AIM: This module enhances the understanding of key concepts and theories in nature-society relations, and engages with understandings of environmental conflicts, crises and security under conditions of environmental change. It has a threefold engagement with the ways environmental management interventions are designed, the way environmental crises are framed, and in whose interests security is defined; in order to tease out the ‘biopolitical’ implications for both human and non-human life of our actions and inactions with regards to environmental change.

Core values: Environmental Conflicts, as conceived and practised within this module, is distinguished as being:

• **Value-explicit**: in favour of peace with justice;
• **Critical**: recognising that the opposite of value-explicit is not value-neutral but value-concealed;
• **Counter-hegemonic**— rejecting the proposition that all ideas are ‘orthodoxies’ (accepted views), which can and/or should be criticised ‘equally’, and
• **Activist**— committed to engaging in community debates and joining positive efforts to contribute to peace with justice

These principles have been built into the concept for this module and the assessment

Module content:
This course draws on political ecology and Socio-Ecological Systems approaches to critically engage the ways environmental crisis and environmental conflict are understood and managed, in particular in Kwazulu-Natal.

Environmental change is a ‘threat-multiplier’, intensifying existing socio-economic, political and environmental conflicts and is undermining the security and long-term stability of the African continent. Environmental conflicts and crises are complex and highly context and time-specific. At their core are resource scarcity issues which are particularly pertinent where natural resource dependencies are strong. Conflicts are not only influenced by environmental change, but also conditions of specific environments, political economies, and adaptive capacity of communities.

The module supports political ecology approaches and integrated systems thinking in understanding reciprocal relationships between socio-ecological systems (SESSs) under environmental change and conflict-sensitive adaptation.

The module examines several key issues:
• Conceptual frameworks
• Socio-spatial vulnerabilities
• Geopolitics and security
• Conceptualisations of crisis
• Geographic imaginaries
• Neoliberal interventions
• The economic and political underpinnings of different approaches to environmental conflict and crisis management
• Conservation ‘fads’
• Green Economy
• Strategies for conflict-sensitive adaptation
• Environmental justice

Learning Outcomes:
• To understand key socio-spatial vulnerabilities linked to conflicts on the African continent
• To critically examine the understanding of the concepts of environmental conflict, crisis, security, vulnerability and resilience
• To appreciate key conceptual theories that frame current environmental conflict, management and policy – including political ecology and adaptive management/ Socio-ecological System approaches
• To theorise the social production of nature and nature-society relations under neoliberal economic and political regimes, and the synergies and feedbacks between ecosystems and drivers of environmental change
• To appreciate the need for and understanding of power in environmental change, and as integrated systems thinking, in approaching concepts such as environmental management, environmental crisis and sustainable development
• To develop critical and strategic thinking about managing environmental conflicts and crises

Assessment: Class mark (50%); 3 h exam (50%)
DP Requirement: 80% attendance at lectures and seminars; 40% class mark.

The class mark is comprised of the following:
• 1 assignment on relevance of course concepts to your research project (30%)
• 5 reflection essays, one each week (5x12 = 60%)
• Seminar presentation and participation (10%): Prepare one or two brief reading summaries which will be presented in seminars, and conduct further reading for discussion in the seminar. The summaries will be circulated with the class for revision purposes.

Assignment – The student will attempt apply course themes and concepts to their research project area or a closely related topic, decided by the student. The students should ask themselves if there are any particular discourses or narratives around environment or development issues related to their research. Are there any security, crisis or conflict dynamics
reflected? Can any of the theory or empirics of the course readings be used to compare and contrast to the case in question? What is the political and economic background to the issues in question? Are interventions and measures to correct any issues framed in particular ways? Do these privilege some actors over others?

**Reflection essays** – students will write a weekly reflection essay of 2.5-5 pages regarding the material covered in the seminars and a topic posed each week.

