This is a sample syllabus for Geography 493: “Local Democracy and the Environment.” Each year I update a large portion of the readings. So, the readings here are not necessarily going to be the readings you will see in this year’s teaching. Each year I also try to have a particular focus. Last teaching it was climate vulnerability and democracy. In the next teaching it will be something new. You can write me to get a sense of the focus for the coming year when you are deciding which courses to take. In the mean time this syllabus should give you a good sense of the course.

Nature and Sub-national Democracy in the Developing World: Emancipating Interventions?

Listed as “Local Democracy and the Environment”

Course Syllabus sample based on 2014 teaching
Geography 493
Time: One session per week that is 3 hours
Place: TBA
Prof.: Jesse Ribot (Ribot@Illinois.edu)

Course Description: Democracy matters. It matters for wellbeing when people are able to influence the political economy that shapes their lives. It matters for risk reduction when it enables people to shape the legal and economic infrastructure of entitlements. It matters for efficiency and equity if, as theory suggests, public accountability, the disciplining of leaders, or the internalizing of externalities, makes government more broadly responsive and effective. It also matters because self-determination is a good in and of itself. In the theatre of sub-national democracy, decentralization reforms are being performed across the developing world with the creation of new elected local governments. What is the nature of the resulting local ‘democracies’? How would we evaluate whether what is being called local ‘democracy’ is democratic or not? How do we know if it is likely to be emancipatory or subordinating, or if it is to create citizens rather than maintain subjects? How would we know if democracy, even if real and emancipatory, is efficient or equitable?

The course examines these questions through the lens of democratic decentralization reforms involving natural resource management and use in the developing world. Many new local governments are legally empowered to manage and use the local natural resources on which their communities depend. ‘Nature’, when under local control, is important as a material basis of local democracy. Democratic decentralization of natural resources is lauded as a means of achieving efficiency, equity and justice. What does theory have to say about how to achieve these outcomes? Why are these outcomes so often celebrated but rarely achieved? This course analyzes the two-way relation between natural resource management and three dimensions of local democracy: representation, citizenship, and the public domain. The course investigates
theoretical foundations of democracy, localism and decentralization, and analyzes the policy processes by which theory is inscribed in law and project documents and then translated into practice. Through theoretical literature and natural resource case studies it explores local-democracy effects of environmental interventions and the environmental implications of local democratic decision making. Case studies of global environmental policy will be used for theoretical and empirical analysis.

The course also will give you skills in research proposal writing. By the end of this course you should be able to identify a good problem to study, questions to ask in order to solve that problem, how to apply theories to understanding how you might investigate the questions you are asking, and how to develop methods to collect the data you need to answer the questions so as to solve the problem. The main assignment of this course is a research proposal. I use this to teach about how research is conducted for the solving of real-world problem.

This 4-credit course (3 credits for undergrads) will meet for three hours once a week. Participants will also be expected to attend two or three TBA SDEP Friday lectures (http://illinois.edu/calendar/list/3575, Friday afternoons 3:30 to 5:00 PM) during the fall semester. These SDEP lectures should highlight different aspects of the democracy-environment relationship.

Assignments and Grading:

1. **Class Participation** (25% of the grade) is essential. This will include intervening in class discussions and will also include periodic leading of discussion in class.

2. **Commentaries on literature** (25% of the grade). Each student must write up to 250 words (no more, please use 12 pt font) on questions that emerge from each week’s readings. These written assignments must be submitted to me by e-mail by noon on the day of class. Each student must complete ten of these during the semester (allowing you to skip a few). For some weeks specific questions will be posed for you to reflect on in these commentaries. Each is worth 2.5% of your grade.

