

**GEOG 520
Political Ecology
Fall 2016**

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Office Hours: W 2-3 pm or by appointment

Class Time: Thursday: 2:00 – 4:50
Location: 137D Davenport Hall
CRN: 49790

Required Materials

Robbins, Paul. 2011. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction, 2nd Edition*. London: Blackwell. (ISBN: 978-0470657324)

West, Paige. 2012. *From Modern Production to Imagined Primitive: The Social World of Coffee from Papua New Guinea*. Durham: Duke University Press. (ISBN: 978-0822351504)

Additional readings will be made available on Compass and/or I will provide them directly via email.

Course Description & Organization

This course examines the relationship between people and nature through the broadly defined lens of Political Ecology. Political Ecology is a multi-disciplinary approach, spanning Geography, Anthropology, Sociology, STS, Women and Gender Studies, and Political Science (among other cognate fields), to the study of access to and control over resources. The field involves an analysis of the social institutions and environmental conditions through which access to resources is mediated. As an evolving field, it frames resource systems within complex networks of processes – political institutions, political economy, globalization, gender/race relations, socially produced discourses/knowledges, and nonhuman agents – to understand the ways that these multiple processes mediate the interaction of humans with the nonhuman world.

Historically the discipline has been advanced and deployed in the Global South to understand development processes and livelihood systems. More recently however, the approach is being employed by researchers in the Global North to address questions of conservation, environmental degradation, urbanization, political ecologies of the body, environmental justice and governance. Therefore, it is a very dynamic field.

This course explores the fields' origins and will apply its analytical tools to a collection of case studies drawn from both the Global North and South.

Course Requirements

Course assessment will be based on:

1. 25% Weekly Preparation
2. 25% Classroom Participation
3. 50% Final Project

1. Weekly Preparation (25%):

A) *Engage with Readings* – We can't have a productive conversation unless we all read the assigned readings carefully.

B) *Response Papers* -- Each week students will write a brief (1 page) response to the assigned readings. These papers need to be written with care but the judicious use of bullet points is fine too. Response papers:

- i) Can be critical, descriptive, or a combination of the two; but
- ii) Need to raise 1 or 2 carefully reasoned questions for class discussion

These short response papers, and more importantly the 1 or 2 questions raised from the reading, will form part of the basis for group discussion for the week's meeting. I will assemble these questions before each class and provide them in handout form in class.

The response papers, with embedded questions, are due by 12 pm (noon) to me via email on Thursdays.

2. Classroom Participation (25%):

This follows from being prepared (above). Come to class prepared to think and to discuss. In addition to daily in-class discussions, each student (working in pairs) will be required to lead some class discussions as well.

A) *Discussion Leadership* – Each student pair will lead group discussion twice during the course of the semester. This will require first, providing a brief (5-15 minute) summary of or introduction to the week's readings. Second, the discussion leader(s) will draw on the questions from the response papers to help lead the class discussion. I will provide the discussion leaders with these discussion questions by 1 pm (provided that I receive them on time!!).

3. Final Project (50%):

A) The final project will consist of a 12-20-page paper and an in-class presentation that engages with the theoretical and empirical questions brought up during the course of the semester. The final project may be a new research paper, a research proposal, a grant proposal or a dissertation chapter. There is flexibility on the form of the project, but it should be something that not only engages with the course material but also furthers your graduate goals.

The project will be completed in phases. I will hand out a project timeline by mid-semester. The project deadline is noon (via email), Friday, December 9.

Topic and Reading Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction & what is Political Ecology?, August 25

1. Robbins Intro & Ch. 1: Political vs apolitical ecologies

Week 2: Political Ecology's History and its Toolbox, September 1

1. Robbins, Part I (remainder): Chapters 2 – 4
2. Watts, M. (1983). On the poverty of theory: natural hazards research in context. Interpretations of Calamity. K. Hewitt. Boston, Allan and Unwin: 231-262.

Week 3: Concepts and Methods, September 8

1. Robbins, Part II: Ch. 5 – 7
2. Turner, M. D. (2014). Political ecology I: An alliance with resilience? *Progress in Human Geography*, 38(4), 616-623.
3. Turner, M. D. (2016). Political ecology II: Engagements with ecology. *Progress in Human Geography*, 40(3), 413-421.
4. Birkenholtz, T. (2012). Network political ecology: Method and theory in climate change vulnerability and adaptation research. *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(3), 295-315.

Week 4: Degradation and Marginalization, September 15

1. Robbins, Chapter 8
2. Benjaminsen, T. A., Aune, J. B., & Sidibe, D. (2010). A critical political ecology of cotton and soil fertility in Mali. *Geoforum*, 41(4), 647-656.
3. Ariza-Montobbio, P., Lele, S., Kallis, G., & Martinez-Alier, J. (2010). The political ecology of Jatropha plantations for biodiesel in Tamil Nadu, India. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37(4), 875-897.
4. Jenkins, J. (2016). Contested terrain of extractive development in the American West: using a regional political ecology framework to understand scale, biocentric conservation values, and anthropocentric resource utility. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 23, 182-196.

