010

Department of Environment and Geography

Fall 2019

Tuesday, 2:30-5:20pm, 114 St. John's College

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Office Hours: Monday 10-12

Pre-requisites: Permission of the instructor

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the field of political ecology with a specific focus on how it can help us understand contemporary forms of environmentalism. While concern for nature has been a longstanding part of civilization, in the past 50 years, environmentalism has become intertwined with all aspects of life. Yet, at the same time, the environmental crisis grows. Political ecology, as a field of academic and activist study that examines human-environment interactions for their political and economic subtexts, can provide a useful lens on understanding this paradox. Political Ecology has the promise to illustrate the motivations for, ideologies behind, and consequences of contemporary expressions of environmentalism.

In this course, we will use the lens of political ecology to understand the different ways that care for nature and the environment is mobilized in our era. This has the opportunity to provide a critical appraisal and critique of environmental activism as well as help sharpen our ideas of what works and why. This is an engaged practice with environmentalism that looks toward just, equitable and effective activist possibilities.

Objectives:

There are three course objectives:

1. To survey the contemporary field of environmental activism. Students will read from and understand the political, economic and social contexts of a wide range of environmental movements.
2. To understand political ecology as a lens for understanding human-environment interactions. Students will be exposed to a number of approaches within the field of political ecology.
3. To build students' own analysis of activist practices based on the readings and discussions. Students will be asked to make their own analyses of environmental movements and opportunities based on course readings and discussions.

Assignments:

Assignment 1: Review paper	- 20%
Discussion Leader	- 15%
Participation	- 15%
Paper	- 50%

Assignment 1: Review:

- a. *For Undergraduate Students: **Article Synthesis*** - Drawing from Political Ecology journals, you will provide a synthesis of three articles on a related topic. You can choose the articles from any post-2014 issue of: *Journal of Political Ecology, Capitalism, Nature, Socialism, Antipode, Geoforum, Environment and Planning A-E, Journal of Peasant Studies, and Development and Change*, all of which can be accessed electronically through the U of M library. Your purpose is to identify the underlying commonality between the three articles and illustrate the value of such an approach to the issues at hand. This is not simply a report on the articles; it is a **synthesis** of their content. The paper will be between 750-1000 words and follow proper academic formatting.

- b. *For Graduate Students: **Book Review*** - In consultation with me for the appropriate book, students will write a publishable quality review of a recent book in political ecology (from 2015-). The review will provide a summary of the book and its key contribution to the field of political ecology alongside a critical review of the book. Reviews will be 750-1000 words.
 - i. The progress of this storm
 - ii. The Climate leviathan
 - iii. Environmentalism of the Rich

Reviews are due on October 29th.

Discussion Leader:

Twice throughout the course, students will be the discussion leader for a particular seminar. The leader will be responsible for sparking the conversation in that week's class by providing a 10-15 minute presentation on the readings and topics, and steering some of the discussion that follows. The presentation will not be a summary of the articles, but rather a thoughtful analysis of what the articles have to offer, how they apply to broader issues, and where they might need to be critiqued. At the end of the presentation, the rest of the students should have a better understanding of the articles as well as an understanding of your position on those articles.

Participation:

Students are expected to participate fully in the course, which (of course) means reading all of the texts for each week and being ready to comment on them in detail. Unless exceptional circumstances arise, attendance is a vital part of the course.

Participation in this course is based upon three basic principles:

1. **Preparation** - In all courses it is assumed that you have prepared for the class by reading all materials and reflecting on them. In this 4th year class, you are expected to carefully consider these materials - including making the effort to understand the sections that weren't clear originally, looking up words or locations you are unfamiliar with, ask and start to answer critical questions about the text, and relate the texts and discussion to other materials that you are familiar with.
2. **Engagement** - As a seminar course, the level of discussion in the class will depend upon student engagement. This means bringing your questions to class, enhancing the discussion with your thoughts and insights, and working to understand the material as it is presented. Engagement, in other words, means learning so that we have a better understanding at the end of the day than what we started with.
3. **Listening** - The course simultaneously depends upon our ability to listen to others in the class. The seminar will include some lecture moments, but just as importantly, we need to take seriously our peers. The discussion should build on each others points, not bounce from one viewpoint. In this way, we can make it our goal to bring forward everyone's perspective and in doing so push our collective understandings of the issues at hand.

