

Political ecology 2011-2012

Info about the final exam

1) present the research project groups

2) one essay in which you have to connect one environmental problem to one of the concepts we have discussed in the class and explain in which way that concept can be used to understand/solve/deconstruct the problem chosen. (you will have two lists of concepts and environmental issues). For that assignment you will have 500 words

3) one essay in which you will be free to express more your opinion. There will be an argument about a very general issue and you will be asked to discuss what a political ecologist would say about it. You will have 1500 words for this essay.

for tasks 1 and 2 you will have about two weeks and they will due by the 15 of February. You will send the essays to someone who will help us and give us your essay anonymously. so we will grade the essays without knowing who is the author. Then that grade will be weighted with the other tasks (the research project and your participation in the class)

Please do not hesitate to contact anybody of us for information

Master in Environmental Sciences

Module: SocioEnvironmental Research Methods

Academic year: 2011-2012

SUBMODULE

POLITICAL ECOLOGY

coordinator: Marco Armiero

Instructors: Isabelle Anguelovski, Marco Armiero, Giacomo D'Alisa, Christos Zografos

For information about the instructors, their work and their contact details, check: www.eco2bcn.es

For contact, you may reach:

Isabelle Anguelovski: Isabelle.Anguelovski@uab.cat

Marco Armiero: marco.armiero@gmail.com

Giacomo D'Alisa giacomo.dalisa@uab.cat

Christos Zografos: christos.zografos@uab.cat

11 October 2011 - 31 January 2012

Classes on Tuesdays (3.00 - 6.30)

Aula Colserolla, ICTA-Ciencies.

Objectives

In this course we will explore the interdisciplinary field of Political Ecology. Political Ecology is a theoretical and methodological approach to the study of socio-ecological systems that focuses on conflict, power relationships and the unequal distribution of environmental costs and benefits. It seeks to "politicize" debates about environmental problems, and stands in contrast to a-political ecologies that explain environmental issues in terms of universal population, bio-physical, or human-behavioural drivers.

This course aims to familiarize you with the key concepts and tools used by political ecologists and help you do political ecology if you wish. Unlike other sciences with which you might be familiar, political ecology does not work with experiments, model or quantitative analysis; it works with theoretical concepts, which it documents with case-studies that combine qualitative and quantitative information in an empirically-backed narrative ("story"). Each class of this course will focus on a different key concept of political ecology, and use an important, published case-study article to illustrate how this concept is "put to work" in a real case.

Class format

Classes will follow a seminar format with a combination of teaching by the instructor, discussion in class of assigned readings. For each class we will read two articles. Typically one of them will be theoretical, presenting the main concept to be discussed in this class, and the second will include a case-study.

All students are expected to have read these articles in advance and write short commentaries (see assignments below). A group of 2 students will be responsible for synthesizing the commentaries of the week at the beginning of the class (5 minutes presentation). After this a critical discussion of the key ideas of the articles will take place under the facilitation of the instructor. This might also include discussion in small groups, games, use of audiovisual material (movies, lectures by famous political ecologists, videos, etc).

Assignments and Exam

1. Weekly commentaries

For each class you should write a commentary on the readings of the week, responding to a set of questions that will be handed to you the week before. The commentary should be about 350 words long. Commentaries should be emailed not later than Sunday night before class to the student(s) responsible for presenting the commentaries. (S)he will then have to edit all commentaries into a single document and send it back to class not later than Monday at 12 p.m.

2. Group project

Groups of 2-3 students should work to present an analysis of an environmental conflict in the last class (25/1). The presentation should last 10 minutes and all members of the group involved. It should focus on an environmental conflict of interest and present basic data about the conflict (geography, history, social and environmental impacts involved, etc), the main actors involved in the conflict, their interests, values and "languages" (narratives about the conflict) and explain the institutional and social arenas through which the conflict is mediated. A good project should use one of the main concepts of political ecology presented in the course to explain the conflict and challenge "mainstream" views about it.

3. Final exam SEE THE INFO AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PAGE

The final course assignment is a take-home exam consisting of three essays on selected topics related to the content of the course.

The final grade will be derived 70% from the exam and 30% from the group project. The weekly commentary will not be graded, but 1 point will be subtracted from the final grade for each commentary not delivered in time (i.e. if you do not deliver two commentaries during the course, the maximum grade you can get will be 8, and not 10). Exemptions apply for exceptional circumstances (e.g. serious illness) and with prior information and consent of the instructor.

Resources

All information about the course will be available at:

<http://marcoarmiero.webnode.it/>

Also at www.environmentalconflicts.com you can find interesting material from a summer school on political ecology held last Summer in Barcelona including readings, presentations, and many relevant videos from the web. You need to register first at the bottom of the page.

