ATA 581 – Political Ecology: Theoretical Foundations and Current Debates

Fall 2023
Tue 678

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Description:

This course aims to introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of political ecology, which focuses on human-environment relationships by uncovering power, politics, and inequalities at different scales. It will cover a wide range of analytical lenses linked to political ecology studies and provide an overview of key concepts and analytical frameworks. Part I will focus on the foundations of political ecology with key readings that have contributed to the establishment of the field. Part II will explore key themes in political ecology such as resource extraction and governance, socio-environmental conflicts, environmental justice, commons, and commodification. This part will establish the links of political ecology with fields like ecological economics, critical geography and resource geography based on concrete case studies. Part III will analyze alternative paths towards socio-ecologically just and sustainable futures as a core dimension usually studied in the political ecology field. Finally, Part IV will emphasize different currents in political ecology that currently shape the development of the field assembling a wide range of interdisciplinary studies.

Course objectives:

The course aims to provide students with a critical lens to understand and analyze socio-ecological issues by overcoming the dichotomy of human versus environment and uncovering the power and politics related to environmental problems and transformations. On completion of this course, the students will have a wide understanding of different schools of thought linked to the transdisciplinary field of political ecology and develop a critical perspective on the roots and politics of current and historical environmental problems.

Evaluation:

Students are expected to fulfill the following requirements of the course:

1) Regular attendance and participation in class discussions are expected. Additionally, each student will choose one week's readings and make a **presentation** in the class (35%).

2) **3 response papers** (approx. 2 pages) discussing the readings of three weeks will be sent to the instructor two days before the class (15%). The students can choose the weeks (excluding the week in which they are responsible for the presentation in the class).

3) A **final research paper** will be written in a scientific paper format with appropriate referencing (40%). Students will choose a scientific journal linked to their research theme and follow its submission procedure for their paper. At the end of the semester, they are encouraged to submit their paper to the journal they have chosen. A well-**structured outline or a draft of the final paper** is required by mid-November (10%).

PART I: Introduction: Environment – Society Nexus and Political Ecology

Week 1: Foundations of political ecology

- Robbins, P. (2012). "Political versus apolitical ecologies". In *Political ecology: A critical introduction* (2nd edition). Wiley-Blackwell, 11-24.
- Perreault, T., Bridge, G. & McCarthy, J. (eds.) (2015). "Editors' introduction". In *The Routledge handbook of political ecology*. London, New York: Routledge, 3-18.
- **Bryant, R.L. (ed.) (2015). "Political ecology: handbook topics and themes". In *The international handbook of political ecology*. Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1-13. (optional)

Audio-visual materials:

• Maria Kaika: Political ecology.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5PRfxNUBao
• **ENTITLE (European Network of Political Ecology) scholars: What is political ecology? (optional)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLVE69QZt5w
• **Paul Robbins: The ecology in political ecology. (optional)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1QkulKOZ4c

Week 2: Theorising nature-society-capitalism

- O'Connor, J. (1989). Political economy of ecology of socialism and capitalism. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 1(3), 93-107.
- Peluso, N.L. (2007). "Enclosure and privatization of neoliberal environments". In Heynen, N. et al. (eds.) *Neoliberal environments: False promises and unnatural consequences.* London: Routledge, 89-93.
- Clausen, R. & Clark, B. (2005). The Metabolic Rift and Marine Ecology: An Analysis of the Ocean Crisis Within Capitalist Production. *Organization & Environment*, 18(4), 422-444.
- **Smith, N. (2007). Nature as accumulation strategy. *Socialist register*, 43, 17-36.
- **Castree, N. (2015). "Capitalism and the Marxist critique of political ecology". In T. Perreault, G. Bridge & J. McCarthy (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 279-292.
  ** Please choose one of the last two readings according to your interests.

Audio-visual materials:

• Noel Castree: Theories in political ecology.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30eEEEP_3OM
• Jason Moore: The Capitalocene today and in the past.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MbOtBHOpr8

PART II: Key Themes in Political Ecology

Week 3: The political ecology of extraction

- Bridge, G. (2009). Material worlds: Natural resources, resource geography and the material economy. *Geography Compass*, 3(3), 1217–1244.
- Mitchell, T. (2009). Carbon democracy. *Economy and Society*, 38(3), 399-432.
- Andreucci, D. & Kallis, G. (2017). Governmentality, development and the violence of natural resource extraction in Peru. *Ecological Economics*, 134, 95–103.
- **Bakker, K. (2005). Neoliberalizing Nature? Market Environmentalism in Water

Supply in England and Wales. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 95(3), 542-565.