Reading summaries – Please briefly account for the following in your reading summ
1. Clearly state your name and student number at the top and the relevant.
2. Identify 3 or 4 keywords that you associate with the reading that will help you remember what the seminar theme is about.
3. Provide a brief overview of the theoretical approach being focused on in the readings.
4. Concisely present the key argument(s) of each required reading and highlight any points of confusion.
5. Briefly analyse how the readings relate to each other.
6. Comment on how this theoretical framework/ empirical material could be used to study your chosen research project topic.

Fieldtrip – this course may include a brief fieldtrip if time allows. To be confirmed.

**COURSE STRUCTURE:**

This course is arranged around bi-weekly seminars that are approximately 1-2 hours in duration. The first part of each seminar will entail a discussion of an overview of aspects to be discussed. Clarifications of key concepts and issues will be included. The rest of the seminar will enable the class to look critically at the reading material and themes that are being raised.

The course has an introduction week, a theory week discussing nature society relations, then a week on environmental security and conflict, a week on biosecurity and conservation, a week on a week on climate security, and finally a concluding week on environmental justice and conflict sensitive management.

The readings engaged in this course deal with various aspects of conflict, crisis and security, particularly regarding their human dimensions and the kinds of interventions embarked upon to ostensibly resolve them. The readings offer both critiques of such interventions and suggestions at better arrangements. These are often difficult readings by leading academics in their respective fields. Thus we will take time in the seminars to understand and engage with them.

The class will be invited to attend public seminars relevant to the course, including a panel discussion on environmental conflict in Northern KZN in memorial of Mr Dladla, a community activist. The class may also include a Fieldtrip to Bisley Nature reserve.
Week 1 – Engaging Environmental Conflict and Crisis: The rise of environmental security

This this course entitled ‘Managing environmental conflict’, covers important issues related to the environment and conflict, as well as how to understand and engage with the same. As written, however, the title is insufficient to encapsulate the scope of contemporary environmental issues and concerns, best considered as crises, or situations which demand urgent attention and action. While some situations and contexts can indeed benefit from applied management strategies, a central premise of this course is that we might question the degree to which we should ‘manage’ an assumed external ‘environment’ or ‘nature’ - as a sphere separate from culture and society is questionable. Critical scholars suggest we might also need to think about managing ourselves, and the socio-ecological entanglements we produce in an increasingly globalised and environmentally stressed society, in order to reduce environmental conflict and crisis. Climate change is of course not least amount these stresses, and has been called an acute ‘conflict multiplier’ for the way it exacerbates existing tensions and conflicts.

To be relevant, then, we also need to think about ‘engaging’ with concepts of ‘environmental crisis’ and the local, global and systemic risks to stability and sustainability that they pose in their different forms. Similarly we need to add an understanding of the relationship between ‘the environment’ and security, broadly defined. What kinds of life and what kinds of activities are we choosing, consciously or unconsciously, to sustain with our current global development pathway? What outcomes and effects do certain interventions to save or sustain life have on different populations of human and non-human persons? And what kinds of human or non-human life are we jeopardizing or ‘letting die’ through our actions and inactions?

Concerns about conflict, crisis and security are central to these questions and reflect in many environment and conservation debates. This week we will go over a number of readings which begin, in the spirit of an expanded course title, engage with environmental conflict, crisis and security.

Seminar 1: Environment, conflict and the protection/elimination of life

In the 21st century we have seen an exponential increase of problems such as inequality and environmental degradation. This could more accurately be portrayed as an intensification of processes and the language we use to engage them. Inequality is no longer about some having more than others – it has become extreme. Climate change looms as an urgent and existentially threatening shadow over society and its future, where the risks and costs of the environmental conflicts we are already experiencing intensify dramatically if we continue with ‘business-as-usual’.

We can also witness an increase in the intensity of the language we use to describe our interventions, where for instance today we aim to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. Accordingly sustainable development is no longer about development, it is about addressing a threat to life itself as we know it – where development and progress are seen to be
connected. Even the understandings of life and the way we engage with it politically are shifting. We now longer merely discuss the lives of individuals, but of societies, species and populations as a whole, and their embeddedness in complex socio-economic and socio-ecological systems with multiple drivers of social and environmental conflict, risk and hazard. In this we enter the realm of ‘Biopolitics’ and the governance not only individuals and development, but of populations and life itself.

