

ENVIRONMENT, SOCIETY AND POLITICS (25033)

1. Course details

Course: Environment, Society and Politics

Course code: 25033

Study programme: Bachelors Programme in Political and Administration Sciences
(Grau en Ciències Polítiques i de l'Administració)

Credits: 4 ECTS credits (100 hores de dedicació)

Trimester: 1st

Teaching language: English

Course tutor: Christos Zografos, PhD

Office hours: Thursdays 15:00-16:00 (between: 5 October – 30 November 2017)

2. Course presentation

The course explores ways in which power relations shape environmental change and governance from a critical environmental social science perspective. In this course, we will discuss how the environments in which we live have been produced by major forces such as capitalism, colonialism and empire, but also consider the limits posed to those projects by nature itself and by alternative, counter-hegemonic projects. We will also look at how race, class, and gender are relevant categories for analysing environmental change and conflict, and consider how those categories intersect.

The classes draw on knowledge from the interdisciplinary fields of political ecology, environmental history, and ecological economics, which use varied conceptual devices and methodological tools to study how environmental change is produced and what are its social implications.

The aim of the course is to help students develop a critical understanding of environmental change and of the relevance of power and politics for producing or shaping nature. After the end of the course, students should be in a position to mobilise specific concepts and analytical tools presented in the class in order to analyse environmental transformation, and embark on mini-projects (e.g. for their final year dissertations) in the area of environmental social science.

3. Associated skills

This course is part of the optional courses itinerary “citizenship and government” that together, develops the following competencies:

BASIC SKILLS:

CB2. That students can apply their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional manner and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study.

CB3. That students have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical.

CB4. That students can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

CB5. That students have developed those skills needed to undertake further studies with a high degree of autonomy.

GENERAL SKILLS:

CG1. Capacity for analysis and synthesis.

CG3. Knowledge of a second language.

CG4. Basic computer skills.

CG6. Interpersonal skills.

CG7. Ability to work in an interdisciplinary team.

CG10. Research skills.

CG12. Ability to generate new ideas (creativity).

CG13. Leadership.

CG15. Project design and management.

TRANSVERSAL SKILLS:

CT1. Identify and analyze critically gender inequality and its intersection with other axes of inequality.

SPECIFIC SKILLS:

CE2. Analyze the structure and functioning of political systems.

CE6. Identify citizen behavior and democratic values.

CE7. Analyze the functioning of electoral processes.

CE17. Apply the methods and techniques of political and social research.

CE18. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data.

CE19. Examine the techniques of political communication.

CE20. Categorize information and communication technologies (ICT) and analyze their impact on the political system.

4. Contents

Section 1: Introduction: Linking environment, society and politics

- Environmental governance
- Politics and power
- Political ecology, ecological economics and environmental history
- Political economy and environmental change

Section 2: Capitalist natures

- Capital accumulation and environmental degradation
- Commodity frontiers

Section 3: Colonial and imperial natures

- Environmental justice and environmental racism
- Empire and environmental degradation
- Colonialism: othering, coloniality and nature

Section 4: Constructed and hybrid natures

- The power of discourse, or how discourses produce nature
- Disciplining communities, disciplining nature
- Hybridity: incomplete dominations and unfinished natures

Section 5: Environmental subjects

- The power from within: subject-making
- Governmentality and the environment
- Desire and power

Section 6: Feminist natures

- Gender and nature
- Feminism and nature
- The role of emotions in environmental transformation and conflict
- Intersectionality

Section 7: The materiality of nature

- Nature as an uncooperative commodity
- The agency of nature
- Vital materiality

Section 8: Valuing nature

- The monetary valuation of nature, and the power to reduce complexity
- Environmental externalities vs. cost-shifting
- Monetisation and commodifying nature
- Rationality and environmental decision-making
- Democracy and sustainability decision-making

5. Seminars

This course includes two seminars, which will be used to conduct ongoing student evaluation.

The first seminar (10% of final mark) will involve the screening of the 1984 movie ‘Where Green Ants Dream’ by German director Werner Herzog (in English, with English subtitles). Students are required to do a set of readings before that seminar. After the screening, students will get into groups (of 2-5 students, depending on the size of the class) to answer a set of questions, which they will then present in the class, and the presentations will be followed by a class discussion. Student performance will be evaluated by how well students bring knowledge imparted during the course in their answers to the questions, and by their participation in the discussion.

The second seminar (30% of final mark) will have two elements. The first element involves the presentation of a poster which will be prepared before the class by students into groups (of 2-5 students, depending on the size of the class), and will be presented briefly (6-10 minutes, depending on the size of the class) to the rest of the class; after each presentation, other students (and the tutor) will be able to ask questions on the

content of the poster. This part of the class will essentially follow the format of a scientific conference ‘poster session’, where posters are hanged on the wall, and scientists go around into groups listening to poster presentations and asking questions about them. **By Week 3 of the course**, students must form groups and decide on poster topics from a list of topics that will be provided by the tutor. The groups will then prepare the poster, through doing a set of readings and answering a set of questions that will be provided by the tutor. The second part of the seminar will involve a discussion facilitated by the tutor, which will be structured around questions related to the content of course classes. Student performance will be evaluated on the basis of how well students bring knowledge from the course in their posters and in their participation in the discussion.

