

## **E9: Introduction to Political Ecology**

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**Instructor:** Nitin Rai ([nitinrai@atree.org](mailto:nitinrai@atree.org))

**Credits:** 2 credits (32 contact hours)

**Duration of the Course:** 11<sup>th</sup> September to 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014

**Time and Days:** 10:00 – 12:50 AM on Thursdays

**Field trip:** 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> October 2014

### **Course description**

The course aims to introduce a political ecology approach to study interactions between society and the environment. We will explore in detail the idea that the environment is produced by both social and bio-physical processes. The course will discuss how a range of actors are implicated in this production of nature and how some have more power than others in shaping the environment. Dominant approaches and narratives in conservation and development leave lasting impacts on people and ecosystems. Discussions will cover such topics as the theoretical basis of political ecology, critiques of current conservation approaches, the production of environmental knowledge, and narratives of environmental change. An identified gap in the political ecology literature is the insufficient attention to ecological processes. The course will introduce approaches in political ecology that incorporate ecology.

### **Grading:**

Class participation (30%): Students are expected to be fully involved in discussions and read the assigned chapters of the text book and assigned papers as these form the basis for discussions. Two students will summarise one reading each in class.

Written critique (20%): Two students will present one paper each in class and present a written critique of the paper (1000 words) a week after class. Every student will submit two such responses during the course.

Final paper (50%): Students will submit a paper (about 3000 words) that will either critically review recent literature, or explore a contemporary human-environment question from a political ecology perspective. Students will submit an outline of their paper midway through the course to ensure progress and clarity on objectives.

Text book: Robbins, Paul. 2004. Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction. Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishing. Soft copies of the assigned papers will be uploaded in Google docs.

Schedule and readings:

Session # (Date)	Topic	Readings
Session 1	What is political ecology?	Robbins chapter 1, Greenberg and Park (1994), Bryant (1998)
Session 2	Cultural ecology	Robbins chapter 2, Conklin (1957), Rappaport (1967)
Session 3	Malthussian myths	Robbins chapter 3, Harvey 1974 Hardin 1968
Session 4	Karl Marx	Guest lecture
Session 5	Antonio Gramsci	Guest lecture
Session 6	Liberation ecology	Robbins chapter 4 Peet and Watts (1993)
Session 7	Michel Foucault	Michel Foucault (1991)
Session 8	Discourse and narrative	Bryant (2002) Brosius (1999)
Session 9	Degradation and marginalisation	Robbins chapter 4 and 5, Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) Bassett and Zueli (2000)
Session 10	Social construction	Robbins Chapter 6 Fairhead and Leach (1995) Demeritt (1998) Castree and Braun (1998)
Session 11	Non-equilibrium Ecology	Holt 2008 Botkin (1990) Scoones (1999) Zimmerer (2000)
Session 12	Conservation and control	Robbins chapter 8, Sletto (2011) Johari (2007) West et al (2006)
Session 13	Environmental identity and social movements	Robbins chapter 10 Baviskar (2001) Zimmerer (1991) Li (2000)
Session 14	Neoliberal conservation	Smith (2007) Castree (2008a and 2008b) O'Connor (1988)
Session 15	The future of political ecology	Robbins chapter 11 Walker (2005), Goldman and Turner (2011) Turner (2011) Campbell (2011)

		Nygren and Rykoon (2008)
24, 25, 26 October	Field trip	Friday, Saturday and Sunday field trip to BRT

## Readings

Bassett, T. and Zuéli, Koli B. 2000. Environmental Discourses and the Ivorian Savanna.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90 (1): 67-95.

Baviskar, A. (1999). Written on the body, written on the land: Violence and environmental struggles in Central India. Working Paper WP02-10, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

Blaikie, P. M., and H. C. Brookfield. 1987. Land degradation and society. London ; New York: Methuen.

Botkin, D. B. 1990. Discordant harmonies : a new ecology for the twenty-first century. New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chs 1 and 2.

Brosius, J. P. (1999). Green Dots, Pink Hearts: Displacing Politics from the Malaysian Rain Forest. *American Anthropologist*, 101(1):36-57.

Bryant, R. 1998. Power, knowledge and political ecology in the third world: a review. *Progress in Physical Geography* 22 (1):79-94.

Bryant, Raymond L. 2002. Non-governmental Organizations and Governmentality: ‘Consuming’ Biodiversity and Indigenous People in the Philippines. *Political Studies* 50: 268-292.