Paper:

Students will be expected to produce a research paper on a specific environmental campaign or movement. It is expected that students will draw from course material in their paper and will develop an argument that addresses some of the main questions addressed in class. For Graduate students, the paper will be between 4000-6000 words. For Undergraduate students, the paper will be between 2500-5000 words. You are encouraged to consult with me on the topic of the paper. Further details will be provided in class.

Grading, Assignment Submission, Lateness Penalties and Missed Tests

Grading: The grading scheme for this course is as follows:

A+	(90-100%)	is Exceptional
A	(80-89%)	is Excellent
B+	(75-79%)	is Very Good
B	(70-74%)	is Good
C+	(65-69%)	is Satisfactory
C	(60-64%)	is Adequate
D	(50-59%)	is Marginal
F	(0-49%)	is Failure

Lateness Penalty: Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized 5% for every 24 hour period that it is late. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be granted by the course instructor. Please make every effort to contact the instructor *prior* to your assignment being late to make such arrangements.

Feedback: Evaluative feedback on your Participation in class discussions and on the Book Review (if chosen) will be provided by the voluntary withdrawal deadline of November 17th.

Class Communication

The University requires all students to activate an official University email account. For full details of the Electronic Communication with Students please visit: http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/media/Electronic_Communication_with_Students_Policy_-_2014_06_05.pdf

Please note that all communication between myself and you as a student must comply with the electronic communication with student policy (http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/electronic_communication_with_students_policy.html). You are required to obtain and use your u of m email account for all communication between yourself and the university.

Topics and Readings:

Whole books are available at the University Bookstore. Most other readings are available through the University library. Readings not available through the library or bookstore will be made available by the Instructor.

PART 1: CONTEMPORAY ENVIRONMENTALISM

September 10th – Roots of Environmentalism

Required Readings:

Carson, R. (1962). "A Fable for Tomorrow" & "The Obligation to Endure." In *Silent Spring*, Boston: Mariner.

McKibben, B. (1989). "A Path of More Resistance." In *The End of Nature*, Toronto: Anchor Books.

September 17th – Contemporary Environmentalism.

Readings:

- Guha, R. (1999). "The Ecology of Affluence." In *Environmentalism: A Global History*, Don Mills: Longman.
- Warde, P., Robin, L. & Sverker, S. (2018). "The Earth is One but the World is Not." In *The Environment: A History of an Idea*. Baltimore: John Hopkins.

September 24th – 'Everything is Dangerous': Critiques from within.

Required Readings:

- Cronon, W. (1996). The trouble with wilderness: or, getting back to the wrong nature. *Environmental History*, 1(1), 7-28.
- Guha, R. (1999). "One World or Two?." In *Environmentalism: A Global History*, Don Mills: Longman.
- Shellenberg & Nordhaus, (2004). The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming in a Post-Environmental World. Online at <http://www.bvsde.paho.org/bvsacd/cd16/death.pdf>

Additional Readings:

- Cronon, W. (1995). *Uncommon ground: toward reinventing nature* (p. 65). New York: WW Norton & Company.
- Haraway, D. (2013). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. Routledge.

PART 2 : UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT AND POWER

October 1st – Political Ecology

Readings:

- Escobar, A. (1996). Construction Nature: Elements for a Post-Structural Political Ecology. *Futures*, 28(4), 325-343.
- Wainwright, J. (2005). The Geographies of Political Ecologies: After Said. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 37(6), 1033-1043.

Additional Readings:

- Peet, R., & Watts, M. (2004). *Liberation ecologies: environment, development and social movements*. Routledge.
- Peluso, N. L., & Watts, M. (Eds.). (2001). *Violent environments*. Cornell University Press.