6. Assessment

Students will be evaluated via three *types* of evaluation tools:

- Participation and performance in the classroom; this is directly connected with having done the readings that will be provided for each class and answering the question related to those readings
- Performance on two seminars
- Performance on a final course essay

In order to get a mark for this course, students **must participate in the two seminars and write the final short essay** (see below).

The following table outlines the contribution of each evaluation to student final mark.

Evaluation tool	% of final mark
Participation in classroom and readings	20%
Seminar 1	10%
Seminar 2	30%
Final Essay	40%

Classroom participation

Class 1 is an introductory class; students are not required to do any readings prior to that class. Classes 2-7, and Class 9 are lecture-based classes. Students are required to read one academic article and answer a question related to that article before the class. Those readings will be made available in the Aula Global university intranet. Students will bring their answer in the class (e.g. in the form of bullet points) where some of them will be asked to present their answers. This will be followed by class discussion on the question, the topics it touches upon and the issues it raises, which will be based on student answers to the question. Performance will be evaluated individually via student participation in those discussions, and specifically by how well students bring into their participation knowledge from the readings.

Seminars

This course includes two seminars. The seminars will be used to conduct ongoing student evaluation. Attendance to seminar sessions is compulsory. Students failing to attend a seminar without providing a (written) proof of serious (e.g. medical) reasons why they did not show up, will get a ‘0’ (zero) mark for that seminar, and will be

automatically suspended from the course, i.e. will get a 'fail' mark for the whole of the course, without the possibility to take a resit exam (retest).

For both seminars, as students will form groups, an overall mark will be given for performance to the whole of the group, and the same mark will be assigned as seminar performance to each student individually.

For details on the content of each seminar, and the criteria for evaluating student performance in them, please see Section 5 of this syllabus.

Final course essay

Students will write a take-home essay. This will involve developing an answer to a question that will be provided by the course tutor, in an essay-style text of a maximum of 1,000 words. Student performance will be evaluated by the ability to bring into the answer relevant knowledge taught during the course, express this in the student's own words (but using scholarly language to the extent that this is possible), and provide examples to demonstrate and support the points made in the essay.

Students failing to hand in the essay by the deadline without providing a (written) proof of serious (e.g. medical) reasons why they did not keep with the deadline, will be given a '0' (zero) mark for that essay, and will be automatically suspended from the course, i.e. will get a 'fail' mark for the whole of the course without the possibility to take a resit exam (retest).

Retest

Those failing the course will be given a second chance to pass the course by taking a resit exam (retest). Only those who have attended both seminars and have handed in a final essay will be able to resit to pass the course.

7. Methodology

This course combines lectures with seminars. There will be eight lecture classes, and two seminar ones.

For the lecture-based classes, students are required to read one academic article and answer a question related to that article before the class, and then discuss their answers in the class. The class will also combine a more 'traditional' lecture format in which the tutor will explain further points related to the topic, as well as classroom activities (e.g. based on watching short videos or reading a short text in the class and answering questions related to it), and conclude with a summary of the main points raised with the class. Student participation is highly encouraged and will be sought through questions and discussions with the students.

The two seminars will be used for student performance evaluation purposes. For details about seminar content and evaluation, please see Section 5 of this document.

8. Bibliography and other resources

Key readings

- Robbins, Paul. 2012. *Political Ecology* (2nd edition). John Wiley & Sons
- Paulson, Susan, and Geezon, Lisa. (eds.). 2005. *Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups*. New Jersey: Rutgers
- Peet, Richard, Robbins, Paul, and Watts, Michael (Eds.). 2011. *Global political ecology*. London & New York: Routledge
- Robbins, Paul. 2007. *Lawn People: How Grasses, Weeds, and Chemicals Make Us Who We Are*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Martínez-Alier, Joan. 2003. *The environmentalism of the poor: a study of ecological conflicts and valuation*. Edward Elgar Publishing
- Elmhirst, Rebecca. 2011. Introducing New Feminist Political Ecologies. *Geoforum*, 42(2), 129-132
- Klein, Naomi. 2016. Let Them Drown. The Violence of Othering in a Warming World. *London Review of Books* Vol. 38 No. 11 · 2 June 2016, pp: 11-14
- Blaikie, Piers. 1985. *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion in Developing Countries*. London: Longman.
- McNeill, John R. 2010. *Mosquito empires: ecology and war in the Greater Caribbean 1620-1914*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- St. Martin, Kevin. 2006. The impact of “community” on fisheries management in the US Northeast. *Geoforum* 37, pp. 227-245
- Nelson, Julie A., 2013. Ethics and the economist: What climate change demands of us. *Ecological Economics*, 85, pp.145-154

Recommended readings (alphabetic order)