These are interesting changes and dangerous times, but they also afford us intellectual opportunities to understand our societies and environments in a new light. It also affords us opportunities to apprehend the questions of justice that arise in the interventions we adopt to sustain societies and environments (particularly those interventions which privilege new types of accumulation at the expense of people and the environment).

Core readings:
- Please read the Introduction by Hans Günter Brauch and Jürgen Scheffranand
- Please also read the forwards by the top climate dogs: Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria; Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action; Christiana Figures, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC; R.K. Pachauri, Director General, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Extra reading

Seminar 2. Environmental Security - Conflict, crisis and security

In this seminar we look at the way Interventions are framed and the contexts in which we take action against threats (perceived or real). In particular the readings focus on the intersection between environment and security, and relatedly conflict and conflict/environmental management. Todays increased focus on environmental sustainability builds from classical
It is clear that security threat bring about an urgent imperative to act on the part of those with the ability and will to do so, often in a context of uncertainty and incomplete knowledge. What is at stake, however, often depends on who has the power to act, how the threats are defined, even more broadly which parts of reality are reflected (or excluded) in the framing of the ‘crisis’ in the first place, and how the interventions are designed and implemented. In the rest of the course these factors will be seen to be of vital importance to the kind of outcomes of responses to environmental hazards, risks and problems, and who benefits and who loses as a result. Take the outcomes of George Bush’s discourse of ‘Weapons of mass destruction’ in Iraq (a fabrication) that justified the invasion of Iraq, though largely to secure Oil (itself a contributor of carbon emissions and thereby climate change), and essentially destabilised the region subsequently, with the eventual rise of IS and ISIS in the power vacuum. Crisis framings and their responses in this light can be misled, and thus it is critical to interrogate security discourses and the interventions they legitimate.

In this seminar we will discuss concepts such as discourse, framing and crisis narratives. We will relate these to a particular contested vision for the future, termed ecological modernization.

Core Readings:
See also - Aldo Orellana López and Alan Forsberg. 2016. 10 conservation “fads”: how have they worked in Latin America? Available: https://news.mongabay.com/2016/06/10-conservation-fads-how-have-they-worked-in-latin-america/


Recommended Readings:


Klein, N. Shock doctrine – capitalism calamity and technology

Essay reflection 1
Read and briefly discuss the ecological modernist manifesto and one or more of the articles below which debate ecological modernization. Outline both how the idea of ecological modernisation is contested, and what potentials for conflict might arise in practice should ecological modernisation understandings of crisis and legitimate responses be adopted in the mainstream

The Ecomodernist Manifesto - http://www.ecomodernism.org/
- Ecological Moderism was a screwup of massive proportions - https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/30/ecomodernism-launch-was-a-screw-up-of-impressive-proportions
**Week 2 - Nature and Society**

In academic debates there is seen to be a close relationship between capitalism and the environment. As opposed to western enlightenment understandings of a nature separate from culture, non-western understandings and critical environmental studies emphasise conceptions of socio-natures. However, in recent decades we have seen the relationship between capitalism and the environment change to include the commodification, financialisation and what is termed the ‘neoliberalisation’ of nature and conservation. The extraction from, production of and conservation of natural resource, wild, human and molecular nature is increasingly intersecting with new technologies, engaged with new circulations with other entities and involved in new networks, and subject to forms of capitalist organisation. In fact when discussing issues like climate change scholars such as Jason Moore argue we should not merely consider this the ‘anthropocene’, but the ‘capitalocene’ for the ways that capital (seen as a dynamic process, not merely a store of wealth) at the core of the social and economic system of capitalism is reshaping the environment.