- **Çelik, C. (2021). Extractivism and Labour Control: Reflections of Turkey's 'Coal Rush' in Local Labour Regimes. *Critical Sociology,*

Week 4: Ecological economics, social metabolism and degrowth

- Martinez-Alier, J., Kallis, G., Veuthey, S., Walter, M. & Temper, L., (2010). Social metabolism, ecological distribution conflicts, and valuation languages. *Ecological Economics*, 70(2), 153–158.
- Gerber, J.F., Veuthey, S. & Martinez-Alier, J. (2009). Linking political ecology with ecological economics in tree plantation conflicts in Cameroon and Ecuador. *Ecological Economics*, 68, 2885-2889.
- Demaria, F., Kallis, G. & Bakker, K. (2019). Geographies of degrowth: Nowtopias, resurgences and the decolonization of imaginaries and places. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 2(3): 431-450.
- Andreucci, D. & Engel-Di Mauro, S. (2019). Capitalism, Socialism and the Challenge of Degrowth: Introduction to the Symposium. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 30(2), 176-188.
- Ertör, I. & Hadjimichael, M. (2020). Blue degrowth and the politics of the sea: rethinking the blue economy. *Sustainability Science*, 15, 1-10.

Week 5: Environmental conflicts and environmental justice

- Bullard, R. (1990). "Race, Class and the Politics of Place" (Chapter 2) In *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 21-36.
- Martinez-Alier, J. (2003). "Currents of environmentalism" (Chapter 1) In *The environmentalism of the poor: a study of ecological conflicts and valuation*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 1-15.
- Smith, N. (2006). "There's No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster". Available at: https://items.ssrc.org/understanding-katrina/theres-no-such-thing-as-a-natural-disaster/
- Agyeman, J. et al. (2016). Trends and Directions in Environmental Justice: From Inequity to Everyday Life, Community, and Just Sustainabilities. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.* 41, 321–340.
- **Scheidel, A., Del Bene, D., Liu, J., Navas, G., Mingorria, S., Demaria, F., Avila, S., Roy, B., Ertör, I., Temper, L. & Martinez-Alier, J. (2020). Environmental conflicts and defenders: A global overview. *Global Environmental Change*, 63:102104.
- **Özkaynak, B. et al. (2015) The Gezi Park Resistance from an Environmental Justice and Social Metabolism Perspective, *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 99-114.

** Please choose one of the last two readings according to your interests.

Week 6: Commons and commodification

- Hardin, G. (1968). The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science,* 162 (3859), 1243-1248.
- Basurto, X., & Ostrom, E. (2009). Beyond the tragedy of the commons. *Economia Delle Fonti Di Energia E Dell'Ambiente*, 1, 35–60.
- Akbulut, B. (2017). "Commons" (Chapter 38) In *Routledge Handbook of Ecological Economics*, 395-403.
- **Barca, S. (2007). Enclosing the River: Industrialisation and the 'Property Rights' Discourse in the Liri Valley (South of Italy), 1806-1916. *Environment and History*, 13 (1), 3-23.

- **Varvaroussis, A., Asara, V. & Akbulut, B. (2020) Commons: a social outcome of the movement of the squares. *Social Movement Studies*, 20(3), 292-311.
- **Longo, S.B., Clausen, R. & Clark, B. (2015). *The tragedy of the commodity: Oceans, fisheries, and aquaculture*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 1-38.
- ** Akbulut, B. (2020). Cooperative economies as commons: Labour and production in solidarity. In *Commoning the City,* Chapter 11, 193-206.
  ** Please choose two from the last four readings according to your interests.