3. **Term Papers** (50% of the grade). The term papers enable you to either analyze a case study in depth or to interrogate a theoretical concept using the theoretical literature and multiple case examples. The Term Papers are due on Monday, 8 December. Each student will be asked to give a 15-minute presentation of their term-paper project in class followed by 20 minutes of discussion. The grade for the term paper will be divided as follows: 5% on the draft abstract, 35% on the written paper, 10% on your oral presentation. These presentations are designed to give you feedback on your project.
   a. For Graduate Term Paper: the term paper is a 16-page double-spaced 12pt-font research proposal. Please identify a research question you would want to pursue were you doing a Ph.D. Write a full research proposal. The best approach is to identify a funding agency and use their template. You can also follow my outline of a research proposal presented in Annex A at the end of the syllabus. The research proposals will be judged and ranked as if they were submitted to an actual funding agency. For your presentation, you are required to assign one reading to the class. It can be a theory piece or case study that informs your
research proposal. Everyone will read this in preparation for your presentation. You must have this assigned reading ready and distributed two weeks prior to the date you are to present.

b. For Undergraduate Term Paper: the term paper is to be in the form of a ten-page double-spaced 12pt-font policy brief. Ten pages means that this must be sharply written and focused. For this project you are to pick a policy problem related to the effects of environmental projects or policies on local democracy. Choose a general issue or a specific reform that is in progress. Explain the problem, justify the need for intervention, review the literature, and write up targeted policy recommendations (concerning which agencies should make which reforms). See policy brief outline in Annex B of this syllabus. For your presentation, you are required to assign one reading to the class. It can be a theory piece or case study that informs your research proposal. Everyone will read this in preparation for your presentation. You must have this assigned reading ready and distributed two weeks prior to the date you are to present.

Course readings available on UIUC Library E-Reserve

Note: There is a lot of reading in this course and you are expected to do it. The readings are essential for the discussions. The first half of the semester, the reading load is greater. The second half, it is lighter in order to allow you to focus on your projects. We frontload the readings in order to have deeper and more-grounded discussions throughout.
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Class III – 9 September: Democracy-Environment-Livelihood Linkages ............................................ 1
  Schedule class presentations for the second half of the semester ................................................. 2
Class IV – 16 September: Theory—Basic Readings on Democracy and Representation .................... 2
  Sign up to discuss your research topic with Professor. E-mail to schedule a meeting time .......... 3
  Discussion of your research project ideas. ......................................................................................... 3
Class V – 2 October (Thursday Evening): Theory—On Deliberation and Participation .................... 3
  Discussion of your research project ideas. ......................................................................................... 4
Class VI – 7 October: Theory—On Entitlements and Representation – Hunger and Social Protection .... 4
  Assignment: Hand in Research Proposal Abstracts ........................................................................ 4
  Discuss your proposed topics. .......................................................................................................... 4
Class VII – 14 October: On Capabilities and Representation – Hunger and Social Protection ............ 4
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Class VIII – 21 October: Access & the Material Basis of Authority .................................................. 5
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Class XI – 11 November: Research Proposals & Research Methods ................................................ 7
  -Student Term Paper Presentations ................................................................................................. 7
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Syllabus

Class I – 26 August: Introduction

• Organization of the Course
• Actors, Powers and Accountability
• Politics of Choice and Recognition
  o Choice: Authorizing Authority
  o Recognition: Representation, Citizenship and Public Domain
• Scale and Sub-national Sovereignties
• Food, famine and the ability to influence those who govern
• Democracy before development; redistribution with recognition – relations between representation and material wellbeing
• Research Questions on Environment and Democracy
  o Theorizing the market in an era of enclosure
  o Rights, materiality, and historical bases of democracy
• Flexibility with readings

Class II – 2 September: Democracy Writ Large

Commentary Questions: These readings focus on the relation between emancipation and material wellbeing. What is the relation? What is this thing that the authors are calling representation or emancipation? What are the elements of emancipation? Also, the word democracy, what does it mean? How do each of these authors define it? I want you to derive a definition for each even if they have not defined it explicitly. What is their implicit definition?

Get piece by Chantal Mouffe on agonistics
Get something by Roncier to critique
Read Easterly
Read Global Political Ecology Book

Required Readings (Pp.31+3+58+48=140) (Further readings are listed in endnotes):

Class III – 9 September: Democracy-Environment-Livelihood Linkages

Commentary Questions: What are the implicit theories of participation, representation or democracy in each of these author’s writings? What is their theory of the link between
democracy and environment or democracy and livelihoods? Why don’t we have any articles here on Resilience, Adaptation, and Coupled Human-Environment systems?

