

Welcome to **Political Ecology** (Geography 3801, AU21)

This in-person class meets **Tuesday and Thursday 11:10AM - 12:30PM in Ramseyer Hall 009**. It is taught by **Professor Becky Mansfield**. See the course **Carmen** for all information and course materials.

Course description

This course introduces you to core concepts, methods, and applications of Political Ecology, a unique approach to describing human-environment interactions, explaining socio-ecological problems, and offering pathways to environmental and social justice.

What makes Political Ecology “political” is that it insists that environmental and social issues are always intertwined and shaped by power, defined broadly as dynamics of influence and advantage within economic systems and across multiple intersectional axes such as class, gender, race, and nationality.

With its attention to power, intersectional axes of inequality and injustice, and socio-natures, Political Ecology offers alternatives to dominant, mainstream approaches to environment and development. Because mainstream approaches are not fully attentive to multiple forms of power, they consistently misdiagnose causes of problems and propose solutions that are not only misguided, but often exacerbate both ecological degradation and social inequity.

Political Ecology offers robust alternative ways of thinking about environmental change, governance, and both human and planetary health and well-being. These perspectives have only become more relevant and necessary with the recent widespread acknowledgement of anthropogenic global environmental change, often called the Anthropocene, in which the intertwining of humans and nature is inherent.

Course objectives

1. Students understand foundational theories and methods in Political Ecology (PE). You can define key PE concepts and describe how they are used as analytical lenses, define critique as a method, and critically read academic papers in PE.
2. Students understand the history of geographic thought in nature-society relations. You can describe ideas that led to emergence of PE in the 1970s, how PE differs from other approaches, and describe PE as practiced in OSU geography.
3. Students can apply PE theories and methods to analyze nature-society relations. You can identify and evaluate existing approaches in specific real-world issues and cases, including their ethical dimensions, especially as related to questions difference and intersectional justice for humans and non-humans.
4. Students can apply PE theories and methods to analyze an issue of your own choosing, demonstrating ability to ask questions; gather, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information; and communicate your findings.

Contact information

How to contact me: I am available via Carmen or in-person. If you send a message via Carmen, I will try to get back to you within 24 hours on weekdays (but I'm unlikely to get back to you at all over the

weekend). For brief in-person questions, we can talk right before or after class without an appointment. For a longer conversation (in-person or Zoom) make an appointment through Carmen.

When to contact me: *If you have questions* about course material, assignments, or grades or you need extra time on an assignment. *If you are having difficulties* that prevent you from engaging fully in the course, whether those are related to health (including mental health), work, family, or anything else. *If you are excited about course material* and want to learn more, or you want to learn about opportunities beyond the course, e.g., for research, internships, careers, other courses.

Required course materials

There are 2-3 readings (or films) most weeks, divided between primary readings, “current events” readings, and “academic articles” readings. There are assignments associated with each (see below).

I make all course materials available at no cost in Carmen.

Grading

I grade all assignments on a 5-point scale: 5=excellent; 4=good; 3=passable; 0=missing or completely misses the mark. Rarely will I give a grade of 1 or 2. I limit my use of half points.

Final grade scale (lower cut-off): 93=A, 90=A-, 87=B+, 83=B, 80=B-, 77=C+, 73=C, 70=C-, 67=D+, 55=D

Course requirements

<u>Category</u>	<u>Item percent</u>	<u>Category percent</u>
Readings and reflections	~1.5%each	15%
Quizzes	4@5% each	20%
Academic article write-ups	3@5% each	15%
Current events write-ups	4@5% each	20%
Research project		30%
Topic	5%	
Update	5%	
Presentation	10%	
Written	10%	

Readings and reflections: There are between 10 and 15: one per set of readings and/or films. I grade these for completion and the lowest score will be dropped. Short, low-stakes responses improve learning by providing accountability and requiring you to think about course material.

Quizzes: There are four, one per unit of the course. Quizzes evaluate your grasp of key concepts (theories, methods, history of ideas) and their application in specific cases. Quizzes help consolidate the foundational knowledge you need to conduct your own research.

Academic article write-ups: There are three, one per unit of the course except the Introduction. All “Academic” articles will be topical, case-based political ecology articles by geographers, published in the last year. Each write-up is about 500 words a) identifying the topic, argument, and key evidence, b) identifying political ecology theories and methods and how they matter in the analysis, c) identifying the contribution to geographic scholarship, and d) providing evaluation and personal reaction. Academic paper write-ups teach you to read and evaluate academic literature, improve your understanding of PE

theories and methods, improve your understanding of the development of geographic thought, and prepare you to conduct research.

