

Political Ecology

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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Prerequisites

Not prerequisites

Use of languages

Principal working language: english (eng)

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 you with core concepts used by political ecologists at ICTA and teach you how to apply these concepts to your empirical material. We will introduce you to a profoundly new, critical way of looking at and understanding environmental problems, politics and policies.

By the end of this course you should be able to conduct, if you wish, a political ecology research project on your own. In addition, you will learn how to read and analyze social science, and you will improve your writing and argumentative skills.

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

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Week 1 - What is political ecology? (Giorgos Kallis)

- Robbins, P., 2004. What is Political Ecology? The hatchet and the seed. Chapter 1 in Political Ecology, Blackwell.

Week 2 - Ecological distribution conflicts (Giorgos Kallis)

- Martinez-Alier, J., 2009. Social metabolism, ecological distribution conflicts, and languages of valuation. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 20(1):58-87.
- Demaria, F., 2010. Shipbreaking at Alang-Sosiya (India): an ecological distribution conflict. *Ecological Economics*, 70(2): 250-260.

Week 3 - The social construction of nature (Giorgos Kallis)

- 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

Week 4 - The urbanization of nature: Urban Political Ecology (Giorgos Kallis)

- 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 Swynge-douw E. (eds), *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*. Routledge, Oxford, pp. 1-20
- Robbins, P. and Sharp, J., 2006. Turfgrass subjects: the political economy of urban monoculture. In the nature of cities: Urban political ecology and the politics of urban metabolism, pp.110-28.

Week 5 - The social production of scarcity (Giorgos Kallis)

- Kallis, G., 2016. Reverend Malthus, apostle of growth. Unpublished manuscript.
- Otero, I., Kallis, G., Aguilar, R. and V. Ruiz, 2011. Water scarcity, social power and the production of an elite suburb. The political ecology of water in Matadepera, Catalonia. *Ecological Economics*, 70 (7): 1297-1308.

Week 6 - State, civil society and nature: a Gramscian political ecology (Giacomo D'Alisa)

- Thomas, P.D., 2009. *The Gramscian Moment. Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*. Brill, Leiden, Boston. Note 61 pag. 16; Section 3.1.4, 4.1, 4.3, 5.2.
- D'Alisa, G. and Kallis, G., 2016. A political ecology of maladaptation: Insights from a Gramscian theory of the State. *Global Environmental Change*, 38, pp. 230-242.

Week 7 - Environmentalisms and social movements (Giacomo D'Alisa)

- Martinez- Alier J. 2014. Current of Environmentalism; in In D'Alisa, G. Demaria, F. and G. Kallis (eds), *Degrowth. A vocabulary for a new era*, Routledge-Earthscan.
- Barca S. (2013) *Laboring the Earth: Transnational Reflections on the Environmental History of Work*, *Environmental History* (2013): 1-25.
- Brucher W. 2011, *From the Picket Line to the Playground: Labor, Environmental Activism, and the International Paper Strike in Jay, Maine*, *Labor History* 52: 95-116.

Week 8 - The governance of the Commons (guest lecturer: Sergio Villamayor)

- Ostrom, E., Burger, J., Field, C.B., Norgaard, R.B. and Policansky, D., 1999. Revisiting the commons: local lessons, global challenges. *Science*, 284(5412): 278-282.
- Agrawal, A. and Chhatre, A., 2006. Explaining success on the commons: Community forest governance in the Indian Himalaya. *World Development*, 34(1): 149-166.

Week 9 - Accumulation by Dispossession (Giacomo D'Alisa)

- Perelman, M. 2007. Primitive Accumulation from Feudalism to Neoliberalism. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 18:2: 44-61
- Demaria F. and D'Alisa G. 2016. Contaminate, contaminate! The cost-shifting strategy of capital. Working Paper RESCAT.

Week 10 - Feminist Political Ecology (Camila Rolando)

readings to be confirmed

Week 11 - The political ecology of care (Giacomo D'Alisa)

- D'Alisa G., Deriu M. and Demaria F, 2014. Care In D'Alisa, G. Demaria, F. and G. Kallis (eds), *Degrowth. A vocabulary for a new era*, Routledge: Earthscan.
- Federici S. and Cox N. 1975. Counter planning from the kitchen. In Federici S.(2012) *Revolution at Point Zero. Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. PM Press
- D'Alisa G, Cattaneo C (2013) Household work and energy consumption: a degrowth perspective. *J Clean Prod* 38:71-79.

Week 12 - Roundtable on ICTA research (coordinated by Giacomo D'Alisa)

- Selected researchers from ICTA will present and discuss with the class their work on degrowth.
- Background reading: Kallis, G., D'Alisa, G. and F. Demaria, 2014. *Degrowth*. In D'Alisa, G. Demaria, F. and G. Kallis (eds), *Degrowth. A vocabulary for a new era*, Routledge-Earthscan.

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
Type: Directed			
Work in large group (classroom)	30	1.2	1, 5, 3, 2, 7
Work in small groups	6	0.24	1, 5, 3, 7
Type: Autonomous			

At home short assignment(s)	15	0.6	7
Readings	25	1	5, 3
Self-study	61	2.44	6, 4, 2

Evaluation

1. Weekly homework

Each week you will have to write a 250 words essay, answering to a question related to the readings for that week. You should hand in the assignment to us at the beginning of each class. The assignment will be graded (1-10) and returned in the next class with comments. If you want to discuss your assignments or our evaluation you can ask for an appointment with Giacomo D'Alisa during his office hours. The final homework grade will be the average of all homework grades (excluding those of the first three classes) and will count as 30% of your final grade. Not delivering a homework without a justified excuse counts as a 0 on the average. There is no reason for this to happen. If you miss one class or if you can't for some reason deliver a homework by the deadline, we can grant you an extension to deliver it later (but it will not be graded or count in your final grade).

2. Exam

This will take place on the 22 of January 2018 and will count for 70% of your final grade. The material under examination will consist of all the articles read and discussed during the semester. The style of the questions will be similar to those handed in the weekly homework, i.e. short questions which you will have 250 words to answer. In addition, there will be a longer (1000 words) essay-like question that will require critical thinking and use of the material of the class.

The exam will be "take-home", and you will be expected to use whatever resources you wish to answer the questions. It will be sent by email to all of you at 9 a.m the day of the exam and should be handed in by email by 6 p.m. the same day. The exams will be graded anonymously.

Evaluation activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Final exam	70%	3	0.12	1, 5, 3, 6, 4, 2
Weekly assignments	30%	10	0.4	1, 6, 4, 7

Bibliography

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