

**Master in Political Ecology**  
**Academic year: 2018-2019**

**POLITICAL ECOLOGY**

**Instructors**

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**Objectives**

The course offers a critical introduction to the interdisciplinary field of Political Ecology (PE), the study of the ways in which power affects socio-environmental relations and processes. The course will offer a global view of the current ecological crisis and its political, economic, cultural and epistemological dimensions and interconnections. Drawing from a range of critical approaches, the course will examine key concepts and theoretical frameworks that underlie the contemporary political ecological critique of capitalism and development. Students will learn to think politically about environmental problems, and to critically engage with “apolitical” approaches that explain environmental issues in terms of population, bio-physical, or human-behavioural drivers.

**Structure**

The course is broken into two main parts. In the first part, we will focus on key themes that have been critically studied from a PE perspective, starting to discern central premises and main strands of PE through central debates. Case-study articles will be used to illustrate how this analysis is ‘put to work’ in a real case. The second part will introduce key concepts and ideas that are mobilised in PE research. It will do so by analysing how some key actors in global environmental governance - namely, capital, the state, development agencies, and social movements - “see” nature and seek to shape environment-society relations.

Each class’s **readings** consist of two required texts (journal articles or academic book chapters). There are also additional (suggested) readings for most topics. While we do not expect you to read all additional readings, we will address some key ideas raised in them. All readings will be made available in digital format beforehand.

**Classes** will follow a seminar format with a combination of lecture and discussion of the assigned readings. This might also include discussion in small groups, debates, games, use of audiovisual material, and other activities.

### **Assignments and evaluation**

This class does not require a final exam. Students will be evaluated on the basis of weekly responses to the readings, and of a final group-written review and oral presentation.

#### 1. Responses to the readings

Before each class, starting from week 2, you will be asked to hand in an assignment where you will answer one question about the readings (250 words). You should hand in the assignment to us at the beginning of each class. If after the class you wish to resubmit the assignment, you can do so in the following class. These will be assessed and count towards the final grade (60% of the overall grade). These will be returned to you at the end of the course.

#### 2. Group presentations and book reviews

The course will require reading and critically reviewing a book. The class will be divided into four groups; students in each group will choose a book from the list below (first come, first served), read it and discuss it among themselves. Each group will *a)* write collectively a book review; and *b)* give a 20 minute presentation of the book to the class (last session). Both the review and the presentation will be evaluated and count towards the final grade (20% and 20% respectively). Instructions for writing the review and preparing the presentation will be provided in advance.

### **Programme outline**

#### **1. Introduction to Political Ecology (Marta & Diego)**

##### Required readings:

Robbins, 2012 "Political versus apolitical Ecologies" (Ch. 1). In: *Political Ecology. A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell

Robbins, 2012 "The Critical Tools" (Ch. 3). In: *Political Ecology. A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell

##### Further readings:

Robbins, 2012 "A Tree with Deep Roots." In: *Political Ecology. A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell

Bridge, McCarthy, and Perreault, 2015, "Editors' Introduction" (Ch. 1). In: *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, edited by Tom Perreault, Gavin Bridge, and James McCarthy. New York, Routledge.

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## **Part one: Key themes in PE (Marta Conde)**

### **2. Capitalism and the commodity frontiers**

#### Required readings:

Patel, R., & Moore, J. W. (2017). Introduction. *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet*. Univ of California Press.

Conde, M. and Walter, M. (2015) Commodity Frontiers (Ch 13) *Degrowth. A Vocabulary for a New Era*.

#### Additional readings:

Alimonda H., (2015) Mining in Latin America: Coloniality and Degradation, 149-162 *In International handbook PE* (Bryant (Ed.)).

### **3. Feminism and feminist political ecologies**

#### Required readings:

Veuthey, S., & Gerber, J. F. (2010). Logging conflicts in Southern Cameroon: a feminist ecological economics perspective. *Ecological economics*, 70(2), 170-177.

Elmhirst, R., (2016). Feminist Political Ecology. In Perreault, T., Bridge, G. and J. McCarthy (Eds). *Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology, Chapter 40*

#### Additional readings:

Carney, J. (1993). Converting the wetlands, engendering the environment: The intersection of gender with agrarian change in the Gambia. *Economic Geography*, 69(4), 329-348.

