

ATA 581 – Selected Topics in Social Theory and History

Political Ecology: Theoretical Foundations and Current Debates

Fall 2020

Th 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 and 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 has the objective of providing 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 present them to the class (30%).
- 2) 4 response papers (aprox. 2 pages) discussing the readings of each major block will be sent to the instructor one day before the last class (of each part) (20%).
- 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 the beginning April (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, pp. 11-24.
- Robbins, P. (2012). “Marxist political economy”. In *Political ecology: A critical introduction* (2nd edition). Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 54-59.
- Perreault, T., Bridge, G. & McCarthy, J. (eds.) (2015). “Editors’ introduction”. In *The Routledge handbook of political ecology*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 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, pp. 1-13.

Audio-visual materials:

- Maria Kaika: Political ecology.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5PRfxNUBao>
- **ENTITILE (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.
- Smith, N. (2007). Nature as accumulation strategy. *Socialist register*, 43, 17-36.
- 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, pp. 89-93.
- 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, pp. 279-292.
- 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.

Audio-visual materials:

- Noel Castree: Theories in political ecology.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30eEEEEP_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

- 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.
- 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.

- Gonzalez Hidalgo, M. & Zografos, C. (2017). How sovereignty claims and “negative” emotions influence the process of subject-making: Evidence from a case of conflict over tree plantation from Southern Chile. *Geoforum*, 78, 61-73.
- Andreucci, D. & Kallis, G. (2017). Governmentality, development and the violence of natural resource extraction in Peru. *Ecological Economics*, 134, 95–103.

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.
- D’Alisa, G., Demaria, F., & Kallis, G. (eds.) (2014). “Introduction: degrowth”. In *Degrowth: a vocabulary for a new era*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 1-17.
- 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. (2019). Blue degrowth and the politics of the sea: rethinking the blue economy. *Sustainability Science*, 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, pp. 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, pp. 1-15.
- Smith, Neil (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/>
- Agyaman 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.
- Martinez-Alier, J., Temper, L., Del Bene, D., & Scheidel, A. (2016). Is there a global environmental justice movement? *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 43(3), 731-755.

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*, pp. 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.
- **De Angelis, M. (2012). Crises, movements and commons. *Borderlands E-Journal: New Spaces In The Humanities*, 11(2).
- **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, pp. 1-38.

- **Stavrides, S. (2015). Common Space as Threshold Space: Urban Commoning in Struggles to Re-appropriate Public Space. *Commoning as Differentiated Publicness*, 9-20.
- ** 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

- 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.
- Robbins, P. (2012). "The Producer is the Agent of History: Peasant Studies". In *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 59-63.
- 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., Borrás 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.
- **Barbesgaard, M. (2017). Blue growth: savior or ocean grabbing? *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1-20.
- **Calvario, R. (2017). Food sovereignty and new peasantries: on re-peasantization and counter-hegemonic contestations in the Basque territory. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1-19.

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.
- Çoban, A. (2004). Community-based ecological resistance: The Bergama movement in Turkey. *Environmental Politics*, 13(2), 438-460.
- Barca, S., (2012). On working-class environmentalism: a historical and transnational overview. *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, 4(2), 61-80.
- Avcı, D. (2015). Mining conflicts and transformative politics: A comparison of Intag (Ecuador) and Mount Ida (Turkey) environmental struggles. *Geoforum*, 84, 316-325.

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, pp. 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.
- 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=UCRaBqtAaws>

Week 10: Political ecology studies on Turkey

- Islar, M. (2012). Privatised Hydropower Development in Turkey: A Case of Water Grabbing? *Water Alternatives*, 5(2), 376-391.
- 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.
- 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.
- **Çoban, A. (2013). Sınıfsal Açıdan Ekolojik Mücadele, Demokrasinin Açmazları ve Komünizm. *Yaşayan Marksizm*, 1(1), 243-282.
- **Çoban, A. (2016). Toplumsal ve İklimsel Adaletsizlik Sarmalında İklim Siyaseti. *Doğa ve Kent Hakları için Siyasal Stratejiler*, 13-41.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Zeybek, S. O. (2016). Ekolojinin politikası: Yeni sınırlar, yeni aktörler. *Toplum ve Bilim*, 138-139, pp. 7-25.

** Please choose two from the optional readings.

PART IV: Different Currents in Political Ecology

Week 11: Feminist political ecologies

- Rocheleau, D., B. Thomas-Slayter, and E. Wangari (eds.). (1996). "Gender and Environment: A feminist political ecology perspective" (Chapter 1) In *Feminist political ecology: global issues and local experience*. London: Routledge, pp. 3-23.
- Elmhirst, R., (2015). "Feminist Political Ecology" In Perreault, T., Bridge, G. and J. McCarthy (eds). *Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, Chapter 40, pp. 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, pp.138-148.
- Ahmed, S. (2017). "Bringing Feminist Theory Home" (Introduction) In *Living a Feminist Life*. Duke University Press.
- **Kimura, A.H. (2015). Understanding Fukushima: nuclear impacts, risk perceptions and organic farming in a feminist political ecology perspective. In Bryant, R.L. (ed.), *The International Handbook of Political Ecology*, Chapter 19, pp. 260-273.
- **Gonzalez-Hidalgo, M. & Zografos, C. (2019). Emotions, power, and environmental conflict: Expanding the 'emotional turn' in political ecology. *Progress in Human Geography*.

Week 12: Environmental history

- McNeill, J. (2003). Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History. *History & Theory*, 42(4), 5-43.
- 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.
- Zavestoski, S. (2014). "The struggle for justice in Bhopal: A new/old breed of transnational social movement" (Chapter 7) In Armiero, M. & Sedrez, L. (eds.) *A History of Environmentalism: Local Struggles, Global Histories*. London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- **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, pp. 17-57. (optional)
- **Federici, S. (2009). *Caliban and the Witch*, pp. 81-115. (optional)
- **McNeill, J. (2000). *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-century World*. New York: Norton. (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

- 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.
- Angelovski, I. (2013). New directions in urban environmental justice: Rebuilding community, addressing trauma, and remaking place. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 33(2), 160-175.
- Garcia-Lamarca, M. (2017). From Occupying Plazas to Recuperating Housing: Insurgent Practices in Spain. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 41(1), 37-53.

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>