Campbell, L. M. 2011. Debating the Science of Using Marine Turtles: Boundary Work among Species Experts. In *Knowing nature: conversations at the intersection of political ecology and science studies*, ed. M. J Goldman, P. Nadasdy, and M. D. Turner, 47-64. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Castree, N. and Braun, B. 1999. The construction of nature and the nature of construction. In *Remaking reality*. ed. B. Braun and N. Castree, 3-42. London: Routledge.

Conklin H. 1954. An ethnoecological approach to shifting agriculture. *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 17:133-142

Castree, N. 2008a. Neoliberalising Nature: Processes, Effects, and Evaluations. *Environment and Planning* 40: 153–173.

Castree, N. 2008b. Neoliberalising Nature: The Logics of Deregulation and Reregulation. *Environment and Planning* 40: 131–152.

Demeritt, D. 1999. Science, social constructivism and nature. In *Remaking reality*, ed. Braun, B. and Castree, N. 173-193. London: Routledge.

Fairhead, J, and M Leach. 1995. False Forest History, Complicit Social Analysis: Rethinking Some West African Environmental Narratives. *World development* 23 (6): 1023-1035.

Foucault, M. 1991. Governmentality. In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality.*, ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller, 87-104. London: Harvester.

Goldman, M. J, and M. D Turner. 2011. Introduction. In *Knowing nature: conversations at the intersection of political ecology and science studies*, ed. M. J Goldman, P Nadasdy, and M. D Turner, 1-23. The University of Chicago Press.

Greenberg, J. B., & Park, T. K. (1994). Political Ecology. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 1, 1-12.

Hardin, Garrett. 1968. The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science* 162 (3859): 1243-1248.

Hart, Gillian. 2006. Denaturalizing Dispossession : Critical Ethnography in the Age of Resurgent. *Antipode*.

Harvey, D. 1974. Population, Resources, and the Ideology of Science. *Economic Geography* 50 (3):256-277.

Holt, Robert D. 2008. Theoretical perspectives on resource pulses. *Ecology*, 89(3): 671–681

Johari, R. 2007. Of Paper Tigers and Invisible People: The Cultural Politics of Nature in Sariska. Pp 48-77. In *Making Conservation Work*. Eds. Shahabuddin, G. and Rangarajan, M. Permanent Black, New Delhi

Li, Tania M. 2000. Constituting Tribal Space: Indigenous Identity and Resource Politics in Indonesia. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (1).

Nygren, A, and Rikoon, S. 2008. Political Ecology Revisited: Integration of Politics and Ecology Does Matter. *Society and Natural Resources* 21: 767-782.

- O'Connor, J. 1988. Capitalism , Nature , Socialism : A Theoretical Introduction: *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 1 (1): 11–38.
- Peet, R., and M. Watts. 1993. Development Theory and Environment in an Age of Market Triumphalism. *Economic Geography* 69 (3):227-253.
- Rappaport, R., 1967. Ritual regulation of environmental relations among a New Guinea people. *Ethnology*. 6(1):17-30
- Robbins, Paul. 2004. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishing.
- Scoones, I. 1999 New Ecology and the Social Sciences: What Prospects for a Fruitful Engagement? *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol 28, no 1, 479-507
- Sletto, Bjørn. 2011. Conservation planning, boundary-making and border terrains: The desire for forest and order in the Gran Sabana, Venezuela. *Geoforum* 42 (2):197-210.
- Smith, Neil. 2007. Nature as Accumulation Strategy. In *Coming to Terms with Nature. Socialist Register*. edited by L Panitch and C Leys, 16–36. London: The Merlin Press.
- Turner, Matthew D. 2011. Production of environmental knowledge: scientists, complex natures, and the question of agency. In *Knowing nature: conversations at the intersection of political ecology and science studies*, ed. M. J Goldman, P Nadasdy, and M. D Turner, 25-29. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Walker, P. 2005. Political Ecology: Where is the Ecology? *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (1):73-82.
- West, Paige, James Igoe, and Dan Brockington. 2006. Parks and Peoples: The Social Impact of Protected Areas. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35: 251-277
- Zimmerer, K. 1991. Wetland production and small holder persistence: agricultural change in a highland Peruvian region. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81 (3): 443-463.
- Zimmerer, K. 2000. The Reworking of Conservation Geographies: Non-equilibrium Landscapes and Nature-Society Hybrids. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90 (2):356-369.