

## Seminar in Cultural and Political Ecology

GEO6931

Tuesdays 3:00 – 6:00

Room 3018

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Political Ecology is a multi-disciplinary approach for understanding and examining the interconnected relationships between political, economic, and social forces and environmental change, occurring across spatial scales. Scholars from a wide array of disciplines (i.e., geography and anthropology) have used political ecology to frame studies of resources and management challenges that include climate change, conservation, environment and development conflicts, food and water insecurity, and land use. Political Ecologists reject the view that environmental degradation can be understood as simple, objective problems amenable to scientific or technological solutions (e.g. *there are just too many people* or *we just need cleaner, more efficient technologies*). Political Ecologists maintain that there is a politics to ecology, and ecology is political. For instances, the distribution, allocation, and extraction of natural resources shape political and social institutions that create challenges and opportunities for meeting the basic needs of society. In circumstances of scarcity, decisions must be made over how resources are to be allocated, who benefits and who does not. Likewise, politics determines which groups in society bear the burden of environmental degradation. The course will examine how political ecology has been used by researchers to frame their research questions, theoretical approaches, fieldwork and analyses to provide insight into explanations and policy alternatives for particular places and cases.

### **REQUIRED READINGS:**

There is no required “text” for this course. Instead, most of the readings will be posted on Canvas in digital form. Other readings will require a search via the internet.

There are several recommended texts that I will be drawing from, and each is easily available via internet search at prices much less expensive than available via bookstore – sometimes free. In Geography, the following are focused texts:

Robbins, Paul, John Hintz, and Sarah A. Moore. *Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Neumann, Roderick P. *Making Political Ecology*. London: Hodder Arnold, 2005.

Paulson, Susan, et al. *Political ecology across spaces, scales, and social groups*. Rutgers University Press, 2004.

Bryant, Raymond L. (1997). *Third World Political Ecology*. Routledge.

Zimmerer, K. S., & Bassett, T. J. (Eds.). (2003). *Political ecology: an integrative approach to geography and environment-development studies*. Guilford Press.

Robbins, P. (2012). *Political ecology: A critical introduction* (Vol. 20). John Wiley & Sons.

Forsyth, T. (2013). *Critical political ecology: The politics of environmental science*. Routledge.

Special Issue - GEOFORUM - Volume 39, Issue 2, Pages 543-1092 (March 2008).  
Conversations Across the Divide. The Time and Place for Political Ecology: The Life-Work of Piers Blaikie. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/00167185/39/2>.

- Joshua Muldavin, The time and place for political ecology: An introduction to the articles honoring the life-work of Piers Blaikie, *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, March 2008, Pages 687-697, ISSN 0016-7185, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.07.003>.
- David Simon, Political ecology and development: Intersections, explorations and challenges arising from the work of Piers Blaikie, *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, March 2008, Pages 698-707, ISSN 0016-7185, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.01.011>.
- Raymond Bryant, Michael K. Goodman, A pioneering reputation: Assessing Piers Blaikie's contributions to political ecology, *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, March 2008, Pages 708-715, ISSN 0016-7185, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.01.012>.
- Dianne E. Rocheleau, Political ecology in the key of policy: From chains of explanation to webs of relation, *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, March 2008, Pages 716-727, ISSN 0016-7185, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.02.005>.
- Roderick P. Neumann, Probing the (in)compatibilities of social theory and policy relevance in Piers Blaikie's political ecology, *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, March 2008, Pages 728-735, ISSN 0016-7185, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2006.12.004>.
- Michael R. Dove, Bambang Hudayana, The view from the volcano: an appreciation of the work of Piers Blaikie, *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, March 2008, Pages 736-746, ISSN 0016-7185, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.01.003>.
- Paul Robbins, Kristina Monroe Bishop, There and back again: Epiphany, disillusionment, and rediscovery in political ecology, *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, March 2008, Pages 747-755, ISSN 0016-7185,

- <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2006.12.013>.
- Tim Forsyth, Political ecology and the epistemology of social justice, *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, March 2008, Pages 756-764, ISSN 0016-7185, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2006.12.005>.
  - Piers Blaikie, Epilogue: Towards a future for political ecology that works, *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, March 2008, Pages 765-772, ISSN 0016-7185, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.07.004>.

