

ENVS/GEOG 67 Political Ecology

Meeting Time: 2A (TTh 2-3.50 am; X Hour: Wed, 4.15-5.05 pm)
Instructor: Chris Sneddon (cssneddon@dartmouth.edu), 123 Fairchild
Room: 007 Kemeny Hall
Office Hours: Wed, 1-2.15 pm; Th, 12.30-1.45 pm; or arranged

Description: Political ecology is an approach to studying human-environment relations that links a broad understanding of biophysical systems (e.g., tropical forests, coastal ecosystems, river basins) to knowledge regarding the political, economic and cultural forces that drive ecological change. Drawing on examples from North America, Southeast Asia, Africa and other regions, this course employs a political ecology framework to examine contemporary debates over urbanization, conservation, water resources, the role of science in environmental conflicts, and the cultural landscape.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, I hope that you will be able to:

1. Understand the major theories and paradigms that have shaped contemporary scholarship in political ecology;
2. Critically analyze and assess various frameworks and methodologies in political ecology and understand their applicability to a range of theoretical and/or real-world problems; and
3. Critically reflect on your own role as a socio-ecological agent who is part of a broader set of political and ecological processes.

Texts:

- (1) Peet, R., Robbins, P. and M. Watts (eds). 2010. *Global Political Ecology*. New York: Routledge;
- (2) Neumann, R. 2012 [2nd edition]. *Making Political Ecology*. New York: Routledge.

Electronic Resources

Nearly all of our readings (articles, etc.) will be posted to our Canvas site. We will also make use of our course Discussion Board and other features (e.g., Assignments, Groups) of Canvas.

EXPECTATIONS

Assessment

Attendance and Participation in class	20%
Reading Reactions	20%
Midterm Exam (take home)	20%
Project 1: Course Facilitation	10%
Project 2: Dartmouth Political Ecology Project (DPEP)	30%

Attendance and participation

This course requires and *depends* on your diligence throughout the term, rather than a marathon session at the end. Each student is expected to engage in a sustained, serious way with all assigned readings, and to actively prepare for and participate in discussions each week. Class discussion will revolve around readings and your reaction (posted on class Discussion Board in Canvas). I expect your punctuality and presence in every class; your commitment to read closely and arrive prepared for discussion; and notification in advance if you will, on the rarest occasion, need to miss a class. See my note at the end of the syllabus for a more precise definition of how I assess course participation.

Reading Reactions (RRs)

You must write and post a brief summary and critique of the readings assigned **for each class** on the dates noted in the syllabus (a total of ten RRs for the term). These summaries form the basis of class discussion and questions from your Reactions should be posted to our Discussion Board on the Course Canvas site at least one hour prior to the beginning of class. These submissions consist of questions and reactions formulated around the assigned readings. Although you should include some descriptions of the texts, the emphasis in these writings should be on your analysis of the arguments. Thinking deeply about how the readings engage political ecology as both an intellectual framework and a research practice will further your own interpretations and add depth and vitality to our class conversations.

Projects

1) *Course Facilitation*

One of the key learning outcomes of higher education is an improved capacity to collect, interpret and present information to a specified audience. Working in small teams, students will be responsible for “teaching” one of the political ecology units in the second half of the term. You can use Professor Sneddon’s facilitation of class as an example, or develop your own pedagogical techniques. There is even some leeway in terms of altering the readings for that unit. We will try to identify teams and match them with units some time in the first two weeks of the course. A more detailed description of this “project” will be disseminated the second week of the course.

2) *The Dartmouth Political Ecology Project (DPEP)*

This project will initiate a long-term study on the political ecology of the Dartmouth campus, including (but not limited to): historical changes in the human-environment relations at Dartmouth; current ecological conditions; and students’ roles in the power geometry that influences current human-environment relations. Taking a critical perspective on how to achieve a sustainable campus, students will work individually or in small teams to investigate (a) Dartmouth’s immediate material landscapes, and (b) the institutional (political, economic) and cultural forces that come together to create those landscapes. The precise nature of this project will be developed in a participatory process—students and Prof. Sneddon will generate sub-topics (e.g., landscape history, ecological landscapes, human perceptions) and specific research questions early in the term. A more detailed hand-out that describes the project will be disseminated the second week of the course.

