

## Agrarian Political Ecology

Geography 700  
Thursdays, 4:45-7:30pm, Eggers 155

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### Course Overview

This course surveys key themes in the field of agrarian studies, with an emphasis on political economy and political ecology. We will engage with many of the ‘classics’ of agrarian political economy, beginning with work by (and about) Marx, Lenin, Kautsky, and Chayanov. We will then examine some of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century debates and the re-birth of peasant studies, including work by Eric Wolf, James Scott, and debates regarding land reform, agrarian capitalism under globalization, and peasant mobilization. We then move on to more recent debates regarding agrarian extractivism, agrarian social movements, land grabbing, agroecology, food security, and food sovereignty. In some cases, we will read older works (e.g., Marx’s section on “Primitive accumulation” from *Capital Vol. 1*; E.P. Thompson’s essay on the “Moral economy of the English crowd”) alongside more recent works (e.g. Harvey’s “Accumulation by dispossession;” Wendy Wolford’s work on moral economy in relation to Brazil’s landless movement) in order to follow the trajectory of these ideas over time and across various topics.

The readings are listed on the course schedule (below) in the order in which you should read them. Where possible, I have included foundational theoretical and/or review articles, followed by more empirically grounded research articles. This is designed to give you a sense of the conceptual debates and the ways that scholars have engaged with and applied these concepts in their research.

Please note that this class is more an agrarian studies seminar than a political ecology seminar per se. We will read several political ecologists, and my own perspective on agrarian studies is always filtered through a political ecology lens, so much of our discussion will no doubt reflect this view. But the primary focus of this class will be agrarian political economy. One way to think about this is that we will read the classics in agrarian studies (Marx, Kautsky, Lenin, Chayanov, etc.), but *not* the classics in political ecology (Watts, Blaikie and Brookfield, Hecht and Cockburn, Peet and Watts, etc.). If you are interested in learning more about the literature in political ecology, I can recommend *lots* of readings, and our department has a separate seminar on political ecology (GEO 755), which will probably be offered either next Spring ('23) or next Fall ('23).

### Course Requirements

This course will be run as a seminar. As such, participation and preparation are essential. You are expected to do *all* assigned readings and come to class ready to discuss them critically and in-depth. Over the course of the semester, you are also expected to submit a total of five mid-length (~2000 word) **critical analysis papers** that engage with the week’s readings, based on weekly prompts. Critical analysis papers may present questions, rebuttals, syntheses of key ideas, or critiques of particular ideas in the week’s readings. They may incorporate additional ideas or empirical data for context or comparison. Keep in mind, however, that your papers should *not* merely summarize the key points in the week’s readings. Rather, your job is to *critique* the articles and *form an argument* in relation to them. You should plan on submitting your five critical analysis papers sometime between weeks 2 and 12 (during weeks with pre-assigned readings), prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. You may choose when to submit your papers, according to your schedule and stress level. Critical analysis papers are worth 20 points each, so while each paper is no worth a lot, collectively they will count as much as your final paper.

You are also responsible for submitting a **final research paper** of roughly 5000-6000 words. This should be a *polished* final draft, free of spelling and grammatical errors. Papers of rough draft quality will not be accepted. Your paper must be fully referenced and include a detailed bibliography. For format and style, please follow the guidelines for the [\*Annals of the American Association of Geographers\*](#) (on Blackboard, in the Course Materials folder). You may write your paper on any topic you choose, as long as it is related to agrarian studies, political economy or political ecology. If you wish, you may use this assignment to write a research proposal, literature review essay, or a chapter draft for a thesis or dissertation. Regardless of the direction your paper takes, you are required to submit a **paper proposal** of about 2-pages. Your proposal should include a short, preliminary bibliography (of about 8-10 sources) of key works relevant to your topic, along with a clear, well thought out statement of the paper's research focus (i.e., What problem will your paper examine? What questions will it ask? With what literatures will it engage with?). *The paper proposal is due no later than October 13 (week 7), and a hard copy of the final paper is due no later than Monday, December 12 by 4pm.*

Course readings are listed in the course schedule (below) by author last name and date of publication and are posted in the Readings folder on Blackboard. Please note that the readings are listed on the syllabus, and posted on Blackboard, *in the order in which you are to read them.*

In addition to the articles and book chapters posted on Blackboard, we will read two monographs for this class:

- *This Land is Ours Now: Social Mobilization and the Meanings of Land in Brazil*, by Wendy Wolford (Duke University Press, 2010) (week 8)
- *Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*, by Tanya Li (Duke University Press, 2014) (week 10)

Please make arrangements to borrow, purchase or otherwise get ahold of these books as soon as possible (since the SU bookstore no longer actually sells books, I did not order them in advance).

### Grading

• Research Paper	100 points
• Critical analysis papers (5x20 points)	100 points
• Class participation (discussion, critical responses)	30 points
• Paper proposal	20 points
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Total	250 points

### Missing Class

If you need to miss class for any reason (religious observance, illness, personal issues, travel) please do your best to notify me ahead of time via email.

