

GEOG 4750/ENVR 4000

Understanding Contemporary Environmentalism: Power and Discourse

Department of Environment and Geography

Fall 2022

Tuesday, 2:30-5:20pm,
St. John's College Room 202

Instructor: Bruce Erickson
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Office Hours: By appointment.
Pre-requisites: Permission of the instructor

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the field of political ecology with a specific focus on how it can help us understand contemporary forms of environmentalism. While concern for nature has been a longstanding part of the social world, in the past 50 years environmentalism has become intertwined with all aspects of life. Yet, even with this growth in environmental concern, the environmental crisis grows. Political ecology, as a field of academic and activist study that examines human-environment interactions for their political and economic subtexts, can provide a useful lens on understanding this paradox. Political Ecology has the promise to illustrate the motivations for, ideologies behind, and consequences of contemporary expressions of environmentalism.

In this course, we draw from political ecology to understand the different ways that care for nature and/or the environment has been popularized. This has the opportunity to provide a critical appraisal and critique of environmental activism as well as help sharpen our ideas of what works and why. This is an engaged practice with environmentalism that looks toward just, equitable and effective activist possibilities.

Objectives:

There are three course objectives:

1. To survey the contemporary field of environmental activism. Students will read from and about the political, economic, and social contexts of a wide range of environmental movements.
2. To understand political ecology as a lens for understanding human-environment interactions. Students will be exposed to a number of approaches within the field of political ecology.
3. To build students' own analysis of activist practices based on the readings and discussions. Students will be asked to make their own analyses of environmental movements and opportunities based on course readings and discussions.

Assignments:

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| Article Synthesis | - 20% |
| Backgrounder | - 20% |
| Participation | - 20% |
| Term Paper | - 40% |

Article Synthesis:

Drawing from Political Ecology journals, you will provide a synthesis of three articles on a related topic. You can choose the articles from any post-2019 issue of: *Journal of Political Ecology*, *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, *Antipode*, *Geoforum*, *Environment and Planning A-E*, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, and *Development and Change*, all of which can be accessed electronically through the U of M library. Your purpose is to identify the underlying commonality between the three articles and illustrate the value of such

an approach to the issues at hand. This is not simply a report on the articles; it is a **synthesis** of their content. The paper will be between 750-1000 words and follow proper academic formatting.

Backgrounder:

Twice throughout the course, students will be responsible for providing a 5-10 minute background presentation on an article. The presentation will not be a summary of the article, but rather it will provide a short introduction to the relevance of this article to the field of environmentalism. This will involve finding material from outside the article (case studies, campaigns, conflicts) that relate to the issues and insights of the article. In essence, the presentation will give an angle for the class to understand the argument the article is putting forward. More information on the Backgrounder will be provided in class.

Participation:

Students are expected to participate fully in the course, which (of course) means reading all of the texts for each week and being ready to comment on them in detail. Unless exceptional circumstances arise, attendance is a vital part of the course.

Participation in this course is based upon three basic principles:

1. Preparation – In all courses it is assumed that you have prepared for the class by reading all materials and reflecting on them. In this 4th year class, you are expected to carefully consider these materials – including making the effort to understand the sections that weren't clear originally, looking up words or locations you are unfamiliar with, ask and start to answer critical questions about the text, and relate the texts and discussion to other materials that you are familiar with.
2. Engagement – As a seminar course, the level of discussion in the class will depend upon student engagement. This means bringing your questions to class, enhancing the discussion with your thoughts and insights, and working to understand the material as it is presented. Engagement, in other words, means learning so that we have a better understanding at the end of the day than what we started with.
3. Listening – The course simultaneously depends upon our ability to listen to others in the class. The seminar will include some lecture moments, but just as importantly, we need to take seriously our peers. The discussion should build on each other's points, not bounce from one viewpoint. In this way, we can make it our goal to bring forward everyone's perspective and in doing so push our collective understandings of the issues at hand.

Paper:

Students will be expected to produce a research paper on a specific environmental campaign or movement. It is expected that students will draw from course material in their paper and will develop an argument that addresses some of the main questions addressed in class. The paper will be between 2500-5000 words. You are encouraged to consult with me on the topic of the paper. Further details will be provided in class.

Grading, Assignment Submission, Lateness Penalties and Missed Tests

Grading: The grading scheme for this course is as follows:

| | | |
|----|-----------|-----------------|
| A+ | (90-100%) | is Exceptional |
| A | (80-89%) | is Excellent |
| B+ | (75-79%) | is Very Good |
| B | (70-74%) | is Good |
| C+ | (65-69%) | is Satisfactory |
| C | (60-64%) | is Adequate |
| D | (50-59%) | is Marginal |
| F | (0-49%) | is Failure |

Lateness Penalty: Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized 5% for every 24 hour period that it is late. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate

grounds, etc., may be granted by the course instructor. Please make every effort to contact the instructor *prior* to your assignment being late to make such arrangements.

Feedback: Students will receive feedback on each of their assignments. This feedback will include a grade and comments (including a rationale for the grade provided). Evaluative feedback on Assignment 1 will be provided by the voluntary withdrawal deadline of November 22nd.