We will also use a common email address politicaecology@libero.it (students will have the password to access it during the course)

PROGRAM OUTLINE AND READINGS

Week 1 (11/10) – Introduction to Political Ecology (Armiero)

Introduction to the class. No readings for this week.

[Political ecology 2011 \(1 week\).pdf \(940,1 kB\)](#)

Week 2 (18/10) – Ecological Distribution Conflicts and Environmental Advocacy (Anguelovski)

Questions for the commentaries:

- 1) What are the different causes (actors, processes, and goals) behind ecological distribution conflicts and environmental justice claims?
- 2) What are the internal and external obstacles faced by communities or neighborhoods when building strategies of organizing and advocacy towards environmental justice?

Please note that these two questions are relevant for all three readings assigned for next week. They are meant to help you think across readings and authors.

Readings

1) Martinez-Alier, J., 2009. Social Metabolism, Ecological Distribution Conflicts, and Languages of Valuation, *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 20 (1): 58-87.

2) Pellow, D. and R. Brulle, eds. 2005. "Power, Justice, and the Environment: Toward Critical Environmental Justice Studies" Chapter 1 in *Power, Justice and the Environment: A Critical Reappraisal of the Environmental Justice Movement*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

3) Hicks, Barbara. 2011. Hicks, Barbara. "Bypassing the State to Strengthen the Rule of Law? Local Activists, Transnational Networks and Gold Mining in Bulgaria." In J. Carmin and J. Agyeman (eds.), *Environmental Inequalities Beyond Borders: Local Perspectives on Global Injustices*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[10.18.2011 Anguelovski PE class Oct.2011 FOR WEBSITE \(1\).pdf \(3,5 MB\)](#)

Week 3 (25/10) – On the political (D'Alisa)

Question for the commentaries:

- 1) How do you imagine the end of the world?
- 2) How do you imagine the end of capitalism?
- 3) Which of the two questions is a political question and why?

Mouffe C. 2005. Introduction and chapter 1 from *On the political. Thinking in Action*. Routledge.

Swyngedouw E. 2009. Impossible Sustainability and the post-political Condition. In *Making strategies in spatial planning. Knowledges and values* (edited by Cerreta M. et al.).

[On the political \[Last saved by user\].pdf \(110 kB\)](#)

Week 4 (8/11) – Post-normal science (D’Alisa)

Questions for commentaries:

- 1. What is a Post-Normal Science framework, how is it different from normal science and why is it necessary in our times?**
 - 2. According to you, "the waste emergency" in Campania is a context where post-normal science approach should be applied?**
- Funtowicz S. O., Ravetz J. R., 1994. The worth of a songbird: ecological economics as a post-normal science. *Ecological economics* 10 (197-207).

D’Alisa et al. 2010. **Conflict in Campania: Waste emergency or crisis of democracy?** *Ecological Economics*, in press.

[Post normal Science Presentatio8-11-2011.pdf \(1,6 MB\)](#)

Week 5 (15/11) Theoretical Underpinnings of Environmental Inequality and Injustice (Anguelovski)

Question for the commentaries:

- 1) How are environmental inequalities in general and environmental racism in particular produced in the global North?**
- 2) Name two different areas (for instance regulatory policy, policy implementation and monitoring, international agreements, local or national civil society mobilization, or any other area) where you think much success can be achieved for addressing environmental injustice in the global South, and explain why those two areas should be prioritized. You can focus on a specific type of environmental injustice (resource extraction, waste, water, plantations, etc) in the global South if this helpful to you.**

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE LAST READING HAS BEEN CHANGED, YOU WILL FIND it ON POLITICALECOLOGY@LIBERO.IT

Readings

Pellow, David N. 2000. Environmental Inequality Formation: Toward a Theory of Environmental Injustice. *American Behavioral Scientist* 43(4): 581-601.

Rudel, Thomas, Timmons Roberts and JoAnn Carmin. "Political Economy of the Environment." Forthcoming. *Annual Review of Sociology*.

Nathan McClintock, From Industrial Garden to Food Desert: Demarcated Devaluation in the Flatlands of Oakland, California

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE POWERPOINT OF THIS LESSON IS AT politicalecology@libero.it because it was too heavy to be uploaded here. Sorry.

Week 6 (22/11) Urban Environmental Inequities with Field visit to the Casc Antic – The Forat de la Vergonya (Anguelovski)

This session is focused on inequalities in urban planning and urban development decisions. It examines issues of processes and outcomes, conflicting values at stake, and discusses examples of urban injustices. This class will be based on the case study of urban socio-environmental conflict in the Casc Antic of Barcelona and explore urban dimensions on environmental and spatial inequities. We will meet on the site of the Forat de la Vergonya and discuss social, political, and environmental issues around the rehabilitation of the old town. Students are expected to have read the short newspaper articles and the chapter below.

