

## Political Ecology: Nature, Culture, Power

Geography 755

Tuesdays, 5:00-7:45pm, Eggers 155

Professor Tom Perreault

Eggers 529

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00-4:00pm or by appointment

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### Course Overview

This course surveys key themes in the field of political ecology. We will examine the political economies of environmental change, as well as the ways in which our understandings of nature are materially and discursively bound up with notions of culture and the production of subjectivity. The course does not attempt to present a comprehensive review of the political ecology literature. Rather, it is a critical exploration of theories and themes related to nature, political economy, and culture; themes that, to my mind, fundamentally underlie the relationship between society and environment. The course is divided into four sections: (I) “*Foundations of Political Ecology: Core Concepts and Key Debates*” examines the intellectual foundations and key debates of political ecology as a field; (II) “*Governing Nature*” examines capitalist transformations of nature, with a particular focus on neoliberalism and commodification, and the modes of environmental governance they engender; (III) “*Nature and Subjectivity*” focuses on subjectivity and the production of social difference, and how these are experienced in relation to nature; and (IV) “*Spaces and Scales of Political Ecology*” considers three key spheres of political ecological research: (a) agrarian political economy and rural livelihoods; (b) urban political ecology; and (c) the Anthropocene.

No seminar can be completely comprehensive in its treatment of a given field, and this class is no exception. There are large and well-developed literatures within political ecology that are not included in the course schedule. These include (but are not limited to) political ecologies of water resources, land- and water-grabbing, payment for ecosystem services, conservation, forest governance, extractive industries, energy, and food systems. You will have an opportunity to focus in-depth on these or other topics during the last three weeks of the class, which are devoted to student-led discussions. For these, I will ask you to form small groups to select topics and readings according to your interests. I will work with each group to help you select the readings for the week. The final week of the semester will be devoted to student research presentations (in which you will present your final paper in a conference-style format).

### 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. You are also expected to prepare weekly papers of 1-2 pages that respond critically to the readings. Critique papers may present questions, rebuttals, syntheses of key ideas, or critical analyses of particular ideas in the week’s readings. Keep in mind that your papers should not merely summarize the key points in the week’s readings. Rather, they are meant to be *critical* in nature and should *make an argument*. You are allowed three ‘free weeks’ when you don’t have to turn in a critique paper. You may choose when to take these, according to your schedule and stress level. Each student is responsible for presenting two of these responses to the class during the

semester. These presentations will serve as an introduction to the week's readings, and as a basis for class discussion. These weeks, your critiques should be 3-4 pages, and should provide a more comprehensive overview and critique of the week's readings. I will collect, read and comment on your response papers each week, but will only grade the papers you present to the class. In summary, by the end of the semester you will need to have turned in eight short (1-2 page) and two long (3-4 page) critique papers to get full credit. Only the long papers will be graded.

Half your grade will be based on a final research paper of roughly 6000 words (around 25 pages). 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 cited and include a detailed bibliography. For format and style, please follow the guidelines for the [\*Annals of the Association of American Geographers\*](#) (on Blackboard, in the Course Materials folder). You may write your paper on any political ecology-related topic you choose. If you prefer, 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?). The proposal is due by **February 21**, and final papers are due on **Monday, May 8 at 12 noon** (they must be in my mailbox in the Geography Department office, 144 Eggers Hall, no later than 12:00 noon). No late papers will be accepted.

Finally, you will also be expected to do a 15-minute conference-style presentation of your final research paper. Student presentations will be on the last day of class, May 2.

**There are no books to purchase for this class. All required readings are available on Blackboard, in the course readings folder.**

Your readings include *Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology* (RHPE) and the Elgar *International Handbook of Political Ecology* (IHPE) – please note references to RHPE and IHPE in the course schedule below. The Handbooks are located in the Handbooks of PE folder on Blackboard.

## Grading

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| • Research Paper                                       | 50% |
| • Critique papers & presentations                      | 20% |
| • Class participation (discussion, critical responses) | 15% |
| • Paper proposal                                       | 5%  |
| • Final research presentation                          | 10% |

## 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 is a very serious breach of academic honesty, and will not be tolerated in this class. **If you are caught plagiarizing you will automatically fail the course.** There will be no exceptions.

