

## **Contemporary Environmental Political Thought**

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### **Course Instructor**

The course instructor is Alex Latta. Alex holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from York University, and is currently a Visiting Scholar in the Department of Geography at SFU. Alex's research interests include ecological citizenship, environmental justice, urban environmental politics, eco-criticism, and political theory.

### **Purpose of the Course**

The course offers a brief survey of key perspectives in environmental thought, before moving into an exploration of some of the major contemporary currents in the field. While often grounded in concrete instances of political practice, the course materials demand close engagement with theoretical questions. The interdisciplinary mix of readings explores and invites the reconsideration of common assumptions about the actors, spaces, knowledges and power relations underlying environmental politics. Drawing upon these readings, the lectures and class discussions will investigate different ways of thinking about nature, social movements, subjectivity, science, justice, citizenship, and democracy. Students will be expected to (a) cultivate critical perspectives from which to make their own judgements about the possibilities and limits inherent in different kinds of ecological thought, and (b) demonstrate a capacity to employ theory in the critical analysis of concrete instances of environmental politics.

### **Course Format**

Approximately 70% of the course will be run as a lecture. The other 30% will be devoted to class and group discussion. Evaluation will be based primarily on the written presentation of analysis and argument, in the following four contexts:

1. *Position Paper Assignments* (12.5% of course grade each—total 25%)

At two different times during the semester, students will be required to submit a position paper, which engages in a comparative critical analysis of two course readings. See the Position Paper Assignment (page 4-5) for more details.

2. *Essay Proposal* (10% of course grade)

Students must submit an essay proposal, including an annotated bibliography of 5-7 sources. See the essay assignment (page 5+) for more details.

3. *Essay* (25% of course grade)

A 12-15 page essay will be due toward the end of the course. See the essay assignment (page 5+) for more details.

4. *Final Exam* (30% of course grade)

The final exam will test (a) students' capacity to explain and compare some of the key ideas covered in the course, and (b) students' ability to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the course in an original analysis of an instance of environmental politics not previously covered in the course.

5. *Participation* (10% of course grade)

Students will be expected to actively participate in the class and group discussions, and will be evaluated according to the frequency and quality of their contributions.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

All instances of academic dishonesty will be dealt with according to the University's rules and regulations. You should read these rules, and if you have questions about acceptable citation methods you should ask me. Please take this issue seriously, since I will certainly do so if I discover plagiarism in your work. You can view SFUs policies regarding this matter at:  
<<http://students.sfu.ca/calendar/General%20Regs.html>>

## **Schedule of Topics and Readings**

### **Section A *Introduction to Environmental Politics***

Gottlieb, Robert (2001). *Environmentalism Unbound*. Cambridge & London: MIT Press. Chapter 1: Environmentalism Bounded: Discourse and Action, 3-45.

Adkin, Laurie E. (2000). Democracy, Ecology, Political Economy: Reflections on Starting Points. In Fred P. Gale and R. Michael M'Gonigle (eds.), *Nature, Production, Power*. Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, pp. 59-81.

### **Section B *Perspectives on Environmental Politics***

#### **Part 1: "Liberal" Ecologies**

De Geus, Marius (2001). Sustainability, Liberal Democracy, Liberalism. In John Barry and Marcel Wissenburg (eds.), *Sustaining Liberal Democracy: Ecological Challenges and Opportunities*. Houndmills & New York: Palgrave, pp. 19-36.

Zimmerman, Michael E. (2000). A Strategic Direction for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Environmentalists: Free Market Environmentalism. *Strategies*, 13(1), pp. 89-110.

#### **Part 2: "Radical" Ecologies**

Plumwood, Val (1995). Has Democracy Failed Ecology? An Ecofeminist Perspective. *Environmental Politics*, 4(4), pp. 134-168.

Benton, Ted (2000). An Ecological Historical Materialism. In Fred P. Gale and R. Michael M'Gonigle (eds.), *Nature, Production, Power*. Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, pp. 83-104.

Clark, John (1998). A Social Ecology. In Michael E. Zimmerman (ed.), *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ : Pearson/Prentice Hall, pp. 416-440.

#### **Part 3: "Post-Structuralist" Ecologies**

Latour, Bruno (2004). *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter One: Why Political Ecology Has to Let Go of Nature, pp. 9-52.