Information about the field trip

Let's meet on the 22nd in front of the cathedral in the old town (Metro Plaza Catalunya or Liceu or Jaime I) at 14h50. From there, we'll do a tour of the Casc Antic and then go to the Convent De Sant Agusti for our field class. Around 17h30, we'll start the discuss with our guest speaker from Peru. Here are two very short background articles on the case of the Achuars in Peru:

<https://amazonwatch.org/assets/files/2011-talisman-issue-brief.pdf>

<http://amazonwatch.org/work/talisman>

See you then!

Isabelle

PS: If you have any issue the day of the class, please call my cell phone: 636 904 857.

questions for the commentaries

Please remember to write your comments as a short analytical summary at the end.

- 1) Is public space an issue of environmental justice? (Justify)
- 2) Based on the theoretical argument developed by Susan Fainstein, do you consider that the revitalization of the Casc Antic as sponsored and managed by the municipality reflects the ideas of the "just city? Look at the different ways Fainstein talks about her vision for the Just City in the entire article.

Fainstein, S. 2006. *Planning and the Just City*. Conference on Searching for the Just City, GSAPP. Columbia University. April 29, 2006

Newspaper articles:

Un agujero en Ciutat Vella, La Vanguardia, 7 de Noviembre del 2004. p.33

El Forat de la Vergonya, Manuel Delgado, El Pais, 10 Octubre del 2006.

Anguelovski, Isabelle. 2011. *Unequal development and neighborhood fights for environmental improvements in the Casc Antic, Barcelona*. In Chapter 2 "Stories of Neighborhood Abandonment, Degradation, and Socio-Environmental Transformation" of PhD Dissertation: Neighborhood as refuge: Environmental justice and community reconstruction in Boston, Barcelona, and Havana

[11.22.2011 Anquelovski PE class Oct.2011 FOR WEBSITE V2.pdf \(4,5 MB\)](#)

Week 7 (29/11) – Environmental Justice (Armiero)

"Ecological justice" is an expression coined by Low and Gleeson (1998) which has been used to indicate the struggles for an equal

distribution of environmental risks and benefits among classes, races, and genders. According to Robert Bullard, one of the leading scholars in the EJ field, the struggle over a PCB landfill in Warren County, North Carolina in the early 1980s can be considered as the starting point of the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) (Bullard). In the last few decades, grassroots organizations throughout the US have challenged government and corporate power in an effort to improve their neighbourhoods and to affirm their right to a healthy, clean, and safe environment.

The students will familiarize with the literature on the ej, using both theory and case-studies; action research and strong objectivity will also be addressed in the class.

Questions:

- 1) What is environmental justice? Is it related just to race, or does it involve also class and gender?
- 2) What is the role of scientific knowledge?

[lesson political ecology.ppt \(1,8 MB\)](#)

Readings:

Melosi, M, Equity, Ecoracism and the Environmental Justice Movement in *The Face of the Earth*, ed. Donald Hughes (Armonk: M.E. Sharp, 2000), 47-75

Gottlieb, R., *Ethnicity as a Factor: The Quest for Environmental Justice in Forcing the Spring* (Washington, Island Press, 2005)

Bullard, Robert, *The Wrong Complexion for Protection? Race and Environmental Justice*. In VOICES a UCBS (University of California at Santa Barbara) Series

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYVvbs6XsNw>

Week 8 (13/12) - Power and 1st World Peripheries I (Zografos)

Questions for commentaries:

1. Brownlow (2006) argues that "...the uncontrolled growth of weeds and their emerging dominance in the landscape do appear to symbolize disorder, decay, and the absence of control that accompany years of political and fiscal neglect. Socially speaking, the significance of weeds is not what they do but, rather, what they represent; the same can be said for the abandoned autos, heaps of garbage, discarded needles, condoms, and drug paraphernalia, and broken glass that are pervasive throughout the park" (p. 242)

Why, according to Brownlow, have disorder and decay fallen upon Cobbs Creek? Do you know of any other examples where the same thing has happened?

2. St. Martin (2006) claims that "[t]o accept communities everywhere, to see them as co-extensive with the urban and mixed industrial environments of the Northeast (as opposed to only in isolated rural villages), threatens the dominant discourse" (p. 177)

How, according to St. Martin, communities can threaten the dominant discourse? Do you agree with his view that this challenge is possible?