### **4. Culture and power in PE**

#### Required readings:

Bogadóttir, R., & Olsen, E. S. (2017). Making degrowth locally meaningful: the case of the Faroese grindadráp. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 24(1), 504-518.

Robbins, P. (2012) Challenges in Social Construction. (Ch 6). In: *Political Ecology. A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell

Additional readings:

Escobar, A. (1998). Whose knowledge, whose nature? Biodiversity, conservation, and the political ecology of social movements. *Journal of political ecology*, vol. 5, no 1, p. 53-82.

## **5. Politics of science and knowledge**

Required readings:

Conde, M. (2014). Activism mobilising science. *Ecological economics*, 105, 67-77.

Forsyth, T. (2015). Integrating science and politics in political ecology. In *International handbook PE, Bryant (Ed.)*,

Additional readings:

Wisner, B. (2015). Speaking truth to power. A personal account of activist political ecology. In Perreault, T., Bridge, G. and J. McCarthy (Eds). *Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*. (Chapter 3)

S. Funtowicz and J. Ravetz, (2003) *Post normal science*.

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## **Part two: Ways of seeing and making nature (Diego Andreucci)**

### **6. Capital: Nature and dispossession**

Required readings:

Harvey, D. (2003) "Accumulation by dispossession" (Ch. 4). In: *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (**only pp. 137-161**).

Perreault, T. (2013). Dispossession by Accumulation? Mining, Water and the Nature of Enclosure on the Bolivian Altiplano. *Antipode* 45, 5: 1050-69.

Additional readings:

Smith, N., 2009, Nature as accumulation strategy. *Socialist register*, 43.

Prudham, S. (2007). The fictions of autonomous invention: accumulation by dispossession, commodification and life patents in Canada. *Antipode*, 39(3), 406-429.

## 7. The State: Regulation and environment-making

### Required readings:

Parenti, C. (2015). The Environment Making State: Territory, Nature, and Value. *Antipode* 47, 4: 829-48.

Andreucci, D. (2017). Resources, regulation and the state: Struggles over gas extraction and passive revolution in Evo Morales's Bolivia. *Political Geography* 61: 170-80.

### Additional readings:

Poulantzas, N. (2014 [1978]) "The State and the Dominant Classes". In: *State, Power, Socialism*. London: Verso (pp. 101-113).

Robbins, P. "The state in political ecology: A postcard to political geography from the field" (Ch. 12). In: *The handbook for political geography*, ed. by K Cox, M Lowe, y J Robinson, pp. 251-68. London: SAGE, 2007.

Robertson, M. "Environmental governance: Political ecology and the state". In: *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, ed. by Tom Perreault, Gavin Bridge, & James McCarthy. New York: Routledge, 2015.

## 8. Development institutions: Governmentality and nature's legibility

### Required readings:

Goldman, M., 2004, "Eco-governmentality and other transnational practices of a 'green' World Bank". In, Peet, R. and Watts, M. *Liberation Ecologies* (chapter 6, pp. 153-178).

Andreucci, D., and Kallis, G., 2017, Governmentality, Development and the Violence of Natural Resource Extraction in Peru. *Ecological Economics*, 134, pp. 95-103.

### Additional readings:

Foucault, M., 2007, *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan (chapter 4, pp. 87-114).

Valdivia, G. (2015) "Eco-governmentality". In: *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, Ed. by Tom Perreault, Gavin Bridge, y James McCarthy, pp. 467-80. New York: Routledge.

## 9. Social movements: From 'environmental conflicts' to counter-hegemony

### Required readings:

Harvey, D. (2003) "Accumulation by dispossession" (Ch. 4). In: *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (**only pp. 161-180**).

Karriem, A. (2009) The rise and transformation of the Brazilian landless movement into a counter-hegemonic political actor: A Gramscian analysis, *Geoforum* 40, 3: 316-25.

Additional readings:

Simon, R. (1991) *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, Selected chapters.

Andreucci, D. (2018) Populism, Hegemony and the Politics of Natural Resource Extraction in Evo Morales's Bolivia. *Antipode*.

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## **10. Group presentations**

Books suggested:

1. Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference* (2008).
2. Tania M. Li, *The Will to Improve* (2007).
3. Susanna B. Hecht, Alexander Cockburn, *The Fate of the Forest: Developers, Destroyers, and Defenders of the Amazon*, Updated Edition (2004).
4. Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (2004).
5. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch. Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (2004)