Class Communication

The University requires all students to activate an official University email account. For full details of the Electronic Communication with Students please visit: http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/media/Electronic_Communication_with_Students_Policy_-_2014_06_05.pdf

Please note that all communication between myself and you as a student must comply with the electronic communication with student policy (http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/electronic_communication_with_students_policy.html). You are required to obtain and use your u of m email account for all communication between yourself and the university.

No audio or video recording of lectures or presentations is allowed in any format, openly or surreptitiously, in whole or in part without permission of the Instructor. Course materials (both paper and digital) are for the participant's private study and research.

Course Readings:

All the readings for the course are available digitally through the library, the internet or UML.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor and/or based on the learning needs of the students but such changes are subject to [Section 2.8 of ROASS](#).

PART 1: CONTEMPORAY ENVIRONMENTALISM

September 12 – Roots of Environmentalism

Required Readings:

Carson, R. (1962). "A Fable for Tomorrow" & "The Obligation to Endure." In *Silent Spring*, Boston: Mariner.

McKibben, B. (1989). "A Path of More Resistance." In *The End of Nature*, Toronto: Anchor Books.

September 19 – 20th Century Environmentalism.

Readings:

Spears, E. (2020). "Globalizing Environmentalism." In *Rethinking the American Environmental Movement Post-1945*. Routledge. 164-196

Warde, P., Robin, L. & Sverker, S. (2018). "Seeking a Safe Future." In *The Environment: A History of an Idea*. Baltimore: John Hopkins.

September 26 – Millennial Critiques

Readings:

Cronon, W. (1996). The trouble with wilderness: or, getting back to the wrong nature. *Environmental History*, 1(1), 7-28.

Büscher, B. & Fletcher, R. (2021) "Conservation in the Anthropocene." In *The Conservation Revolution: Radical Ideas for Saving Nature Beyond the Anthropocene*. London: Verso

Additional Readings:

Cronon, W. (1995). *Uncommon ground: toward reinventing nature* (p. 65). New York: WW Norton & Company.
Haraway, D. (2013). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. Routledge.

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT AND POWER

October 3 – Political Ecology: Paying attention to Power

Readings:

Watts, M. J. (2012). A tale of two gulfs: life, death, and dispossession along two oil frontiers. *American Quarterly*, 64(3), 437-467.
Li, T. M. (2014). What is land? Assembling a resource for global investment. *Transactions of the institute of British Geographers*, 39(4), 589-602.

Additional Readings:

Bridge, G. (2009). Material worlds: Natural resources, resource geography and the material economy. *Geography compass*, 3(3), 1217-1244.
Peluso, N. L., & Watts, M. (Eds.). (2001). *Violent environments*. Cornell University Press.

October 10 – Nature's Capital: Big Green and Privatization

Readings:

Klein, N. (2014). Fruits, Not Roots. In *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Toronto: Knopf.
Ávila-García, P., Sánchez, E. L., & Furio, V. J. (2012). The Environmentalism of the Rich and the Privatization of Nature: High-End Tourism on the Mexican Coast. *Latin American Perspectives*, 39(6), 51-67.

Additional Readings:

Fairhead, J., Leach, M. & Scoones, I. (2012). Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature? *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2).
McAfee, K. (1999). Selling nature to save it? Biodiversity and green developmentalism. *Environment and planning D: society and space*, 17(2), 133-154.

October 17 – The Environmental subject

Readings:

Rutherford, S. (2011). Introduction. *Governing the wild: Ecotours of power*. U of Minnesota Press. (p. ix-xxvi).
Paterson, M., & Stripple, J. (2013). My space: Governing individuals' carbon emissions. In *Interpretive Approaches to Global Climate Governance* (pp. 139-151). New York: Routledge.

Additional Readings:

Foucault, M., (2003). *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*. Macmillan.
Fletcher, R. (2010). Neoliberal environmentalism: towards a poststructuralist political ecology of the conservation debate. *Conservation and society*, 8(3), 171-181.

October 24 – Neoliberalism: Enterprising and Calculating

Readings

Robertson, M. M. (2006). The nature that capital can see: Science, state, and market in the commodification of ecosystem services. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 24(3), 367-387.
Dempsey, J. (2016). Enterprising Nature. In *Enterprising Nature: Economics, Markets and Finance in Global Biodiversity Politics*. New York: Wiley.

October 31 – Environmental Justice

Readings:

- Sze, J. (2020). "Introduction," In *Environmental justice in a moment of danger*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Di Chiro, G & Rigell, L. (2018). Situating Sustainability against Displacement. In *Sustainable Approaches to Environmental Justice and Social Power*. New York: NYUP.

PART 3: CRISIS AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

November 7 - Colonialism, Discourse and Ontology

Readings:

- Wilson, N. J., & Inkster, J. (2018). Respecting water: Indigenous water governance, ontologies, and the politics of kinship on the ground. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 1(4), 516-538.
- Callison, C. (2020). The twelve-year warning. *Isis*, 111(1), 129-137.