Week 5: Conservation and Control, September 22

1. Robbins, Chapter 9
2. Zimmerer, K. S. (2000). The reworking of conservation geographies: non-equilibrium landscapes and nature-society hybrids. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 90(2), 356-370.
3. Hennessy, E. (2015). The Molecular Turn in Conservation: Genetics, Pristine Nature, and the Rediscovery of an Extinct Species of Galapagos Giant Tortoise. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 105(1), 87-104.
4. Hanson, A. M. S. (2016). Women's ecological oral histories of recycling and development in coastal Yucatan. *Gender Place and Culture*, 23(4), 467-483

Week 6: Envtl. Conflict and Payments for Ecosystem Services, September 29

1. Robbins, Chapter 10
2. McAfee, K. (2012). The Contradictory Logic of Global Ecosystem Services Markets. *Development and Change*, 43(1), 105-131.
3. McAfee, K. (2016). Green economy and carbon markets for conservation and development: a critical view. *International Environmental Agreements-Politics Law and Economics*, 16(3), 333-353.
4. Robertson, M., BenDor, T. K., Lave, R., Riggsbee, A., Ruhl, J. B., & Doyle, M. (2014). Stacking ecosystem services. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 12(3), 186-193.

Week 7: Green Governmentality & Neoliberalism I, October 6

1. Robbins, Chapter 11
2. West, Paige – Chapters 1 – 4

Week 8: Green Governmentality & Neoliberalism II, October 13

1. West, Paige – Chapters 5-8

Week 9 Neoliberalism and Accumulation by Dispossession, October 20

1. Harvey, D. (2009). The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession. *Socialist Register*, 64-87.
2. Perreault, T. (2013). Dispossession by Accumulation? Mining, Water and the Nature of Enclosure on the Bolivian Altiplano. *Antipode*, 45(5), 1050-1069.
3. Levien, M. (2013). The Politics of Dispossession: Theorizing India's 'Land Wars.'. *Politics and Society*, 41(3), 351-394.
4. Birkenholtz, T. (2016). Dispossessing irrigators: Water grabbing, supply-side growth and farmer resistance in India. *Geoforum*, 69, 94-105.

Week 10: Assembling Political Ecologies, October 27

1. Robbins, Chapter 12
2. Holifield, R. (2009). Actor-Network Theory as a Critical Approach to Environmental Justice: A Case against Synthesis with Urban Political Ecology. *Antipode*, 41(4), 637-658.
3. Shaw, I. G. R., Robbins, P. F., & Jones, J. P. (2010). A Bug's Life and the Spatial Ontologies of Mosquito Management. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 100(2), 373-392.
4. Burnham, M., Ma, Z., & Zhang, B. Q. (2016). Making sense of climate change: hybrid epistemologies, socio-natural assemblages and smallholder knowledge. *Area*, 48(1), 18-26.

Week 11: The PE of Infrastructure I, November 3

1. Robbins, Chapter 13
2. Swyngedouw, E. (2013). Into the Sea: Desalination as Hydro-Social Fix in Spain. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 103(2), 261-270.
3. Ranganathan, M. (2015). Storm Drains as Assemblages: The Political Ecology of Flood Risk in Post-Colonial Bangalore. *Antipode*, 47(5), 1300-1320.
4. Silver, J. (2015). Disrupted Infrastructures: An Urban Political Ecology of Interrupted Electricity in Accra. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 39(5), 984-1003

Week 12: The PE of Infrastructure II, November 10

1. Carse, A. (2012). Nature as infrastructure: Making and managing the Panama Canal watershed. *Social Studies of Science*, 42(4), 539-563.
2. Cousins, J. J., & Newell, J. P. (2015). A political-industrial ecology of water supply infrastructure for Los Angeles. *Geoforum*, 58, 38-50
3. Loftus, A., March, H., & Nash, F. (2016). Water Infrastructure and the Making of Financial Subjects in the South East of England. *Water Alternatives-an Interdisciplinary Journal on Water Politics and Development*, 9(2), 319-335.
4. Arboleda, M. (2016). In the Nature of the Non-City: Expanded Infrastructural Networks and the Political Ecology of Planetary Urbanisation. *Antipode*, 48(2), 233-251.

Week 13: Student Presentations, November 17

Student Presentations

Week 14: Thanksgiving Break, November 24

Thanksgiving Break: No Classes

Week 15: Student Presentations, December 1

Presentations and last day of classes for GEOG 520

Final papers due at 12 pm (noon) Friday, December 9 via Compass upload