Audio-visual materials:
• Stefania Barca: Theories of the Commons.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtMiOK5Vfic
• Massimo De Angelis: Commons and social movements.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6_gTm5zUJo
• Stavros Stavrides. Communities of Crisis, Squares in Movement.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1dDpylQvG4

Week 7: Political ecology of agrarian change and peasant studies
- Robbins, P. (2012). "The Producer is the Agent of History: Peasant Studies". In *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 59-63.
- Martínez Torres, M.E. & Rosset, P. (2010). «La Vía Campesina: the birth and evolution of a transnational social movement». *The Journal of Peasant Studies,* 37(1), 149–175.
- Karriem, A. (2009). The rise and transformation of the Brazilian landless movement into a counter-hegemonic political actor: A Gramscian analysis, *Geoforum,* 40(3), 316-325.
- **Hall, R., Edelman, M., Borras Jr, S.M., Scoones, I., White, B., & Wolford, W. (2015). Resistance, acquiescence or incorporation? An introduction to land grabbing and political reactions 'from below'. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *42*(3-4), 467-488.
- **Ertör, I. (2021). 'We are the oceans, we are the people!': fisher people's struggles for blue justice. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1-30.
- **Calvario, R. & Kallis, G. (2017). Alternative Food Economies and Transformative Politics in Times of Crisis: Insights from the Basque Country and Greece. *Antipode*, 49(3), 597-616.
  **Please choose two of the last three readings.

PART III: Alternative Paths towards Socio-ecologically Just and Sustainable Futures

Week 8: Social movements and socio-ecological transformations
- Escobar, A. (1998). Whose Knowledge, Whose Nature? Biodiversity, Conservation, and the Political Ecology of Social Movements. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 5, 53-82.
- Barca, S. (2012). On working-class environmentalism: a historical and transnational overview. *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, 4(2), 61-80.
- della Porta, D. & Portos, M. (2021). Rich kids of Europe? Social basis and strategic choices in the climate activism of Fridays for Future. *Italian Political Science Review*, 1-26.
- **Avcı, D. (2015). Mining conflicts and transformative politics: A comparison of Intag (Ecuador) and Mount Ida (Turkey) environmental struggles. *Geoforum*, 84, 316-325.
- **Zavestoski, S. (2009). The struggle for justice in Bhopal: A new/old breed of transnational social movement. *Global Social Policy,* 9(3), 383-407.
- **Çoban, A. (2004). Community-based ecological resistance: The Bergama movement in Turkey. *Environmental Politics*, 13(2), 438–460.

**Please choose two from the last three readings.

Week 9: Political ecology from below: Protests and activism

- Scott, J. (1999). "Normal Exploitation, Normal Resistance". In *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 28-47.
- Armiero, M. (2008). Seeing like a protester: nature, power, and environmental struggles. *Left History*, 13(1), 59-76.
- **Loftus, A. (2009). Intervening in the environment of the everyday. *Geoforum,* 40, 326-334.
- **Knudsen, S. (2016). Protests Against Energy Projects in Turkey: Environmental Activism Above Politics? *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 43(3), 302-323.
- Please check the webpage and choose two blog texts on resistances: https://undisciplinedenvironments.org

Audio-visual material:

- Marco Armiero: Seeing like a protester.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCRaBqtAwsw

Week 10: Political ecology studies on Turkey

- Adaman, F., Akbulut, B. & Arsel, M. (2016). "Türkiye'de Kalkınmacılığı Yeniden Okumak: HES'ler ve Değişen Doğa-Toplum İlişkileri". In Aksu, C., Erensü, S. & Evren, E. (eds.) *Sudan Sebepler: Türkiye'de Neoliberal Su-Enerji Politikaları ve Direnişler*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Turhan, E., Zografos, C. & Kallis, G. (2015). Adaptation as biopolitics: Why state policies in Turkey do not reduce the vulnerability of seasonal agricultural workers to climate change. *Global Environmental Change,* 31, 296-306.
- Ertör, I. & Ortega-Cerda, M. (2019). The expansion of intensive marine aquaculture in Turkey: The next-to-last commodity frontier? *Journal of Agrarian Change,* 19, 337-360.
- **Kayaalp, E. (2016). Remaking the Tobacco Market: The Emergence of Contract Farming and New Subjectivities, (Chapter 11) In *The Making of Neoliberal Turkey.* London: Routledge, 183-200.
- **Çoban, A. (2016). Toplumsal ve İklimsel Adaletsizlik Sarmalında İklim Siyaseti. *Doğa ve Kent Hakları için Siyasal Stratejiler*, 13-41.
- **Zeybek, S. O. (2016). Ekolojinin politikası: Yeni sınırlar, yeni aktörler. *Toplum ve Bilim*, 138-139, 7-25.
- **Turhan, E. & Gündoğan, C. (2017). The post-politics of the green economy in Turkey: re-claiming the future? *Journal of Political Ecology*, 24, 277-295.