Yet capital is rarely addressed in discussions of security and change, and authors such as Murat and Gupta (not that Gupta) argue we need to bring the dynamics between capitalism and nature back into our understandings of development and change. Today life has been so re-embedded into capitalist networks that we face a paradox that while we struggle with its social and environmental impacts, but to exist without it (‘too big to fail’), or to exist outside of it is seemingly inconceivable – or that capital has an unassailable place at the heart of our (neoliberal) political and economic systems. This makes it essential to understand the biopolitics of the pathologies that accompany the relationship between capitalism and nature (life), not least inequality and environmental degradation, the logics that underpin them, and the ways to reconstitute these relationships.

**Seminar 3 – Capitalism and environmental change**

In this seminar we engage with readings that discuss the relationship between capitalism and environmental change, and intensifications in the same. Issues of the production and neoliberalisation of nature are raised, as are issues of uneven development and the intensification of the pace of development and change, the intensifying form of surveillance and control that are applied in the face of increasing incidences of disaster and crisis, rising volatility in economic markets, the extension of market mechanisms into the governance and control of further areas of life and nature, the commoditization, marketization and exchange of nature, the blurring of the lines between human and non-human natures – from agricultural systems to the molecular level, and the rise of terms such as bioeconomy, natural capital, bioservices which naturalise capital as central to life. In recognising these connections it must be acknowledged that science and economics are political and without getting lost in ‘post truth politics’ acknowledge that there is a need to convince audiences of the connections.

**Core Reading**


Perkins, H. 2017. Neoliberalism and the Environment Published Online: 6 MAR 2017

Naomi Klein - Crisis Capitalism

**Required Readings:**


Barcia, S and Bridge, G. Industrialisation and environmental Change. Handbook of Political Ecology chapter 28

**Seminar 4 – Critical approaches to security and Nature-society relations**

There are various *Conflict Theories* which are applicable to understandings of environmental conflict and security. These include neo-malthusian, Resource curse, Resource scarcity, and Resource capture theory approaches. These attempt to explain conflict as determined within the relationship between societies and their environments/natural resources. While these can provide interesting insights, the elements of environmental determinism (the idea that environments strictly determine the lives of those within them) within them require further understandings to account for the complexity of socio-ecological change and conflict. More explicitly political approaches include eco-feminism, political Ecology, and critical security approaches. What the latter have in common is a questioning accepted understandings and narratives about environmental change, their causes, effects and justified interventions. This seminar will begin by discussing these approaches, and follow with an exploration of the political readings provided.

**Core Readings:**
Bryant, Raymond L. and Wilson, Geo A. 1998. “Rethinking environmental management.”
Swyngedouw, E. 2007a: ‘Impossible “sustainability” and the post-political condition’, in Krueger,
Dalby, S. 2010. Recontextualising violence, power and nature: The next twenty years of critical

Extra Readings:
Watts, M. 2009. “Political ecology.” In Gregory, D., Johnston, R., Pratt, G., Watts, M.J. and
545-547
Post-Political Condition’, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements, 69, pp. 253-274.
Geography, 40(3): 413-421.

Reflection essay 2
Drawing on two or more of the readings discussed this week discuss what a political approach
to nature society relations involves.

Week 3 – Environment, security and conflict

This section is the first of three which deals with differing aspects of security and the
environment. In it we touch upon new dynamics between the environment and violent conflict,
including contestations over: different ways of understanding environmental processes and
change; unequal access to resources and structural inequalities (often exacerbated by
environmental policies); and increases in wildlife crime and militarised responses to the same.
Correspondingly, as in the case of peace parks, some conservation interventions explicitly hope
to resolve violent conflicts. In these we must question and critique the way these connections
are formed under the predominant economic and political environment of neoliberal
capitalism.

Seminar 5 –Environmental conflict and Transboundary resources
This seminar engages the ways environmental conflict and transboundary resources are engaged through security interventions. In particular there is a focus on the framing and implementation of ‘peace parks’ initiatives in Southern Africa by the peace parks foundation and other stakeholders, and to a lesser degree the way water security is addressed as a transboundary issue. While in both cases resources are unevenly accessed and managed by differing populations readers should be encouraged to look beyond resource scarcity and overpopulation arguments to explain insecurities and conflict lines; likewise interventions should be questioned as to the degree they function as claimed. The premise for peace parks is to utilise conservation areas as vehicles for enhancing peace – ‘a double win’, and that water issues can be governed to promote security and reduce conflict. While these are laudable aims, the realities of peace park implementation and water security interventions in practice o not match their intent, as these readings show.