- Agarwal, Arun. 2005. *Environmentality: technologies of government and the making of subjects*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press
- Agarwal, Bina. 2001. Participatory Exclusions, Community Forestry, and Gender: An Analysis for South Asia and a Conceptual Framework. *World Development*, 29(10), 1623-1648.
- Armiero, Marco, and D'Alisa, Giacomo. (2012). Rights of resistance: the garbage struggles for environmental justice in Campania, Italy. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 23(4), 52-68
- Bennett, Jane. 2009. *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Duke University Press.
- Blaser, Mario, Feit, Harvey A, and McRae, Glenn. (Eds.) *In the Way of Development: Indigenous Peoples, Life Projects and Globalisation*. London: Zed Books, pp. 26-44
- Escobar, Arturo. 1996. Construction nature: Elements for a post-structuralist political ecology. *Futures* 28 (4), pp. 325-343

- Escobar, Arturo. 2011. *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press.
- Featherstone, David, and Korf, Benedikt. 2012. Introduction: Space, contestation and the political. *Geoforum*, 43(4), 663-668
- Heywood, Andrew. 2002. Politics. 2nd edition. *Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan*.
- Kaika, Maria. 2005. City of flows. *Modernity, nature and the city*. Routledge, New York/London
- Martinez-Alier, Joan, Kallis, Giorgos, Veuthey, Sandra, Walter, Mariana, and Temper, Leah. (2010). Social metabolism, ecological distribution conflicts, and valuation languages. *Ecological Economics*, 70(2), 153-158
- McCarthy, James. 2002. First World political ecology: lessons from the Wise Use movement. *Environment and planning A*, 34(7). pp. 1281-1302
- McNeill, John R. 2001. The World According to Jared Diamond. *The History Teacher* 34(2)
- Peluso, Nancy L., and Watts, Michael, 2001. *Violent environments*. Cornell University Press
- Robbins, Paul. 2015. The Trickster Science. In: Perreault, T., Bridge, G., & McCarthy, J. (Eds.). *The Routledge handbook of political ecology*. Routledge, 89-101
- Rodó-de-Zárate, Maria. 2014. Developing Geographies of Intersectionality with Relief Maps: Reflections from Youth Research in Manresa, Catalonia. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 21(8), 925- 944
- Schroeder, Richard A., St. Martin, Kevin, and Albert, Katherine, E. 2006. Political ecology in North America: discovering the Third World within? *Geoforum* 37, pp. 163-168
- Sharp, Joanne. 2009. *Geographies of postcolonialism: spaces of power and representation*. Sage Publications
- Sultana, Farhana. 2011. Suffering For Water, Suffering From Water: Emotional Geographies of Resource Access, Control and Conflict. *Geoforum*, 42(2), 163-172
- Swyngedouw, Erik. 1999. Modernity and Hybridity: Nature, Regeneracionismo, and the Production of the Spanish Waterscape, 1890-1930. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89(3)
- White, Sam. 2011. *The climate of rebellion in the early modern Ottoman Empire*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zografos, Christos, and Martínez-Alier, Joan. 2009. The politics of landscape value: a case study of wind farm conflict from rural Catalonia *Environment & Planning A* 41, pp. 1726-1744

Other resources

- ENTITLE blog – A collaborative writing project in Political Ecology. <https://entitleblog.org/>
- EJ Atlas: Mapping Environmental Justice. <https://ejatlas.org/>

CNS Web: an online community of red-green activists. <http://www.cnsjournal.org/>

ENTITLE Marie Curie Initial Training Network in Political Ecology. <http://www.politicaecology.eu/>

University of Kentucky Political Ecology Working Group (DOPE). <https://www.facebook.com/ukpewg/>

Edge Effects: a collaborative project of the Center for Culture, History, and the Environment at The University of Wisconsin–Madison. <http://edgeeffects.net/>

Uneven Earth. Website seeking to provide clear and thoughtful discussions about environmental and social justice conflicts. <http://www.unevenearth.org>

POLLEN Political Ecology Network. <https://politicaecologynetwork.com/>

Revista de Ecología Política. <http://www.ecologiapolitica.info/>

9. Weekly schedule

<i>Week</i>	<i>In-class activities</i>	<i>Out-of-class activities</i>	<i>In class hours</i>	<i>Out-of-class hours</i>
Week 1	Lecture	Read assigned texts	3	6
Week 2	Lecture	Read assigned texts, prepare seminars	3	6
Week 3	Lecture	Read assigned texts, prepare seminars	3	6
Week 4	Lecture	Read assigned texts, prepare seminars	3	6
Week 5	Lecture	Read assigned texts, prepare seminars	3	6
Week 6	Lecture	Read assigned texts, prepare seminars	3	6
Week 7	Lecture	Read assigned texts, prepare seminars	3	6
Week 8	Seminar 1	Read assigned texts, prepare seminars	3	6
Week 9	Lecture	Read assigned texts, prepare seminars	3	6
Week 10	Seminar 2	Read assigned texts, prepare seminars	3	6
Hours			30	60
Study hours for final exam				10
Total hours			100	