Current events write-ups: There are four, one per unit of the course. These will be news stories from reputable newspapers and magazines, published within a few months of when they are assigned. Each write-up is about 500 words a) succinctly describing the issue at hand, b) identifying how PE is applied and/or suggesting how it *might be* applied and with what effect, and c) providing evaluation and personal reaction. Current events write-ups give you practice applying course material to real-world events and prepare you to conduct research.

Research: You will use PE approaches to describe, analyze, and communicate findings on a contemporary issue (I will provide examples and you may propose your own topic). You may work independently or in groups of up to 3 students. Each person will provide an individual update on the topic (half to one page + bibliography) and ongoing research (at least one page + bibliography) in weeks 10 and 12 respectively. The last week of class is dedicated to individual and group presentations. Each person will also complete an individual written portion, due during finals week. You can choose the format for both the presentation (e.g., video, poster, slideshow and talk, movie, play, artwork...maybe even a fieldtrip?) and the written component (e.g., research essay, letter to your Congresspeople, short story, essay to accompany your artwork or fieldtrip, magazine-style article, personal essay...).

Course schedule (subject to change)

Most assignments are due at 11am on class days. A few are due other days: watch for those!

Unit 1: Introduction to Political Ecology (2 weeks)

Tu Aug 24: Introduction to the course and each other	No assignments
Th Aug 26: Power, nature, difference, and knowledge	Read: Robbins Excerpt 1
Tu Aug 31: Why Political Ecology? History of the field	Read: Robbins Excerpt 2
Th Sept 2: History, cont.	Current events write-up 1
Fri Sept 3 by 5pm	Online Quiz 1

Unit 2: Political ecology of environmental *degradation* (3 weeks)

Tu Sept 7: Colonialism and marginalization	Read: Robbins Excerpt 3
Th Sept 9: Colonialism and marginalization, cont.	No assignments
Tu Sept 14: Development	Read: Adger et al.
Th Sept 16: Development, cont.	Academic article write-up 1
Tu Sept 21: Population	Read: Sasser Ch 2, 4
Th Sept 23: Population, cont.	Current events write-up 2
Fri Sept 24 by 5pm	Due: Online Quiz 2

Unit 3: Political ecology of environmental *governance* (3 weeks)

Tu Sept 28: Protected areas, violence, and control	Read: Robbins Excerpt 4
Th Sept 30: Protected areas, cont.	No assignments
Tu Oct 5: Sustainable Development	Read: Adams Ch 3, 4
Th Oct 7: Sustainable Development, cont.	Academic article write-up 2
Tu Oct 12: Market environmentalism	Read: Dempsey Ch 1, 7
Th Oct 14: NO CLASS, AUTUMN BREAK	
Tu Oct 19: Market environmentalism, cont.	Current events write-up 3
Wed Oct 20 by 5pm	Online Quiz 3

Unit 4: Political ecology of socionatures: chemicals/environmental health (4 weeks)

Th Oct 21: 21st Century Socionatures	Read: Robbins Excerpt 5; Watch: My Louisiana Love
Tu Oct 26: Socionatures, cont.	Research topic
Th Oct 28: Chemical geographies / toxic landscapes	Read: TBD
Tu Nov 2: Toxic landscapes, cont.	Academic article write-up 3
Th Nov 4: Governing through risk	Read: Suryanaraynan and Kleinmen, Intro, Ch 4
Tu Nov 9: Green consumerism	Read: McKendrick Ch 1-3
Th Nov 11: NO CLASS, VETERAN'S DAY	
Fr Nov 12 by 5pm	Research Update
Tu Nov 16: Contesting toxicity	Read: TBD
Th Nov 18: Contesting toxicity, cont.	Current events write-up 4

Unit 5: Research projects (3 weeks)

Tu Nov 23: No in-person class	Online Quiz 4
Th Nov 25: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING	
Tu Nov 30: Catch-up and Conclusions	No assignment
Th Dec 2: Research presentations	Presentation
Tu Dec 7: Research presentations	Presentation
Mon Dec 13 by 5pm	Written research

Inclusion Statements

Statement on Disability Services The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Statement on mental health As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614- 292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Statement on sexual misconduct/ relationship violence Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you can find resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu.

Statement on diversity The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination

against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

Statement on Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.