### **COURSE FORMAT:**

The course will be based on an interactive learning approach (seminar style), and may incorporate at times lectures, videos, guest speakers, and group activities.

A seminar is a shared intellectual experience in which the instructor and students inform one another. Ideally, the instructor operates as a tutor, charting the course and serving as a navigational aid. The students are the drivers, and the degree to which they are driven determines the success of experience. Preparation is essential. All assigned readings must be read and digested before the class in question. Teams are assigned to lead each class discussion each class, more on that below.

One of the most important lessons of graduate education and essential arts of scholarship is that of "respectful critique" learning to appreciate the strengths and identify the weaknesses of other works.

Every **Monday**, prior to class, students are required to post a **brief comment (1-4 paragraphs)** and **3 type-written discussion questions** derived from that week's readings. These comments should not be summaries of the readings, but instead should reflect your thoughts, criticisms, and/or praise of the ideas discussed in the readings. These should be posted on the canvas discussion board.

In addition, each student will be responsible **to lead discussions** on a specific set of readings on a rotating basis during the semester. The discussion leaders must provide a **typed overview of the main points** in the readings for the class, summarize the main arguments orally, and stimulate discussion. More directions below.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

**Grades will be based on the following items:**

#### **1. Term Paper – 100 points**

The paper should be based on student's own interest, but it must be linked thematically to the course material. Paper topics must be discussed and approved by me in advance.

The following paper components need to be completed and uploaded into the CANVAS DROPBOX by set due date..

- A one to two page typed description of the paper topic: 10 points.
- A typed description with title and outline: 15 points.
- Final term paper: 75 points.

Papers must be typed, double-spaced, 12-point times new roman font, 1 inch margins top/bottom/right/left. **The required length of the paper is text only**, and does not include figures, tables, maps, pictures, references, etc...

**Graduate student paper length: 15- 20 pages**

**2. Term Paper Presentation – 25 points**

**3. Class Participation – 50 points**

- **Weekly Comments and discussion questions – 30 points**

Every Monday, before class, each student must upload to Canvas Discussions, a summary and three typed discussion questions on this week’s readings. The summary (1-4 paragraphs) and questions must reflect your thoughts, concerns, and/or views derived from the readings. These questions must be more than true-false/fact based questions, and should stimulate discussion.

- **Lead Discussion Group – 20 points**

Each student is responsible to participate in leading class discussions on a rotating basis, as organized by the designated sub-group of students. These groups will be pre-selected by the professors, and a group listserv will be created under the Communications section of the Canvas course website to facilitate inter-group discussions. The leadership group will need to interact over the weeks prior to the scheduled seminar in order to ensure equitable distribution of work.

How the materials are written up and orally presented to the class is the responsibility of the group. However, each group must:

- ✓ Prepare a Typed Summary of the readings with at least Five discussion points, to be distributed to the class.  
\*\*On the Monday prior to the designated class, the group must upload their summary, which will be accessible to all class participants via Canvas.
- ✓ Give an Oral Summary of the readings and identify key topics/debates in order to stimulate class discussion that week.

**TOTAL COURSE POINTS = 175**

**Grading Scale (& GPA equivalent):**

<b>A</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>D-</b>	<b>E</b>
100-93 (4.0)	92-90 (3.67)	89-87 (3.33)	86-83 (3.0)	82-80 (2.67)	79-77 (2.33)	76-73 (2.0)	72-70 (1.67)	69-67 (1.33)	63-66 (1.0)	62-60 (0.67)	59-57 (0)

**Note:** A grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx#hgrades>  
<http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

### **CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

- **Attendance & makeup policy:** Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.
- **Grade Disputes:** Should a student wish to dispute any grade received in this class (other than simple addition errors), the dispute must be in writing and be submitted to the instructor within a week of receiving the grade. The dispute should set out very clearly, the grade that the student believes the assignment should have received as well as why he or she believes that he or she should have received such a grade.

### **UF POLICIES:**

**Academic Honesty:** UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resources Center (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>) for information about available resources for students with disabilities.

**Counseling and Mental Health Resources:** Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness

Center (352-392-1575;  
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>).

**Online Course Evaluation Process:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.