Special Concerns

You are encouraged to visit me and discuss course issues. I also encourage students with disabilities, including “invisible” disabilities like chronic illness and learning disabilities, to discuss with me possible

accommodations that might be helpful. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or adaptations is requested to speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Academic Skills Center may be consulted to verify the documentation of the disability. Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

The Honor Principle

Students are reminded of the existence of an Academic Honor Principle at Dartmouth, the provisions of which are spelled out in Dartmouth's *Organization, Regulations and Courses*. Students are responsible for the information concerning plagiarism found in *Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgment* available in the Deans' Offices or online at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources/>. For the purposes of this course, it is essential that students:

- (a) give credit where credit is due in all papers by citing sources for all quotations, paraphrased arguments, or summaries of basic evidence;
- (b) refrain from copying a fellow student's responses to the readings.

Students with questions should see the instructor prior to the submission of any work that might violate the Honor Principle.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to course: What is Political Ecology?

Tuesday, 6 January

PLEASE LOOK AT THIS READING PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS IF YOU CAN:

Neumann, Chapter 1 (Introduction)

Thursday, 8 January

Peet et al., Chapter 1 (Global nature)

Nietschmann, B. (1979). Ecological change, inflation, and migration in the far western Caribbean. *Geographical review*, 1-24.

Neumann, Chapter 2 (Roots and Branches) - SKIM

[DUE: Reading Reaction #1] NOTE: Be sure to post discussion questions on the appropriate Discussion Forum in Canvas.

Week 2: Nature, Society, History

Tu, 13 January

Neumann, Chapter 3 (Nature and Society)

Moore, D. S. (1998). Clear waters and muddled histories: Environmental history and the politics of community in Zimbabwe's eastern highlands. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24(2), 377-403

Project 1: Discussion of Course Facilitation (Identification of Teams/Dates)

[DUE: Reading Reaction #2]

Th, 15 January

Willems-Braun, B. (1997). Buried epistemologies: the politics of nature in (post) colonial British Columbia. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 87(1), 3-31.

Project 2 Discussion

[DUE: Reading Reaction #3]

Week 3: Dartmouth Political Ecology Project

Tu, 20 January

Wade, C. H. (2013). Legends in the Landscape: Myth as Material Culture at Dartmouth College. *Material Culture*, 45(2): 28-53.

Krasny, M. E., and J. Delia. 2014. Campus sustainability and natural area stewardship: student involvement in adaptive comanagement. *Ecology and Society* 19(3): 27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-06787-190327>.

AASHE (2013) *How-to-Guide: Promoting Sustainable Campus Landscapes*. Denver: AASHE.

<http://sustainability.dartmouth.edu/>

Project 2 Discussion—Introduction

Th, 22 January

Visit from David DiBenedetto (10-10:45)

Project 2 Discussion—Teams, Topics, and Research Questions

Week 4: A “First World” political ecology?

Tu, 27 January

McCarthy, James (2002). First world political ecology: Lessons from the Wise Use movement. *Environment and Planning A* 34:1281-1302.

Rikoon, J. S. (2006). Wild horses and the political ecology of nature restoration in the Missouri Ozarks. *Geoforum*, 37(2), 200-211.

Pincetl, S., Jonas, A. E., & Sullivan, J. (2011). Political ecology and habitat conservation for endangered species planning in Southern California: Region, places, and ecological governance. *Geoforum*, 42(4), 427-438.

[DUE: [Reading Reaction #4](#)]

TAKE HOME MIDTERM EMAILED OUT

Th, 29 January

Peet et al., Chapter 3 (Emel and Neo, “Killing for profit”)

Peet et al., Chapter 8 (Eden, “The politics of certification”)

[DUE: [Reading Reaction #5](#)]

Week 5—Political Economy, Resources, Energy

Tu, 3 February (NO READING REACTION)

Peet et al., Chapter 4 (Mansfield, “Modern” industrial fisheries)

Peet et al., Chapter 14 (Bridge, Past peak oil)

Th, 5 February

Peet et al., Chapter 16 (Bakker, Commons versus commodities)

Sneddon, Chris (2007) Nature’s materiality and the circuitous paths of accumulation: Dispossession of freshwater fisheries in Cambodia. *Antipode* 39(1):167-193.