October 8th – Discourse and Power: Foucauldian Perspectives

Readings:

- Rutherford, S. (2007). Green Governmentality: insights and opportunities in the study of nature's rule. *Progress in human geography*, 31(3), 291-307.
- Luke, T. W. (1995). On Environmentality: Geo-power and eco-knowledge in the discourses of contemporary environmentalism. *Cultural Critique*, (31), 57-81.

Additional Readings:

- Foucault, M., (2003). *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*. Macmillan.
- Rutherford, S. (2011). *Governing the wild: Ecotours of power*. U of Minnesota Press.

October 15th – Environmentalism and Capital

Readings:

- Klein, N. (2014). Fruits, Not Roots. In *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Toronto: Knopf.
- Prudham, S. (2009). Pimping Climate Change: Richard Branson, Global Warming and the Performance of Green Capitalism. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 41(7).

Additional Readings:

- Castree, N., & Christophers, B. (2015). Banking spatially on the future: Capital switching, infrastructure, and the ecological fix. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 105(2), 378-386.
- Büscher, B., & Fletcher, R. (2015). Accumulation by conservation. *New political economy*, 20(2), 273-298.

October 22nd – Neoliberalism and Green Capitalism

Readings:

- Dempsey, J. (2016). Enterprising Nature. In *Enterprising Nature: Economics, Markets and Finance in Global Biodiversity Politics*. New York: Wiley.
- Robertson, M. (2004). The Neoliberalization of Ecosystem Services: Wetland Mitigation Banking and Problems in Environmental Governance. *Geoforum*, 35, p. 361-373.

Additional Readings:

- Heynen, N., McCarthy, J., Prudham, S., & Robbins, P. (Eds.). (2007). *Neoliberal environments: false promises and unnatural consequences*. Routledge.
- Fletcher, R. (2010). Neoliberal Environmentalism: Towards a Poststructuralist Political Ecology of the Conservation Debate. *Conservation and Society* 8(3).

PART 3: NEW ISSUES IN ENVIRONMENTALISM

October 29th – Development Environmentalism

Readings:

- Fairhead, J., Leach, M. & Scoones, I. (2012). Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature? *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2).
- Lunstrum, E. (2014). Green Militarization: Anti-Poaching Efforts and the Spatial Contours of Kruger National Park. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 104(4).

November 5th – The Anthropocene

Reading:

- Lewis, S. & Maslin, M. (2018). Defining the Anthropocene. In *The Human Planet: How We Created the Anthropocene*. Toronto: Pelican.
- Swyngedouw, E. (2011). Depoliticized Environments: The End of Nature, Climate Change and the Post-Political Condition. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements*, 69, 253–274.
- Moore, A. (2019). Selling Anthropocene Space: Situated Adventures in Sustainable Tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 27(4).

November 19th – Black and Indigenous Activism

Readings:

- Di Chiro, G & Rigell, L. (2018). Situating Sustainability against Displacement. In *Sustainable Approaches to Environmental Justice and Social Power*. New York: NYUP.
- Pasternak, S. (2017). “They are clear cutting our way of life.” In *Grounded Authority: The Algonquins of Barriere Lake Against the State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

November 26th – Animals

Required Readings:

- Johnson, A. (2011). How to Queer Ecology: One Goose at a Time. *Orion*.
<https://orionmagazine.org/article/how-to-queer-ecology-once-goose-at-a-time/>
- Mackinnon, J.B. (2013). The Age of Rewilding. In *The Once and Future World*. Toronto: Vintage.
- Boyer, K. (2017). Saving the Polar Bear and Other Objects. In *Critical Norths: Space, Nature, Theory*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska.

December 3rd – The Green New Deal

Reading:

- Green New Deal Group (2008). The Green New Deal. In *A Green New Deal*. London: New Economics Foundation.