November 21 - Animals

Readings:

- Johnson, A. (2011). How to Queer Ecology: One Goose at a Time. *Orion*.
<https://orionmagazine.org/article/how-to-queer-ecology-once-goose-at-a-time/>
- Lunstrum, E. (2014). Green Militarization: Anti-Poaching Efforts and the Spatial Contours of Kruger National Park. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 104(4).
- Collard, R. C. (2018). Disaster capitalism and the quick, quick, slow unravelling of animal life. *Antipode*, 50(4), 910-928.

November 28 – Paper Workshop

This week will be dedicated to a peer workshop on the term paper. Take time to have a significant portion of the paper completed. The more work you have done on it, the more valuable this week will be.

December 5 – The Anthropocene: The Crisis Epoch

Readings:

- Lewis, S. & Maslin, M. (2018). Defining the Anthropocene. In *The Human Planet: How We Created the Anthropocene*. Toronto: Pelican.
- Whyte, K. P. (2018). Indigenous science (fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 1(1–2), 224–242.
- Moore, A. (2019). Selling Anthropocene Space: Situated Adventures in Sustainable Tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 27(4).

Student Support and Conduct

[Writing and Study Skills Support](#)

The Academic Learning Centre (ALC) offers services that may be helpful to you as you fulfill the requirements for this course. Through the ALC, you may meet with a study skills specialist to discuss concerns such as time management, reading and note-taking strategies, and test-taking strategies. You may also meet one-on-one with a writing tutor who can give you feedback at any stage of the writing process, whether you are just beginning to work on a written assignment or already have a draft. Writing tutors can also give you feedback if you submit a draft of your paper online. (Please note that the online tutors require 48 hours, from Mondays to Fridays, to return your paper with comments.)

All Academic Learning Centre services are free for U of M students. For more information, please visit the Academic Learning Centre website at umanitoba.ca/student/academiclearning/

You can also talk to a member of the Academic Learning staff by calling 480-1481 or by dropping in at 201 Tier Building.

[Student Accessibility Services](#)

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) provides support and advocacy for students with disabilities of all kinds: hearing, learning, injury-related, mental health, medical, physical or visual. Students with temporary

disabilities such as sprains and breaks are also eligible to use our services. SAS acts as a liaison between students and the faculty and staff of the University of Manitoba as well as support agencies within the province of Manitoba. Please phone: 474-6213 (voice) or 474-9690 (TTY) for service.

If you are accessing the services of SAS, or see the need for accommodation and support, please feel free to make an appointment to talk to me about your requests and accommodations.

[Student Counselling Centre](#)

Student Counselling Centre (SCC) offers individual, couple or family counselling in individual and groups formats. Please phone: 474-8592 or visit SCC at 474 University Centre.

Policy on Respectful Work and Learning Environment

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/566.html

Inappropriate and Disruptive Student Behaviour

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/students/279.html

Accessibility Policy for Student with Disabilities

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/students/281.html

Withdrawal from class

http://umanitoba.ca/student/records/leave_return/695.html

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism, Cheating and Examination Impersonation

Plagiarism or any other form of cheating in examinations, term tests or academic work is subject to serious academic penalty (e.g. suspension or expulsion from the faculty or university). Cheating in examinations or tests may take the form of copying from another student or bringing unauthorized materials into the exam room (e.g., crib notes, pagers or cell phones). Exam cheating can also include exam impersonation. (Please see Exam Impersonation, found in the Examination Regulations section of the General Academic Regulations). A student found guilty of contributing to cheating in examinations or term assignments is also subject to serious academic penalty.

To plagiarize is to take ideas or words of another person and pass them off as one's own. In short, it is stealing something intangible rather than an object. Plagiarism applies to any written work, in traditional or electronic format, as well as orally or verbally presented work. Obviously it is not necessary to state the source of well known or easily verifiable facts, but students are expected to appropriately acknowledge the sources of ideas and expressions they use in their written work, whether quoted directly or paraphrased. This applies to diagrams, statistical tables and the like, as well as to written material, and materials or information from Internet sources.

To provide adequate and correct documentation is not only an indication of academic honesty but is also a courtesy which enables the reader to consult these sources with ease. Failure to provide appropriate citations constitutes plagiarism. It will also be considered plagiarism and/or cheating if a student submits a term paper written in whole or in part by someone other than him/herself, or copies the answer or answers of another student in any test, examination, or take-home assignment.

Working with other students on assignments, laboratory work, take-home tests, or on-line tests, when this is not permitted by the instructor, can constitute Inappropriate Collaboration and may be subject to penalty under the [Student Discipline By-Law](#).

An assignment which is prepared and submitted for one course should not be used for a different course. This is called "duplicate submission" and represents a form of cheating because course requirements are expected to be fulfilled through original work for each course.

When in doubt about any practice, ask your professor or instructor. For more information, consult the [Academic Integrity](#) webpage of the University of Manitoba.

The [Student Advocacy Office](#), 519 University Centre, 474-7423, is a resource available to students dealing with Academic Integrity matters.