** Please choose two from the optional readings.

PART IV: Different Currents in Political Ecology

Week 11: Feminist political ecologies

- Elmhirst, R., (2015). "Feminist Political Ecology" In Perreault, T., Bridge, G. and J. McCarthy (eds). *Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, Chapter 40, 519-530.
- Federici, S. (2012). "Feminism and the Politics of the Common in an Era of Primitive Accumulation" In *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. Oakland and Brooklyn: PM Press, 138-148.

- Ahmed, S. (2017). "Bringing Feminist Theory Home" (Introduction) In *Living a Feminist Life.* Duke University Press.
- Cadaval Narezo, M. (2022) "Methodologies for Collaborative, Respectful and Caring Research: Conversations with Professional Indigenous Women from Mexico". In Harcourt, W., van den Berg, K. Dupuis, C. and J. Gaybor (eds). *Feminist Methodologies: Experiments, Collaborations, and Reflections,* Chapter 7, 139-162.
- **Konak, N. (2013). "Development and the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP): An Ecofeminist Inquiry" In *Gendered Identities: Criticizing Patriarchy in Turkey* (Dönmez, R.Ö. and Özmen, F.A., eds.), Chapter 3. Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto and Plymouth: Lexington Books, 51-66.
- **Barca, S. (2020). *Forces of reproduction: Notes for a Counter-hegemonic Anthropocene*. Cambridge University Press. 1-19; 27-41.

Week 12: Environmental history

- McNeill, J. (2003). Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History. *History & Theory,* 42(4), 5-43.
- Akgül, Ö.E. (2019). John R. McNeill ile Çevre Tarihi Üzerine Mülakat. *Toplumsal Tarih*, 312, 26-29.
- Moore, J.W. (2010). 'Amsterdam is Standing on Norway' Part I: The Alchemy of Capital, Empire and Nature in the Diaspora of Silver, 1545-1648. *Journal of Agrarian Change,* 10(2), 33-68.
- *Kentel, K.M. (2019). Doğanın "Kozmopolis"i: Terkos Suyolu Boyunca Kentliler, Köylüler ve Hayvanlar. *Toplumsal Tarih*, 312, 30-37.
- *Akgül, Ö.E. (2019). Batı Anadolu'da Keresteciler, Köylüler ve Müşterekler: Koskoca Bir Ormanın Tahribi ve İmhası. *Toplumsal Tarih*, 312, 50-57.
- **Richards, J.F. (2005). "The Early Modern World" (Chapter 1) In *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World.* University of California Press, 17-57. (optional)
- **Federici, S. (2009). *Caliban and the Witch*, 81-115. (optional)
- **McNeill, J. (2000). "Peculiarities of a Prodigal Century" (Chapter 1) In *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-century World*. New York: Norton, 52-83. (optional)

Audio-visual material:

• McNeill, J. (2013). An Environmental History of the Industrial Revolution: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=th_OXOKWZJY

Week 13: Urban political ecology & Closing Session

- Heynen, N., Kaika, M., & Swyngedouw, E. (2006). Urban political ecology: Politicizing the production of urban natures. In *The nature of cities*, Taylor & Francis, 1-20.
- **Bartu Candan, A. & Kolluoğlu, B. (2008). Emerging Spaces of Neoliberalism: A Gated Town and a Public Housing Project in İstanbul. *New Perspectives on Turkey,* 39, 5-46.
- **Garcia-Lamarca, M. (2017). Creating political subjects: collective knowledge and action to enact housing rights in Spain. *Community Development Journal,* 1-15.

Audio-visual materials:

• Maria Kaika: Urban political ecology and radical alternatives.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhxtIM5GPvk
• Erik Swyngedouw: Political ecology and the contested politics of urban metabolism.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5cLdosjnJY