Brownlow, A. (2006) 'An archaeology of fear and environmental change in Philadelphia' *Geoforum* 37, pp. 227-245

St. Martin, K. (2006) 'The impact of "community" on fisheries management in the US Northeast' *Geoforum* 37, pp. 227-245

[Power - First World Peripheries 1 2011.pdf \(400,7 kB\)](#)

Week 9 (20/12) –Power and 1st World Peripheries II (Zografos)

Question for commentaries:

Paulson et al. (2005) specify two ways of exploring or locating power that are used in their book: outline these and say which one you find more convincing and why?

Paulson, S., Gezon, L., Watts, M. (2005) 'Politics, ecologies, genealogies' in Paulson, S., Gezon, L. (eds.) *Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups* New Jersey: Rutgers

This class will screen a 70 minutes-long documentary on environmental transformation and conflict in New Brunswick, Canada. This will be followed by a discussion and a short class exercise. Although students are expected to have read the obligatory reading before the class as this will help them for both the documentary discussion and the class exercise, they will not have to summarise or present this reading in class.

Week 10 (10/1) – Enclosure (Armiero)

The enclosures have been the most powerful process in the history of human/nature relationships. Transforming common goods and services in private properties has changed the very object (nature) and human ways of looking at it.

Furthermore, the history of enclosures is also a fertile common ground among social history, environmental history, and political ecology. Privatization has always implied resistance from those who were expropriated.

In this class, students will familiarize with the long historical process of enclosures but they will also be introduced to the several and less recognized kinds of enclosures, such as those connected to the protection of nature or the sanitization of urban spaces.

Questions for the commentaries:

- 1) According to Polanyi, enclosures were part of the construction of a society based on market economy. Why?
- 2) In which sense does Neumann consider imperial national parks as enclosures?
- 3) Once upon a time.... Could you tell a story of success of a commons (from your own experience or from your knowledge of past-current history)

Readings:

Polanyi: Satanic Mills (from The Great Transformation)

Rod Neumann, Imposing wilderness

Further readings and materials on the commons, for those who are interested...

Marx wrote in 1842 a series of articles on a Prussian law which transformed the gathering of woods in a crime <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/10/25.htm>

The classical critique of the commons is that from Garret Hardin, which we will discuss in the class http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_tragedy_of_the_commons.html

You can find a lot of materials on the commons at the website of the international association of the study of common property <http://www.indiana.edu/~iascp/>

Finally, here is a talk by Elinor Ostrom <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByXM47Ri1Kc>

[Enclosures.ppt \(822,5 kB\)](#)

Week 11 (17/1) –Neoliberalism (Armiero) THIS CLASS IS CANCELLED. WE WILL NEGOTIATE WHEN AND HOW TO HAVE IT

McCarthy, J. and S.Prudham, 2004. Neoliberal nature and the nature of neoliberalism. *Geoforum*, 35: 275-283.

This class will screen the 77 minutes-long documentary "The Shock Doctrine" based on the same-titled book by Naomi Klein. The movie will be followed by a discussion, including reflection on the reading of the week. There will be no presentation of the commentaries for this week.

Week 12 (24/1) Accumulation by dispossession and accumulation by contamination (D'Alisa)

Questions for commentaries:

- 1) Nowadays primitive accumulation is still an going process?
- 2) Can you give some example of accumulation by dispossession? Why is it different by a primitive accumulation?

Harvey, D. 2003. Accumulation by Dispossession, chapter 4 in *The New Imperialism*, Oxford University Press.

De Angelis M. 2001. Marx and primitive accumulation: The continuous character of capital's "enclosures". <http://www.thecommoner.org>

Karl Marx. Capital Volume One. Part VIII: Primitive Accumulation. Chapter XXVI: The secret of Primitive Accumulation. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch26.htm>

CHANGE IN THE PROGRAM AS REQUESTED BY THE STUDENTS

Week 12 (25/1) Presentation of the students' projects

1) let's start at 15:45, we (Isabelle, Christos, Giacomo and myself) might be a little late but it is better to anticipate the class

2) each group has 10 minutes to make its presentation. Please be prepared to stay into this time constraint. This is also part of the assignment. You must be able to present your project in the time which you have. You are supposed to timing your presentation and be sure that it fits in 10 minutes. A suggestion from the experience: when you are presenting you will always need more time for the stress of the presentation.

3) be aware that we might need to stay longer in the class because hopefully we will need time for a few questions and discussion

4) on the 25th you will get also the questions for the final text.

Week 13 (31/1) – Neoliberalism (Armiero)

McCarthy, J. and S.Prudham, 2004. Neoliberal nature and the nature of neoliberalism. Geoforum, 35: 275-283.

This class will screen the 77 minutes-long documentary "The Shock Doctrine" based on the same-titled book by Naomi Klein. The movie will be followed by a discussion, including reflection on the reading of the week. There will be no presentation of the commentaries for this week.