

ENVS/GEOG 67 Political Ecology

Meeting Time: 10A (TTh 10:10am-12:00pm; X Hour: W 3:30-4:20)
Instructor: Chris Sneddon (cssneddon@dartmouth.edu), 123 Fairchild
Room: 007 Steele
Office Hours: Tuesday, 1-2:30pm; Wednesday, 11:30am-1:00pm; or by appointment

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, 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 across a range of spatial scales and cultural contexts; 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:

We will be reading selected chapters out of Neumann, R. 2012 [2nd edition]. *Making Political Ecology* (New York: Routledge). You can find a good used copy for under US\$10.00. It will be available on Reserve in Kresge. Select chapters will also be available on our Canvas site.

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 (including addenda), 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 7 RRs for the term, with the lowest score thrown out). These summaries form the basis of class discussion and at least one question from your Reactions should be posted to our Discussion Board on the Course Canvas site one hour prior to the beginning of class. I have tried to spread these out over the term, and there is roughly one per week. You will have some flexibility in opting to do the RR on Tuesday or Thursday.

These submissions consist of questions and reactions formulated around the assigned reading or 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. This year, I have explicitly included news articles and other non-academic information sources in order to (a) update events described in the journal articles, and/or (b) provide a more “popular political ecology” view of the cases we examine. See my note at end of syllabus for how I assess Reading Reactions.

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 is the fourth in a long-term study on the political ecology of the Dartmouth campus and beyond, including (but not limited to): historical changes in the human-environment relations at Dartmouth; current socioecological conditions; and students’ roles in the power geometry that influences human-environment relations at the College, in nearby communities, and globally. This year students will analyze environmental conflicts and think about how such conflicts might be resolved and/or managed, students will work individually or in small teams (3-5 students) to investigate the political ecology of a **contemporary environmental controversy**. The different elements of your project include (at a minimum): (a) the historical origins of the controversy (i.e., how did this issue become a “matter of concern?”); (b) the actors engaged in the controversy and their relative power to affect outcomes (i.e., who are the relevant “players?”); (c) the role of scientific knowledge; and (d) recommendations and/or analysis of pathways towards potential resolution of the controversy. The precise nature of this project will be developed in a participatory process—students and Prof. Sneddon will generate a list of potential controversies and specific research questions early in the term.

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.

Laptops and Other Electronic Devices

Recent research has demonstrated that use of laptops in college/university classrooms can both inhibit and facilitate the learning process. We will have a brief discussion about the use of laptops regarding their appropriate and effective use during class on the term's first day. At no times during class periods should mobile phones be used (unless under very specific and rare circumstances).

COURSE SCHEDULE

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

Tuesday, 12 Sept

PLEASE LOOK AT THIS READING PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS:

Neumann, Chapter 1 (Introduction)

Thursday, 14 Sept

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

Neumann, Chapter 2 (Roots and Branches)

<http://www.voanews.com/a/deadly-nicaragua-land-conflict-displaces-hundreds/2985480.html>

(current land conflicts involving Miskito people)

DUE: Reading Reaction #1 NOTE: Be sure to post discussion questions to the Discussion Forum in Canvas at least one hour prior to class.

Week 2: Nature, Society, History

Tues, 19 Sept

Demerritt, D. (2001). "Being constructive about nature." In N. Castree and B. Braun (eds) *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics*, pp. 22-40. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

<http://www.fooddive.com/news/what-is-natural-post-lawsuits-resurface-debate/424605/>

(What is "natural" in breakfast cereal?)

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/news/article/Newspaper-Killing-of-wolf-pack-leads-to-death-9195227.php>

(Short article on re-introduction of wolves in western US)

DUE: Reading Reaction #2a

Thur, 21 Sept

Neumann, R. (1992). Political ecology of wildlife conservation in the Mt. Meru area of northeast Tanzania. *Land Degradation and Development* 3(2), 85-98.

DUE: Reading Reaction #2b

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

Introduction of Project 2 (DPEP): Themes and Teams

Week 3: Dartmouth Political Ecology Project (DPEP) – Theme: Dartmouth Commodities

Tues, 26 Sept

Project 2: Thinking about Environmental Controversies

Barry, A. (2012). Political situations: Knowledge controversies in transnational governance. *Critical Policy Studies*, 6(3), 324-336.

Lakoff, G. (2010). Why it matters how we frame the environment. *Environmental Communication*, 4(1), 70-81.

Thur, 28 Sept

Project 2: The Role of Knowledge (Scientific and Otherwise)

Sneddon, C.S, Magilligan, F.J. and Fox, C.A. 2017. Science of the dammed: Expertise and knowledge claims in contested dam removals. *Water Alternatives* 10(3):

Putting It All Together

Week 4: A "First World" political ecology?

Tues, 3 Oct

Robbins, P. (2006). The politics of barstool biology: environmental knowledge and power in greater Northern Yellowstone. *Geoforum*, 37(2), 185-199.

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

<http://www.news-leader.com/story/news/local/ozarks/2016/07/27/missouris-wild-horses-still-roam-free-20-years-after-feds-nearly-removed-them/87541072/> (Missouri's wild horses still run free...)

DUE: Reading Reaction #3a

TAKE HOME MIDTERM EMAILED OUT

Thur, 5 Oct

Pulido, L. (2000). Rethinking environmental racism: White privilege and urban development in Southern California. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 90(1), 12-40.