[DUE: [Reading Reaction #6](#)]

TAKE HOME MID-TERM DUE BY 5 pm

Week 6—Urban Political Ecology

Tu, 10 February

Heynen, N. (2013). Urban political ecology I: The urban century. *Progress in Human Geography*, 38(4) 598–604.

Peet et al., Chapter 6 (Moore, Global garbage)

Peet et al., Chapter 7 (Ghertner, Green evictions)

Th, 12 February

Millington, N. (2013). Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(1), 279-296.

Safransky, S. (2014). Greening the urban frontier: Race, property, and resettlement in Detroit. *Geoforum*, 56, 237-248

Project 2 Work Day (consult with peers, Sneddon)

Week 7: Conservation Politics

Tu, 17 Feb [COURSE FACILITATION PROJECT DAY]

Neumann, Chapter 5 (Biodiversity Conservation)

Garland, E. (2008). The elephant in the room: Confronting the colonial character of wildlife conservation in Africa. *African Studies Review*, 51(03), 51-74.

Silva, J. A., & Khatiwada, L. K. (2014). Transforming Conservation into Cash?: Nature Tourism in Southern Africa. *Africa Today*, 61(1), 16-45

[DUE: Reading Reaction #7]

Th, 19 Feb [COURSE FACILITATION PROJECT DAY]

Byrne, J. (2012). When green is White: The cultural politics of race, nature and social exclusion in a Los Angeles urban national park. *Geoforum*, 43(3), 595-611.

Saunders, F. P. (2013). Seeing and Doing Conservation Differently A Discussion of Landscape Aesthetics, Wilderness, and Biodiversity Conservation. *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 22(1), 3-24.

Hinchliffe, S. (2008). Reconstituting nature conservation: towards a careful political ecology. *Geoforum*, 39(1), 88-97.

[DUE: Reading Reaction #8]

Week 8: Political Ecologies of Health

Tu, 24 February [COURSE FACILITATION PROJECT DAY]

Mayer, J. D. (2000). Geography, ecology and emerging infectious diseases. *Social science & medicine*, 50(7), 937-952.

Mansfield, B. (2008). Health as a nature–society question. *Environment and Planning A*, 40(5), 1015-1019.

[DUE: Reading Reaction #9]

Th, 26 February [COURSE FACILITATION PROJECT DAY]

Mansfield, B. (2012). Gendered biopolitics of public health: Regulation and discipline in seafood consumption advisories. *Environment and Planning-Part D*, 30(4), 588

Peet et al., Chapter 18 (Braun, Governing Disorder)

[DUE: Reading Reaction #10]

Week 9

DPEP Presentations (Tu, Th, 3 and 5 March)

Week 10

Roundtable discussion on the future of political ecology (Tu, 10 March)

Neumann, Chapter 6 (The future)

Feedback on DPEP—Where to Next Time?

Assessment of Class Participation¹

Class participation accounts for 20% of the course grade. Every participant in the class is expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material. The success of the course demands that each participant be ready to articulate and defend her/his ideas, as well as to listen to and work with the ideas of the other participants. As alluded to earlier, your participation in discussion, carrying out of the political ecology projects and engagement in the role playing exercises will go a long way to making the course engaging and successful. Class participation will be graded according to the following specifications:

- (1) A student who receives an "A" for participation in discussion typically comes to every class with questions and/or comments about the readings already in mind. S/he raises these issues for other members to discuss and listens to contrary opinions. S/he engages other students in discussion of their ideas as well as her/his own. S/he is under no obligation to change her opinions to fit the consensus of the class, but s/he respects the ideas of others and discusses the issues before the class with a mind to discovering areas of agreement and disagreement. In short, an "A" student participates in an exchange of ideas.
- (2) A student who receives a "B" for participation in discussion typically has completed all the reading assignments on time, but does not always come to class with questions in mind. Rather, s/he waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Other "B" discussants are courteous and articulate but they do not always engage other students in discussion of their ideas. In short, a "B" student may occasionally participate in an exchange of ideas but sometimes frustrates that exchange either through silence or an unwillingness to direct comments to the other participants.
- (3) A student who receives a "C" for discussion typically either attends class sessions sporadically, or attends every meeting of the seminar, but refuses to be drawn into discussion.

¹ There is an important caveat to this system. I recognize that individuals have different styles of learning and participating. If you are better able to contribute to class discussions via written/electronic comments, please do not hesitate to bring this to my attention.