

**Master in Sustainability**  
**Academic year: 2018-2019**

## **POLITICAL ECOLOGY**

Sciences Faculty Building C5B/011  
Mondays 10-13.00 p.m.

### **Instructors:**

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Giorgos Kallis  
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### **Teaching Assistant**

Brototi Roy,  
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Office hours: Wednesday 11.00 – 12.00 (previous appointment required)

### **Objectives**

In this course we will explore the interdisciplinary field of Political Ecology. Political Ecology is a theoretical and methodological approach for the study of socio-ecological systems that focuses on conflict, power and the uneven distribution of environmental costs and benefits. This course will familiarize you with core concepts used by political ecologists at ICTA and teach you how to apply these concepts to your empirical material. We will introduce you to a profoundly new, critical way of looking at and understanding environmental problems, politics and policies.

By the end of this course you should be able to conduct, if you wish, a political ecology research project on your own. In addition, you will learn how to read and analyze social science, and you will improve your writing and argumentative skills.

### **Structure**

The course has twelve classes. Each class, except the first one that will be welcoming and introductory, is normally based on two readings: one theoretical and one empirical. The empirical paper typically applies the concepts and ideas presented in the theoretical paper on a case study. We will discuss the readings as a group in class and occasionally use power point presentations to convey some of the key ideas where necessary. We expect everyone to participate actively in the discussions and to have read the readings carefully in advance.

All articles and reading material for the class are uploaded in a special Dropbox folder (link: <https://bit.ly/2z0rrVm>) and will stay there up to three months after the end of the class, after which it will be deleted. You don't need to buy books, go to the library or download anything.

## **Assignments, Exam and Final Essay**

### **1. Weekly homework**

Each week you will have to write a 250 words essay, answering to a question related to the readings for that week. You should hand in the assignment to Brototi at the beginning of each class. The assignment will be graded (1-10) and returned in the next class with comments. If you want to discuss your assignments or our evaluation you can ask for an appointment with Brototi during her office hours.

The grade of the assignments will not be taken into account in your final grade, unless it is higher than the average grade of your final exam plus essay, in which case it will count for 20% of your overall grade. The weekly assignments will help you recognize weaknesses and improve your writing, given that the final exam will consist of questions with the same style as the weekly assignments. In case you miss a class, you are sick, etc, you have to inform us in advance and then deliver the essay the following week or later as agreed with the instructor (it won't be graded though).

Failure to deliver the essay completely will have an impact on your overall final grade, half a point taken out of your final grade for each essay left undelivered.

Auditors have also to write the weekly assignment but are exempt from the final essay and exam.

### **2. Participation in class**

Participation in class is encouraged, though it won't be evaluated or graded. Different people have different communication styles, some like to talk a lot, others less. We encourage discussion and participation with our teaching style, and we will try to encourage as many of you to speak up and position yourself with respect to the readings and the discussion.

### **3. Exam**

This will take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2019 and will count for 50% of your final grade. The material under examination will consist of all the articles read and discussed during the semester. The style of the questions will be similar to those handed in the weekly homework, i.e. short questions which you will have 250 words to answer. The exam will be "take-home", and you will be expected to use whatever resources you wish to answer the questions. It will be sent by email to all of you at 9 a.m the day of the exam and should be handed in by email by 6 p.m. the same day. The exams will be graded anonymously.

### **3. Essay**

This will count for 50% of your final grade. In due time, and before Christmas, you will be assigned a movie to watch or a text to read and write a 1000 words essay on it from a political ecology perspective. We will grade essays first and foremost for originality and creativity. You should deliver the essay after the final exam on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January.

## **PROGRAM OUTLINE**

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### **Week 1 – What is political ecology? (Giorgos Kallis)**

**15/10**

Robbins, P., 2004. 'Political versus Apolitical Ecologies'. (Chapter 1) in *Political Ecology*, Blackwell.

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**Week 2 – Ecological distribution conflicts (Giorgos Kallis)**  
**22/10**

Martinez-Alier, J., 2009. Social metabolism, ecological distribution conflicts, and languages of valuation. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 20(1): 58-87.

Demaria, F., 2010. Shipbreaking at Alang–Sosiya (India): an ecological distribution conflict. *Ecological Economics*, 70(2): 250-260.

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**Week 3 – The social construction of nature (Giorgos Kallis)**  
**29/10**

Robbins, P., 2004. 'Challenges in Social Construction' (Chapter 6). In *Political Ecology*, Blackwell

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

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**Week 4 – Degradation and Marginalization (Panagiota Kotsila)**  
**5/11**

Robbins, P. (2004) 'Degradation and Marginalization' (Chapter 8). In *Political Ecology*, Blackwell.

Collins, T.W. (2010) 'Marginalization, facilitation and the production of unequal risk, The 2006 Paso del Norte Floods'. *Antipode*, 42 (258-288)

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**Week 5 – Conservation and Control (Panagiota Kotsila & Brototi Roy)**  
**12/11**

Robbins, P. (2004) 'Conservation and Control' (Chapter 9). In: *Political Ecology*, Blackwell.

Peluso, N.L. (1995) "Whose woods are these? Counter-mapping forest territories in Kalimantan, Indonesia." *Antipode* 27 (383-406).

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**Week 6 – Identity and social movements (Panagiota Kotsila)**  
**19/11**

Robbins, P. (2004) 'Environmental Subjects and Identities' (Chapter 11). In: *Political Ecology*, Blackwell.

Valdivia, G. (2005) 'On indigeneity, change, and representation in the northeastern Ecuadorian Amazon'. *Environ. Plan. A* 37 (285–303).

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**Week 7 - Accumulation by Dispossession (Panagiota Kotsila)**

26/11

Harvey, D. (2003) 'Accumulation by dispossession'. In: *The new imperialism*, Oxford: OUP

Federici, S. (2012), 'Feminism and the politics of the common in an era of primitive accumulation' (Part III, chapter 2) . In: *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. PM Press.

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**Week 8 – Political Ecology at ICTA (organized by Brototi Roy)**

3/12

Presentations by ICTA post doc and senior researchers developing research on political ecology with offer of possible master thesis topics.

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**Week 9 – Power, knowledge and governmentality (Panagiota Kotsila)**

10/12

Foucault, M. (1991) 'Politics and the Study of Discourse' & 'Governmentality' (Chapters 2 & 4). In: Burchell, G., Gordon, C., Miller, P. (eds). *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality*. University of Chicago Press.

Goldman, M. (2004) 'Eco-governmentality and other transnational practices of a "green" World Bank'. In: Peet and Watts (ed.) 'Liberation ecologies: environment, development and social movements'. Routledge

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**Week 10 – Biopolitics and the Political Ecology of health (Panagiota Kotsila)**

17/12

Foucault, M. (2003) '17th March 1976' (chapter 11) .In: *Society Must Be Defended*": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976. Macmillan.

Li, T M (2009) *To Make Live or Let Die? Rural Dispossession and the Protection of Surplus Populations*. Antipode

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**Week 11 - Feminist Political Ecology (guest speaker Camila Rolando)**

7/1

Elmhirst, R., 2016. *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), pp.329-348.

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**Week 12 – Third World Political Ecology (Brototi Roy)**

14/1

Escobar, A. (2001). Culture sits in places: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization. *Political geography*, 20(2), 139-174.

Joshi, S. (2015). Postcoloniality and the North–South binary revisited: The case of India's climate politics. *International Handbook of Political Ecology*, 117-130.

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**Week 13 – Exam**