**Required Readings (30+4+14+24+20+22+16=130)**:

- Fraser, N. (2013). A triple movement? Parsing the politics of crisis after Polanyi. *New Left Review*, 81, pp. 119-32. Pp. 14 [In this piece, keep in mind Polanyi’s notion of land (which can be read ‘nature’) as a fictive commodity.]

**Schedule class presentations for the second half of the semester.**

**Class IV – 16 September: Theory—Basic Readings on Democracy and Representation**

Commentary Questions: What is representation? What is democracy? What are the basic elements of ‘representation’ and of ‘democracy’? In essence we are going to get at what a ‘substantive’ definition is and how that enables us to use the definition to get to operational variables that we can then observe and measure through field work. Those observations are then used to interrogate theory and practice.

**Required Readings (17+29+11+45+20=122)**:

  - Introduction: Philip Green, “‘Democracy’ as a Contested Idea” pp. 2-18;
Sign up to discuss your research topic with Professor. E-mail to schedule a meeting time.

Discussion of your research project ideas.

Class V – 2 October (Thursday Evening): Theory—On Deliberation and Participation
[NB: Class of 30 Sept. moved to Thursday evening, 2 Oct. due to travel. Place TBA]

Commentary Questions: There is a schism between those who locate democracy in the state or government. Those who locate it somewhere else – in what they call governance or civil society. Take a critical look at this displacement of democracy from the state. Saward, Hajer, Schmitter all seem to think that government is passé. The others stand elsewhere. What is different about these three authors and what changes do they assume. Are those changes in governing inevitable, real, natural? What are they?

**Required Readings (7+23+27+16+22+21+13=129):**

Discussion of your research project ideas.

Class VI – 7 October: Theory—On Entitlements and Representation – Hunger and Social Protection

Commentary Questions: Famines and other disasters are caused more by a lack of representation and rights than by a lack of food. How does representation and democracy mediate people’s relation with nature in the production of and avoidance of climate-related crises? What is the role of climate? What is the role of representation?

Required Readings (17+15+18+19+21+25 = 115)v

  o Ch 2: Entitlements and Deprivation, pp. 20-34. Pp. 15.

Assignment due today: Hand in a one-paragraph description of your proposed term project with your key questions and a list of sources you hope to use.

Assignment: Hand in Research Proposal Abstracts

Discuss your proposed topics.

Class VII – 14 October: On Capabilities and Representation – Hunger and Social Protection

Commentary Question: Does capabilities theory move us any closer to understanding the role of rights and representation in hunger and famine in the face of climate variability and change?
**Required Readings (24+19+14+29 = 86)**

- Forsyth, T. (2014). Ecological functions and functionings: Towards a Senian analysis of ecosystem services. Draft article. Pp. 29. (Copy to be e-mailed to students.)

Continue to discuss your proposed topics.

**Class VIII – 21 October: Access & the Material Basis of Authority**

Commentary Questions: How are people represented in matters of access? How are they able to influence the political economy that shapes their access? What is the material basis of representation? How is the analysis of access similar to analysis of vulnerability? Where does representation fit into each? What does the relation between materiality and democracy say about the relation between freedom and development? Where does this place us in the debate between Gunnar Myrdal and Friedrich Hayek?

**Required Readings (17+22+19+27+18=103): vi**

- Latour, B. (2005). From realpolitik to dingpolitik or how to make things public. Pp. 5-31. [http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/96-DINGPOLITIK-GB.pdf](http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/96-DINGPOLITIK-GB.pdf). Pp. 27. [This is a great piece about representation in so far as it compares well with Saward’s twisting of the definition of representation in order to take the democratic meaning out of it while trying to claim to address it. This could even be paired with Saward.]

