

**Political Ecology****2015/2016**

Code: 42406

ECTS Credits: 6

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
4313784 Interdisciplinary Studies in Environmental, Economic and Social Sustainability	OT	0	1

**Contact**

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**Use of languages**

Principal working language: english (eng)

**Teachers**

Diego Andreucci

**Prerequisites**

If not native English speaker: valid IELTS (with a minimum score of 6.5) or TOEFL (minimum 550 paper based, 213 computer based, 79 web-based) score report or a Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English or Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English.

The students must hold an undergraduate degree with relevance to environmental or urban studies. Preferably with previous training in a social science (i.e., business, sociology, political science, economics)

**Objectives and Contextualisation**

In this course we will explore the interdisciplinary field of Political Ecology. Political Ecology is a theoretical and methodological approach for the study of socio-ecological systems that focuses on conflict, power and the uneven distribution of environmental costs and benefits. This course will familiarize students with the key concepts and tools used by political ecologists. At the end of the course students should be able to do political ecology research themselves. They will also be introduced to profoundly new, critical, ways of looking at and understanding environmental problems and policies.

Training objectives of the course:

- Use social theory to analyse environmental problems
- Design case-study research and use qualitative research tools
- Understand the role of power in shaping environmental change

**Skills**

- Apply knowledge of environmental and ecological economics to the analysis and interpretation of environmental problem areas.
- Communicate orally and in writing in English.
- Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously
- Integrate knowledge and use it to make judgements in complex situations, with incomplete information, while keeping in mind social and ethical responsibilities.
- Solve problems in new or little-known situations within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to the field of study.
- Work in an international, multidisciplinary context.

## Learning outcomes

1. Communicate orally and in writing in English.
2. Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously
3. Develop a holistic vision of the relationship between the economy, politics and biophysical systems.
4. Integrate knowledge and use it to make judgements in complex situations, with incomplete information, while keeping in mind social and ethical responsibilities.
5. Know the different approaches to environmental problems on the part of political ecology.
6. Solve problems in new or little-known situations within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to the field of study.
7. Work in an international, multidisciplinary context.

## Content

1. Introduction to Political Ecology. What is political ecology and what does it study and how?
2. Environmental Degradation and Social Construction of the environment-
3. Ecological Distribution Conflicts. Introduction to the "environmentalism of the poor" thesis and the study of conflict at the commodity frontiers. What is "social metabolism" and how does it relate to conflict?
4. Social movements and Environmental Justice. What do we mean by environmental justice and which are the historical origins of the concept? Justice in what and for whom?
5. Conservation and control.
6. Accumulation by dispossession. Introduction to the Marxian approach to the analysis of socio-environmental change and the role of power and surplus value extraction. Primitive accumulation as a continuous strategy in the expansion of global capital. Privatization, neo-liberalism and capital accumulation.
7. Governmentality. Introduction to the Foucauldian approach to the analysis of socio-environmental change and to knowledge as a form of power. Post-structuralist political ecology.

## Methodology

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

All students are expected to have read these articles in advance and write short commentaries (see assignments). In each class 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).

## Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
<b>Type: Directed</b>			
Work in large group (classroom)	30	1.2	1, 5, 3, 2, 7
Work in small groups	6	0.24	1, 5, 3, 7
<b>Type: Autonomous</b>			
At home short assignment(s)	15	0.6	7
Readings	25	1	5, 3

## Evaluation

### 1. Weekly commentaries

For each class you should write a commentary on the readings of the week, responding to two questions that will be handed to you the week before. The commentary should be about 500 words long, 250 words for each question. You will hand in the assignment to the instructor at the beginning of each class. The instructor or the teaching assistant, will read and grade your papers and give them back to you next week. The assignments will be graded from 1 to 10. For those whose average in the assignments is greater than their average in the exam, the weekly assignment will count as 30% of their overall grade. For the rest it won't be taken into account. Students are responsible to hand in the assignment for each class, unless they inform the instructor accordingly and get a postponement of the deadline. Assignments delivered after the deadline will not be graded. Failure to deliver two or more assignments will lead to a subtraction of one point from the final course grade.

### 2. Final exam

The final course assignment is a take-home exam to be completed within the same day consisting of short answers to questions and essays on selected topics related to the content of the course.