<http://blog.ucsusa.org/juan-declet-barreto/hurricane-harvey-magnifies-climate-and-petrochemical-toxic-risks-for-environmental-justice-communities-in-houston> (Hurricane Harvey Magnifies Climate and Petrochemical Toxic Risks for Environmental Justice Communities in Houston)

DUE: Reading Reaction #3b

Project 2 Work Day (consult with peers, Sneddon)

Week 5—Food, Dams, Energy

Tues, 10 Oct

Kerr, R. B. (2014). Lost and found crops: agrobiodiversity, indigenous knowledge, and a feminist political ecology of sorghum and finger millet in Northern Malawi. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 104(3), 577-593.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/01/01/250482654/malawian-farmers-say-adapt-to-climate-change-or-die>

DUE: Reading Reaction #4a

Thur, 12 Oct

Chapter 6, Sneddon, C. (2015) *Concrete Revolution: Large Dams, Cold War Geopolitics, and the US Bureau of Reclamation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

<http://thewire.in/62771/the-most-important-dam-you-probably-havent-heard-of/>

DUE: Reading Reaction #4b

Discussion + Project 2 Work Day (consult with peers, Sneddon)

TAKE HOME MID-TERM DUE BY 11 pm

Week 6—Urban Political Ecology

Tues, 17 Oct

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.

<http://www.citylab.com/navigator/2016/08/detroit-urban-farmers-growing/497027/>

DUE: Reading Reaction #5a

Thur, 19 Oct [FACILITATION PROJECT DAY]

Ranganathan, M., & Balazs, C. (2015). Water marginalization at the urban fringe: environmental justice and urban political ecology across the North–South divide. *Urban Geography*, 36(3), 403-423.

DUE: Reading Reaction #5b

Discussion + Project 2 Work Day (consult with peers, Sneddon)

Week 7: Conservation Politics and Climate

Tues, 24 Oct [FACILITATION PROJECT DAY]

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

http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/canned_hunting_and_cub-petting_are_big_business_in_south_africa/

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/12/canned-african-lion-hunts-might-get-wiped-out.html>

DUE: Reading Reaction #6a

Thur, 26 Oct [FACILITATION PROJECT DAY]

Gemenne, F., Barnett, J., Adger, W. N., & Dabelko, G. D. (2014). Climate and security: evidence, emerging risks, and a new agenda. *Climatic change*, 123(1), 1-9.

Nyantakyi-Frimpong, H., & Bezner-Kerr, R. (2015). The relative importance of climate change in the context of multiple stressors in semi-arid Ghana. *Global Environmental Change*, 32, 40-56.

DUE: Reading Reaction #6b

Discussion + Project 2 Work Day (consult with peers, Sneddon)

Week 8: New Frontiers in PE: Health and Technology

Tues, 31 Oct [FACILITATION PROJECT DAY]

Guthman, J., & Mansfield, B. (2013). The implications of environmental epigenetics A new direction for geographic inquiry on health, space, and nature-society relations. *Progress in Human Geography*, 37(4), 486-504.

<https://theconversation.com/if-were-not-careful-epigenetics-may-bring-back-eugenic-thinking-56169>
(Epigenetics' links to eugenics)

DUE: Reading Reaction #7a

Thur, 2 Nov [FACILITATION PROJECT DAY]

Kostakis, V., Roos, A., and M. Bauwens. (in press). Towards a political ecology of the digital economy: Socio-environmental implications of two competing value models. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, doi: 10.1016/j.eist.2015.08.002

<http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/1984534/revealed-toxic-trail-e-waste-leads-us-hong-kong>

DUE: Reading Reaction #7b

Discussion + Project 2 Work Day (consult with peers, Sneddon)

Week 9

DPEP Presentations (TWTh, 7-9 Nov)

Week 10

Tues, 14 November

Roundtable discussion on the future of political ecology

SHORT VIDEOS on political ecology and civic engagement

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.

¹ There is an important caveat to this methodology. 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.

(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.

Reading Reaction Grades Explained

I always think transparency in the grading process is a good idea. So here is my best effort to explain how the scores you receive on your Reading Reactions translate into my understanding of your work.

96-100: This corresponds to an "A" in the Dartmouth system. The RR that scores in this range is extremely well-written, efficient (no wasted words) and has concise summaries of the readings. The linkages among readings, if present, are drawn out. The critical analysis speaks to the most important arguments/topics in the readings and goes further by drawing on the students' own experience, other readings, or other concepts (from G90 and beyond). Questions are not rhetorical or simple ("what do you think was most interesting about..."), but are great fodder for discussion.

93-95: This corresponds to an "AM(inus)". The RR is well-written and has good summaries. Linkages across readings are at least implicit (they are there, but maybe not commented on). Critical analysis focuses on flaws or gaps in reading, or comments on "interesting" points or concepts without going in to detail. Questions are engaging, but maybe slightly off topic.

89-92: Corresponds to "BP(lus)". This RR is pretty well-written, but summaries might be too long or not quite on target. Critical analysis tends towards repeating the arguments of the authors without mobilizing your own analysis. Questions tend towards the rhetorical or simplistic.

85-88: Corresponds to "B". Essentially the same as "BP", but lack of attention to grammar or points are unclear. Little critical analysis, or analysis that seems unconnected to readings (but still interesting). Questions are just slightly above average in terms of relevance, and tend to be very general.

81-84: Corresponds to "BM". Summaries are incomplete or hard to find. Critical analysis slavishly repeats readings' arguments. Questions could be asked without actually doing the readings.

<81: Corresponds to "CP", "C" and "CM". Basically a RR that is mailed in without any genuine engagement with readings. A "rush job."