Core reading:

Recommended Readings

Seminar 6 – Rhino wars
Seminar 6 continues to discuss environmental security through the lens of ‘Rhino wars’. Intensifying conflict over rhino horn has impacted both human and non-human life. The increased militarisation of conservation in place like the Kruger Park and Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park raise a range of questions about conflict, crisis and security, and introduces debate amongst academics as to the causes and solutions to the crisis of rhino poaching. The readings illustrate the complexity of the contexts in question and call into question the efficacy of increasing militarisation as a response to a deepening crisis.

Core Readings:


Duffy, R. 2014. Waging a war to save biodiversity: the rise of militarized conservation. *International Affairs* 90 (4) Pages 819–834


**Recommended Reading:**


**Reflection Essay 3**

Recently, conservation biologists Wilson et. al (2016) in their article *Half-Earth: Our Planet’s Fight for Life*, proposed that half of the earth should be set aside for biodiversity conservation. Contrastingly, Buscher and Fletcher (2016) have pushed back against this assertion. Briefly set out each argument and reflect on the security dimensions raised on the two seminars this week.


**Week 4 – Biosecurity and Conservation**

This week we engage with arguments about how conservation has been re-oriented and reproduced through the application of logics of capitalism. The readings here discuss framings of crisis and those who benefit and lose out when environmental problems are addressed in specific ways, often which privilege capital.
Seminar 7 – Neoliberal biodiversity conservation

The Rhino wars and peace parks examples discussed in week 3 speak to a dual trends in conservation, where the preservation of biodiversity is increasingly wrapped up in security debates – seen as a shift from biodiversity to biosecurity - and secondly where conservation is increasingly impacted by intensifying modes of capital accumulation. The latter is the focus of this seminar, in which the review articles discuss give an overview of scholarship on so called ‘neoliberal biodiversity conservation.

Core readings
Lowe, S. From Biodiversity to Biosecurity in the Handbook of Political Ecology. In The Handbook of Political Ecology, Chapter 38. Perault et al. (eds),
Buscher et al. Towards a synthesised critique of neoliberal biodiversity conservation.

Extra Readings:
Greenwashing capitalism: Conservation’s cosy relationship with corporations
Seminar 8 – Questioning community conservation

In this seminar we discuss readings which question the degree to which communities feature in contemporary conservation practices. Research articles discuss the balance between community interests and those of the state or capital in various contexts. The differences in the interests of diverse stakeholders in conservation must be seen as a central political tension to its effectiveness.

Core Readings

Extra Readings


Essay reflection 4

Drawing from the material covered this week, respond to the following article:

To what extent are debates about changing forms of conservation represented in this article? What is your perspective on the changes and the direction conservation in places like Kruger and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi should take?
Week 5 – Climate Security and ecosystem services

This week we engage the securitisation of climate change through multi-lateral action and the criticisms of both the current levels of commitment, and the interventions and adaptation frameworks in place to combat climate change’s adverse effects. In it we address readings on Multi-scalar environmental politics and governance, and discuss debates over climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the role of market environmentalism in securitising climate change.

Seminar 9 – Securitizing climate change

This seminar questions what it means to securitize climate change – to turn climate change into a security issue with attendant responses - and the kinds of implications that such initiatives might have.