The easiest way to think of plagiarism is the written use of other peoples' ideas or words without proper citation. Students are responsible for knowing University definitions and rules regarding academic honesty. For more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, please see the university's statement:

<http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/c.php?g=258089&p=1723661>

Please also see Syracuse University's academic integrity policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

## Disability-Related Accommodations

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 304 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS 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 ODS website, Office of Disability Services <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>

## 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.

## Course Schedule

Date	Theme	Required Readings
<i>Part I: Foundations of Political Ecology, Core Concepts and Key Debates</i>		
<i>Week 1:</i> Jan 17	<i>Introducing Political Ecology</i>	Watts (2015-RHPE, ch. 2)
<i>Week 2:</i> Jan 24	<i>What's Political (about) Ecology? Foundations &amp; Debates</i>	Harvey (1974) Watts (1983) Blakie & Brookfield (1987) FitzSimmons (1989) Peet & Watts (1993) Robbins (2004) Bridge et al. (2015-RHPE, ch. 1) McCarthy (2002) Walker (2005, 2007) Turner (2009) Rangan & Kull (2009) Sayre (RHPE, ch. 39)
<i>Part II: Neoliberalism &amp; Environmental Governance</i>		
<i>Week 3</i> Jan 31	<i>Commodification &amp; Neoliberalization</i>	Marx (1867: Commodities) Polanyi (1944, ch. 6, 15) Harvey (2005) McCarthy and Prudham (2004) Prudham (2009) Bridge (2009) Robertson (2011) Prudham (2015-RHPE, ch. 33) Bakker (2015-RHPE, ch. 34)

*Week 4:*

Feb 7

*Governing Nature I:  
Neo-Marxian approaches  
to Environmental Governance*

Bridge & Perreault (2009)  
Himley (2008)  
Bridge (2002)  
Bakker (2002)  
McCarthy (2005)  
McCarthy (2012)  
Perreault (2008)  
Robertson (2015, RHPE, ch. 35)

*Week 5:*

Feb 14

No class meeting (IAF meeting)

*Week 6:*

Feb 21

*Governing Nature II:  
Eco-Governmentality & Biopolitics*

Foucault (1991)  
Agrawal (2005)  
Valdivia (2008)  
Valdivia (2015, RHPE, ch. 36)  
Birkenholtz (2009)  
Mansfield (2012)  
Ferguson (2010)

**Paper proposals due in class**

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***Part III: The Nature of Subjectivity***

*Week 7:*

Feb 28

*Feminist Political Ecologies:  
Gender, Race, Indigeneity & the Body*

Rocheleau et al. (1996)  
Carney & Elias (2006)  
Schroeder & Suryanata (2004)  
O'Reilly (2011)  
Hawkins & Ojeda (2011)  
Elmhirst (2015, RHPE, ch. 40)  
Baldwin (2009)  
Mollett (2013)  
Yeh (2015, RHPE, ch. 41)  
Guthman & Mansfield (RHPE,  
ch. 43)  
Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy  
(IHPE, ch. 47)

Week 8:  
March 7

*Political Ecology as Praxis*

Sundberg (2003)  
Asher (2014)  
Loftus (RHPE, ch. 13)  
Sundberg (RHPE, ch. 8)  
Collard (RHPE, ch. 9)  
Rocheleau (IHPE, ch. 6)  
Sultana (IHPE, ch. 45)  
Batterbury (IHPE, ch. 3)  
Guthman (2014)

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March 13-17

*Spring Break (no classes!)*

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*Part V: Spaces and Scales of Political Ecology*

Week 9:  
March 21

*Agrarian Questions:  
Accumulation, Dispossession and  
Social Reproduction*

*i. Accumulation, Primitive and Otherwise*  
Marx (1867: Primitive Accumulation)  
Harvey (2003)  
Glassman (2006)  
Hall (2013)  
Perreault (2013)

*ii. Peasants & Rural Livelihood*  
Bernstein (1982)  
Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010a, b)  
Brookfield (2008)  
Carr (2015-RHPE, ch. 25)

Week 10:  
March 28

*Urban Political Ecology*

Swyngedouw & Heynen (2003)  
Kaika (2006)  
Biehler & Simon (2011)  
Heynen (2013)  
Swyngedouw (RHPE, ch. 47)  
Neo & Pao (IHPE, ch. 29)  
Meehan (2014)

*Week 11:*  
April 4                      *Political Ecologies of Carbon, Climate  
and the Anthropocene*                      Mitchell (2009)  
Bridge (2010)  
Swyngedouw (2010)  
Wainwright and Mann (2012)  
Braun (RHPE, ch. 7)  
Swyngedouw (IHPE, ch. 10)  
Huber (2013)

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***Part VI: Student Topics & Presentations***

*Week 12:*                      *Student Topics – Group 1*  
April 11

*Week 13:*                      *Student Topics – Group 2*  
April 18

*Week 14:*                      *Student Topics – Group 3*  
April 25

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*Week 15*                      Student presentations                      no readings  
May 2

***Final papers due 12noon on Monday, May 8***

## Bibliography

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