### Cell Phones and Laptops

Please be sure that your cell phones are silenced *before* coming to class. Texting during class will not be tolerated. Use of laptops for any purpose other than note taking (or other activities directly related to class) is not acceptable. This is common sense and common courtesy. Persons using electronic devices inappropriately during class will be asked to leave.

## Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

Plagiarism on course assignments is a serious offense and is not acceptable. The University defines plagiarism as:

"The submission of any work by a student is taken as a guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are the student's own except when properly credited to another. Violations of this principle include giving or receiving aid in an exam or where otherwise prohibited, fraud, plagiarism, the falsification or forgery of any record, or any other deceptive act in connection with academic work. Plagiarism is the representation of another's words, ideas, programs, formulae, opinions, or other products of work as one's own, either overtly or by failing to attribute them to their true source" (Section 1.0, Syracuse University *Academic Rules and Regulations*).

Plagiarism is a very serious breach of academic honesty and will not be tolerated in this class. **If a student is caught plagiarizing a second time, they will automatically receive an F for the course and an academic integrity process will be initiated.** There will be no exceptions. Students are responsible for knowing University definitions and rules regarding academic honesty. For more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, please see this [link](#).

As graduate students, you are responsible for understanding and following standard, accepted practices for citing the works you draw on in your writing. This means understanding how to properly cite direct quotes *and* how to reference work you refer to but do not directly cite. Doing this correctly consistently will help you avoid confusion and suspicion of plagiarism. Please also see Syracuse University's academic integrity policy, see <https://class.syr.edu/academic-integrity/policy/>.

*Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy* reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. Syracuse University students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

## Disability-Related Accommodations

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR), 804 University Avenue, Suite 303, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from CDR to Dr. Perreault and review those accommodations with him. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the CDR website, Center for Disability Resources (<https://disabilityresources.syr.edu/>).

## Course Schedule

Date	Theme	Required Readings
Week 1 September 1	Course introduction	Friedman (2021) Bridge, et al. ('Editor's Introduction' from <i>Handbook of Political Ecology</i> )
Week 2 September 8	Frontiers of accumulation	Marx (Vol I, "Primitive Accumulation") Harvey (2003) Hall (2013) Akram Lodhi & Kay (2021) Rasmussen and Lund (2021)
Week 3 September 15	The Agrarian Question	Watts (2021) Kautsky (1988) Akram Lodhi and Kay (2010a) Akram Lodhi and Kay (2010b) Levien, Watts and Hairong (2018) Amin (2021) Bernstein (2004)
Week 4 September 22	Peasants household economy, livelihoods, and social reproduction	van der Ploeg (2021) Thorner on Chayanov (1966) Bernstein (2009) Brookfield (2008) Scoones (2009) Mukherjee (2021) Rao (2021) Pattenden (2021)
Week 5 September 29	Land, rent, and agrarian reform	Marx (Vol. III, "Ground Rent") de Janvry (1981, ch. 5) Bernstein (2002) Akram-Lodhi (2021) Cousins (2021)
Week 6 October 6	Moral economy, or why peasants protest	Thompson (1971) Scott (1976, "Moral economy of the peasant") Polanyi (1944) Wendy Wolford (2005) Borras, Edelman & Kay (2008) McMichael (2008)

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Week 7 October 13	Class, resistance, and revolution	Wolf (1969) Scott (1985, “Weapons of the Weak”) Berry (2021) Borras, Edelman and Kay (2008) Borras (2008) Vergara-Camus (2009)
<i>Paper proposals due</i>		
Week 8 October 20	Agrarian mobilization and the meaning of land	Wendy Wolford, <i>This Land is Ours Now</i> (whole book)
Week 9 October 27	Agrarian extractivism, land grabs, and the Plantationocene <b>Guest: Wendy Wolford</b>	McKay & Veltmeyer (2021) Li 2017 (“Repurposing the master’s tools”) Li 2017 (“The price of un/freedom”) Wolford (2021) Goetz (2021) Hall (2021)
Week 10 November 3	Frontier capitalism and agrarian change	Tanya Murray Li ( <i>Land’s End</i> ) (whole book)
Week 11 November 10	Agroecology and agrobiodiversity <b>Guest: Estel Jimenez</b>	McCune & Rosset (2021) Jiménez (2021) Altieri and Toledo (2011) Zimmerer (2016) Zimmerer (2017) Perreault (2005) Kloppenber (2014)
Week 12 November 17	Food security and food sovereignty <b>Guest: Mariaelena Huambachano</b>	Claeys et al. (2021) Huambachano (2020) Patel (2009) Edelman et al. (2014) Agarwal (2014) Trauger (2014) McMichael (2014)
Week 13 November 24	<b><i>Thanksgiving (no class this week)</i></b>	

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Week 14

December 1

Student topics

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Week 15

December 8

Student presentations

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**Final papers due by Monday, December 12, 4pm**

### **Bibliography**

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