## Evaluation activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Final exam	60%	3	0.12	1, 5, 3, 6, 4, 2
Weekly assignments	40%	10	0.4	1, 6, 4, 7

## Bibliography

The list of references below is exhaustive and includes numerous recommended suggested readings for students. A shorter and selected list of references with weekly obligatory readings will be given to the students at the beginning of the class in the Fall.

[www.politicalecology.eu](http://www.politicalecology.eu)

Robbins, P., 2004. What is Political Ecology? The hatchet and the seed. Chapter 1 in Political Ecology, Blackwell (Chapters 2, 3 and 4 should also be read at some point during the course as they will be part of the examined material).

Martinez-Alier, J., Kallis, G., Veuthey, S., Walter, M. and L. Temper, 2010. Social metabolism, ecological distribution conflicts and valuation languages, *Ecological Economics*, 70 (2): 153-158.

Heynen N. C., Kaika M., and Swyngedouw E., 2006. Urban political ecology: Politicizing the production of urban natures. In Heynen N. C., Kaika M., and Swyngedouw E. (eds), *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*. Routledge, Oxford, pp. 1-20

Robbins, P., 2004. Destruction of nature: Human impact and environmental degradation. Chapter 5 in Political Ecology, Blackwell

Robbins, P., 2004. Construction of nature: environmental knowledges and imaginaries. Chapter 6 in Political Ecology, Blackwell

Sletto B, 2008, The Knowledge that Counts: Institutional Identities, Policy Science, and the Conflict Over Fire Management in the Gran Sabana, *Venezuela World Development* 36(10) 1938-1955

Robbins, P., (2004), Environmental Conflict, Chapter 9 in Political Ecology, Blackwell

Otero, I., Kallis, G., Aguilar, R., Ruiz, V., 2011. Water scarcity, social power and the production of an elite suburb. The political ecology of water in Matadepera, Catalonia, *Ecological Economics*.

Robbins, P., 2004., Degradation and Marginalization, Chapter 7 in *Political Ecology*, Blackwell

Collins, T.W., 2010. Marginalization, facilitation and the production of unequal risk, The 2006 Paso del Norte Floods, *Antipode*, 42: 258-288

Robbins, P., 2004. Conservation and Control, Chapter 8 in *Political Ecology*, Blackwell

Neumann, R., 2001. Africa's last wilderness, Reordering space for political and economic control in colonial Tanzania. *Africa*, 4: 641-665.

Robbins, P., 2004. Environmental identity and movements, Chapter 10 in *Political Ecology*, Blackwell

Pellow, D. 2011. Politics by other greens: The importance of transnational environmental justice movement networks. In J. Agyeman and J. Carmin (eds.), *Environmental Inequalities Beyond Borders: Local Perspectives on Global Injustices*.

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.).

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*

Ekers, M., 2009. The political ecology of hegemony in depression-era British Columbia, Canada: Masculinities, work and the production of the forestscape. *Geoforum*. 40 (3): 303-315

Marx, Karl, *Selections: from Capital, Volume I: chapter 26 - Primitive Accumulation*.

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

Perelman, Michael. 2007. Primitive Accumulation from Feudalism to Neoliberalism. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 18:2: 44-61.

Prudham, S., 2007. The fictions of autonomous invention: accumulation by dispossession, commodification, and life patents in Canada, *Antipode* 39(3): 406-429.

Johnson, L. 2012. The fearful symmetry of Arctic climate change: accumulation by degradation, *Environment and Planning D*.

Foucault, M. *Governmentality*. From *The Foucault effect: studies in governmentality*.

Cadman, L. 2012. How (not) to be governed. Foucault, critique and the political. *Environment and Planning D*.

Bryant, R.L., 2002. Non-governmental Organizations and Governmentality: 'Consuming' Biodiversity and Indigenous People in the Philippines, *Political Studies*, 50(2): 268-292.

Martinez-Alier J., Healy H., Temper L., Walter M., Rodriguez-Labajos B., Gerber J.-F., Conde M., 2011. Between science and activism: learning and teaching ecological economics with environmental justice organisations. *Local Environment* 16 (1): 17-36.

D'Alisa G., Burgalassi D., Healy H., Walter M., 2010. Conflict in Campania: waste emergency or crisis of democracy. *Ecological Economics* 70 (2): 239-249