Core Readings
Liverman, D. Reading Climate Change and Climate Governance as Political Ecology - Diana Liverman. Handbook of Political Ecology, Chapter 23.
Klein, N. Sharing the Sky, Chapter 12 in 'This changes Everything'. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2017/jul/17/neoliberalism-has-conned-us-into-fighting-climate-change-as-individuals

Extra Readings.
Prof. Fariborz Zelli (Lund University, Sweden): The institutional architecture of global climate politics: Regime complex or institutional fragmentation?
Hawkings this is the most dangerous time in our planet.
Angela Oels (Lund University, Sweden): The history of the international climate negotiations
Leck and Roberts. Municipal climate change adaptation.
Seminar 10 – Market environmentalism and carbon trading

This set of readings revolves around instances of market environmentalism – the extension of market mechanisms and institutions into new areas of life and the governance of nature and the environment. Market environmentalism is premised on the idea that markets will be more ‘efficient’ in allocating environmental ‘goods’, like common pool resources, water and forest productions, and ‘bads’, like pollution, waste and CO2 emissions. This can include privatisation, deregulation, or even the creation of new markets. The social and ecological outcomes of these mechanisms, however, should be brought into question.

Arguably the exemplar of the logic of market environmentalism finds its expression in carbon markets and carbon trading. These relate to the valuation and trading of commodified ecosystem services, like water and forests, in global market places, in an attempt to secure environmental outcomes, or mitigate dangerous risks. Whole ranges of new actors and processes are applied to make these projects come about, with the crisis of climate change in particular a strong driver of ‘carbon forestry offset’ projects. The critical readings in this section however contest that not only is climate change a direct result of human agency, but that instead of changing our economic system to make it fit within the natural limits of the planet, carbon markets and carbon trading further entrench the political and economic system responsible for the problems in the first place.

Core Readings:

Recommended readings:
Prof. Matthew Paterson (Ottawa University, Canada): The basics of carbon markets, an overview of carbon markets around the world
Neo-Colonial Expansion in the Guise of Addressing Climate Change: The Problem With REDD+

Monday, 30 November 2015 00:00 By Vijay Kollinjivadi, Speakout | Op-ed 5


**Essay reflection 5**

Comment on the blurring of the lines between the state and the market in the utilisation of ecosystems. Are these interventions reconciling the tensions we have with our use of the environment or further entrenching them?

The Umoja Project | A partnership between the Ushujaa Game Reserve, EcoSpect, and Savannah Capital Assets.


Or

Read over the climate change crisis narratives presented in the following article. What is the second article in Jacobin suggesting that the first article overlooks? What might it mean to correct the problem in reality? Refer to the other readings this week if need be.


**Week 6 – Environmental justice and Conflict sensitive management**

We conclude the course with two seminars which more explicitly discuss progressive responses to environmental conflict. Environmental justice approaches and social movements advocate ‘environments for people, not profit’ and the sustenance of global environmental commons, while conflict sensitive adaptation approaches favour sustainable peacebuilding.
Seminar 13 – Environmental Justice and Environmental movements

Sustainable environmental peacebuilding could be said to go hand in hand with environmental justice movements and non-violence and movements for social change. The readings in this seminar engage with environmental justice movements and the way they contest dominant conceptions of ‘green economy’ and environmental security.

In particular question over
This seminar contrasts attempts to adapt to climate change with contestations over climate justice. The former is arguably more practical and pragmatic, however there is so much at stake that we must ask what are the costs of not adopting radical responses to climate crisis, as climate justice activists often advocate. For some, however, climate change is increasingly seen as an ‘inevitable’ factor of life to be accommodated to as well as possible. With global attempts at mitigating climate change stalling, the debate between these two positions is an increasingly important factor of climate security.

Core Reading:

Recommended Reading
Seminar 14 – Conflict sensitive adaptation

This seminar engages with Conflict-sensitive adaptation. This form of adaptation and management emphasises capacity building, and practical tools for adaptation in initiatives including livelihood and risks assessments to account for the specificities of different interests and needs with regards to prospective environmental change. By integrating concepts of vulnerability and resilience into planning on issues like food systems and global change these approaches can go some way to reframing crisis narratives and the interventions they support.

Core Readings

Bob, U and Bronkhorst, S. 2010. Environmental conflicts: Key issues and management implications, ACCORD

Discussion
Read the following articles and contrast their approaches to a better conservation future.