Continue to discuss your proposed topics.
Class IX – 26 October: On Authorizing Authority – Land, Sovereignty, Belonging and Democracy

Commentary Questions: How does property constitute authority? How do property relations constitute governing systems? How do authorities constitute property? Please also use the questions from last class.

Required Readings: (pp. 23+23+75=120)


Discuss in class the discussants for presentation

Class X – 4 November: Research Proposals & Theory—On Accountability

Commentary Questions: How would you define accountability? What are its working parts? What would you measure if you had to go to the field to study accountability?

Required Readings (40+10+26=76):


Three Required Readings from Student Presenters

Three term papers to read and comment

-Student Term Paper Presentations
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ________
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ________
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ________
Class XI – 11 November: Research Proposals & Research Methods

Required Readings (27+30+35=92):

Three Required Readings from Student Presenters
Three term papers to read and comment

-Student Term Paper Presentations
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ______
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ______
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ______

Class XII – 18 November: Research Proposals & Research Methods

Commentary Questions: Who are you as a researcher? How do you place yourself in context? What do you bring with you that shapes how people react to you?

Required Readings (3+19+17 = 39):

Three Required Readings from Student Presenters
Three term papers to read and comment

-Student Term Paper Presentations
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ______
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ______
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ______

-Thanksgiving Break – No class 25 November
Class XIII – 2 December: Research Proposals

Required Readings (15+13=28):

Three Required Readings from Student Presenters
Three term papers to read and comment

-Student Term Paper Presentations
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ______
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ______
  ■ ______ presented/commented by ______
- Term Projects Due 8 December

Class XIV (Final Session) – 9 December: Implementation and its Discontents

Commentary Questions: Is policy or the implementation of policy different in the developing world than in the US? Is corruption worse there or here? Who in the US is unaccountable?

Required Readings: xi
• Ribot, Being developed – perhaps. Draft RFGI Handbook/guidelines – To be distributed.

Hand in final term paper – 12 December COB
Annex A: Graduate Research Proposal Assignment Term Paper

For Graduate Term Paper: the term paper is a 16-page double-spaced 12pt-font research proposal. Please identify a research question you would want to pursue were you doing a Ph.D. Write a full research proposal. The best approach is to identify a funding agency and use their template. You can also follow my outline of a research proposal presented in Annex A at the end of the syllabus. The research proposals will be judged and ranked as if they were submitted to an actual funding agency. For your presentation, you are required to assign one reading to the class. It can be a theory piece or case study that informs your research proposal. Everyone will read this in preparation for your presentation. You must have this assigned reading ready and distributed two weeks prior to the date you are to present.

To write a policy research proposal, the assignment requires:

1. developing a policy research question or hypothesis;
2. locating it within the literature;
3. explaining its broader policy significance (that is, making it clear why anyone should care about what is being investigated and what might be found);
4. explaining what data are necessary for answering the question;
5. explaining the methods to be employed for obtaining and analyzing the data (i.e. tracing out how empirical observations will be related to the question or hypothesis);
6. estimating a time line; and
7. estimating funding needs.

A policy research question addresses an unresolved problem (related to climate adaptation or vulnerability reduction) that has policy relevance. The question must also have theoretical relevance—let us know how answering it will contribute to the broader understanding of this problem for instances other than your particular case. At a minimum, your proposal should identify a problem where better understanding or information is likely to help us to formulate a better solution.

A typical policy-research proposal has the following components (this is just an example—you can use a different outline if you wish):

I. Abstract—200 words
II. Introduction
   a. Problem statement
      i. What is the problem to be explored
      ii. Why is it important and to whom is it important
   b. Summary of debates around the problem
   c. Summary of hypothesis and research questions
III. Background—What does the literature have to say about your problem
IV. Research Questions and Hypotheses
V. Case
a. Where you are going to study your problem
b. Why this is an advantageous place for studying your problem