Goldstein, J., & Tyfield, D. (2018). Green Keynesianism: Bringing the Entrepreneurial State Back in(to Question)? *Science as Culture*, 27(1)

Additional Reading:

Noel Castree & Brett Christophers (2015) Banking Spatially on the Future: Capital Switching, Infrastructure, and the Ecological Fix, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 105:2, 378-386,

Student Support and Conduct

[Writing and Study Skills Support](#)

The Academic Learning Centre (ALC) offers services that may be helpful to you as you fulfill the requirements for this course. Through the ALC, you may meet with a study skills specialist to discuss concerns such as time management, reading and note-taking strategies, and test-taking strategies. You may also meet one-on-one with a writing tutor who can give you feedback at any stage of the writing process, whether you are just beginning to work on a written assignment or already have a draft. Writing tutors can also give you feedback if you submit a draft of your paper online. (Please note that the online tutors require 48 hours, from Mondays to Fridays, to return your paper with comments.)

All Academic Learning Centre services are free for U of M students. For more information, please visit the Academic Learning Centre website at umanitoba.ca/student/academiclearning/

You can also talk to a member of the Academic Learning staff by calling 480-1481 or by dropping in at 201 Tier Building.

[Student Accessibility Services](#)

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) provides support and advocacy for students with disabilities of all kinds: hearing, learning, injury-related, mental health, medical, physical or visual. Students with temporary disabilities such as sprains and breaks are also eligible to use our services. SAS acts as a liaison between students and the faculty and staff of the University of Manitoba as well as support agencies within the province of Manitoba. Please phone: 474-6213 (voice) or 474-9690 (TTY) for service.

[Student Counselling Centre](#)

Student Counselling Centre (SCC) offers individual, couple or family counselling in individual and groups formats. Please phone: 474-8592 or visit SCC at 474 University Centre.

Policy on Respectful Work and Learning Environment

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/566.html

Inappropriate and Disruptive Student Behaviour

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/students/279.html

Accessibility Policy for Student with Disabilities

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/students/281.html

Withdrawal from class

http://umanitoba.ca/student/records/leave_return/695.html

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism, Cheating and Examination Impersonation

Plagiarism or any other form of cheating in examinations, term tests or academic work is subject to serious academic penalty (e.g. suspension or expulsion from the faculty or university). Cheating in

examinations or tests may take the form of copying from another student or bringing unauthorized materials into the exam room (e.g., crib notes, pagers or cell phones). Exam cheating can also include exam personation. (Please see Exam Personation, found in the Examination Regulations section of the General Academic Regulations). A student found guilty of contributing to cheating in examinations or term assignments is also subject to serious academic penalty.

To plagiarize is to take ideas or words of another person and pass them off as one's own. In short, it is stealing something intangible rather than an object. Plagiarism applies to any written work, in traditional or electronic format, as well as orally or verbally presented work. Obviously it is not necessary to state the source of well known or easily verifiable facts, but students are expected to appropriately acknowledge the sources of ideas and expressions they use in their written work, whether quoted directly or paraphrased. This applies to diagrams, statistical tables and the like, as well as to written material, and materials or information from Internet sources.

To provide adequate and correct documentation is not only an indication of academic honesty but is also a courtesy which enables the reader to consult these sources with ease. Failure to provide appropriate citations constitutes plagiarism. It will also be considered plagiarism and/or cheating if a student submits a term paper written in whole or in part by someone other than him/herself, or copies the answer or answers of another student in any test, examination, or take-home assignment. Working with other students on assignments, laboratory work, take-home tests, or on-line tests, when this is not permitted by the instructor, can constitute Inappropriate Collaboration and may be subject to penalty under the [Student Discipline By-Law](#).

An assignment which is prepared and submitted for one course should not be used for a different course. This is called "duplicate submission" and represents a form of cheating because course requirements are expected to be fulfilled through original work for each course.

When in doubt about any practice, ask your professor or instructor.

The Student Advocacy Office, 519 University Centre, 474-7423, is a resource available to students dealing with Academic Integrity matters.