VI. Methods
a. How you get from your questions to answers
b. Time line

One useful way to organize a methods discussion is to break down the problem as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis or Primary Research Questions</th>
<th>Operational Questions</th>
<th>Data Required to answer operational questions</th>
<th>Methods for gathering data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 1: Decentralization reforms leads to better representation.</td>
<td>How has representation changed over time (before and after decentralization)?</td>
<td>Measure of representation (i.e. accountability plus responsiveness) change over time in each case: -Change in accountability -Change in responsiveness -Change in citizen engagement -Change in popular demands being reflected in decisions being taken</td>
<td>Measures before and after decentralization policy implementation of: -Observation of sanctioning by population -Surveys of popular demands -Surveys of decision maker understanding of popular demand -Observation of decision making processes -Decisions (or policies) made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 2: More democratic representation leads to more efficient forest management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question: What is the relation between representation and forestry management outcomes before and after decentralization reforms?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have outcomes varied over time (before and after decentralization reforms)?</td>
<td>Measure of outcomes over time -Change in forest management -Change in hectares under management -Quality of forest health -Change in local income from forests</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Observation and historical interviews concerning change in forest management -Documentation of forest service of forests under management -Transect studies of ligneous density and species mix before</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table is just an example—in the problem definition or background section you would also have to define your variables and explain what theory has to say about the relations—and why you expect a particular kind of relation.

VII. Budget
VIII. Bibliography

A good looking methods book that I have skinned through that may be of help is:


**Annex B: Undergraduate Policy Brief Assignment Term Paper**

*To write a policy brief* will require defining of your audience (a national or international policy maker or even a local policy maker on a rural council); a discussion of the presenting problem and why it is being addressed now; an analysis of the dimensions and causes of the problem; a proposed set of solution options; a proposed implementation strategy.

For Undergraduate Term Paper: the term paper is to be in the form of a ten-page double-spaced 12pt-font *policy brief*. Ten pages means that this must be sharply written and focused. For this project you are to pick a policy problem related to the effects of environmental projects or policies on local democracy. Choose a general issue or a specific reform that is in progress. Explain the problem, justify the need for intervention, review the literature, and write up targeted policy recommendations (concerning which agencies should make which reforms). See policy brief outline in Annex B of this syllabus. For your presentation, you are required to assign one reading to the class. It can be a theory piece or case study that informs your research proposal. Everyone will read this in preparation for your presentation. You must have this assigned reading ready and distributed two weeks prior to the date you are to present.

A typical policy brief has the following components (this is just an example—you can use a different outline if you wish):

I. Executive summary (one or two pages),

II. Introduction
   a. Define the problem
   b. Convince the audience the problem is grave
   c. Convince them it should be a priority
   d. Tell them something new (research findings, experience elsewhere) that indicates that policy should change
   e. Summarize your argument
   f. Summarize your recommendation

III. Background
   a. Develop your case for change
i. What does the literature say
ii. What does new research say
iii. What does history tell us
iv. Analyze the problem
v. Analyze the options for solving the problem
vi. Weigh the options and conclude with an argument for your choice of options

IV. Recommendations
   a. List of recommendations that follow from your analysis
   b. Strategy for implementing recommendations

V. Bibliography

Sections from course that will not be covered this year

On Power and the Public Domain—Basic Readings in Political Philosophy


On Justice


On Markets and Democracy


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On Structure and Agency


Supplementary Readings for Each Class

1 On Human-Environment Relations:

• President Jose Mujica of Uruguay speech at Rio+20. 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cOgONgTupo.


\[\text{ii} \]

Democracy-Environment-Livelihoods Linkages


A few other interesting readings to help contextualize inequality and resource access:
General Additional Readings for Introduction to Democracy and Environment


### On Democracy Theory:

  - Selection 5: James Madison “The Federalist #10”, pp. 44-49;
  - Selection 6: John Stuart Mill “Considerations on Representative Government” pp. 50-56;


### On Deliberative Democracy/Participation


Food, Famine, Capabilities, Entitlements


On Access & Representation


On Authority and Belonging


On Citizenship


On Customary Authority


**On Accountability**


**On Implementation**


**On REDD+**

  o Box 1.1, P. 2, “What is REDD+,” pp. 1.


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