Harraway, Donna J. (1997). *Modest Witness@Second Millennium. FemaleMan<sup>®</sup>\_Meets\_OncoMouse<sup>™</sup>: Feminism and Technoscience*. New York & London: Routledge. Chapter 2: FemaleMan<sup>®</sup>\_Meets\_OncoMouse<sup>™</sup>: Mice into Wormholes: A Technoscience Fugue in Two Parts, pp. 49-118.

## Section C *Contemporary Currents in Eco-political Theory*

### **Part 1: Gender, Race, Sexuality**

Barndt, Deborah (1999). Whose "Choice"? "Flexible" Women Workers in the Tomato Food Chain. In Deborah Barndt (ed.), *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain*. Toronto: Second Story Press, pp. 61-80.

Anderson, Kay (2001). The Nature of 'Race'. In Noel Castree and Bruce Braun (eds.), *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 64-83.

Gaard, Greta (2004). Toward a Queer Ecofeminism. In Rachel Stein (ed.), *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp. 21-44.

### **Part 2: Environment and Indigenous Peoples**

LaDuke, Winona (1999). *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press. Chapter 6: White Earth: A Life Way in the Forest, pp. 113-134.

Borrows, John (2002). *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Chapter 2: Living Between Water and Rocks: The Environment, First Nations, and Democracy, pp. 29-55.

Braun, Bruce (2002). *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press. Chapter 3: "Saving Clayoquot": Wilderness and the Politics of Indigeneity, 66-108.

### **Part 3: Ecological Modernization**

Mol, Arthur P. J. (2000). The Environmental Movement in an Era of Ecological Modernization. *Geoforum*, 31(1), pp. 45-56.

Davidson, Debra J. and MacKendrick, Norah A. (2004). All Dressed Up with Nowhere to Go: The Discourse of Ecological Modernization in Alberta, Canada. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 41(1), pp. 47-65.

### **Part 4: Environmental Justice**

Faber, Daniel R. and McCarthy, Deborah (2003). Neoliberalism, Globalization, and the Struggle for Ecological Democracy. In Julian Agyeman, Robert D. Bullard and Bob Evans (eds.), *Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World*. London: Earthscan, pp. 38-63.

Schlosberg, David (2004). Reconceiving Environmental Justice: Global Movements and Political Theories. *Environmental Politics*, 13(3), pp. 517-540.

### **Part 5: Ecological Citizenship**

Valencia Sáiz, Angel (2005). Globalisation, Cosmopolitanism, and Ecological Citizenship. *Environmental Politics*, 14(2), pp. 163-178.

Kurtz, Hilda E. (2005). Alternative Visions for Citizenship Practice in an Environmental Justice Dispute. *Space and Polity*, 9(1), pp. 77-91.

## Section D Conclusion: Environmentalism, Democracy, and Politics

Torgerson, Douglas (2000). Farewell to the Green Movement? Political Action and the Green Public Sphere. *Environmental Politics*, 9(4), pp. 1-19.

Gottlieb, Robert (2001). *Environmentalism Unbound*. Cambridge & London: MIT Press. Chapter 7: Pathways to Change: A Conclusion, pp. 273-287.

### Position Paper Assignment

**1) Assignment:** Write a critical comparative analysis of two readings, at least one of which is a reading from the course kit. If you choose to bring the second of the two readings from outside the course kit, the outside reading must first be approved by the course instructor.

**2) Purpose:** The purpose of the position paper is to encourage students to engage directly with selected course readings, offering them opportunities to more deeply explore issues and ideas that they find interesting. It also gives the instructor a chance to gauge the students' analytical skills and give constructive feedback. Students are encouraged to express their own reasoned opinions about the articles they examine—this is, after all, a “position paper.” There is no strict formula for doing critical comparative analysis, though certain components should be present. These components include the following (not necessarily in order):

- An explanation of the main arguments found in each article, including consideration of both theoretical and empirical (when present) aspects.
- An examination of the ways in which the two different analyses may be considered opposing and/or complimentary. Even papers on very different topics can be compared and contrasted, though you may have to dig deeper or ask less obvious questions if the two pieces do not share obvious common ground. I will say more in class about how to choose fruitful pairings of readings.
- An argument as to why each article is interesting (or not), along with an effort to relate the specific issues of the reading to the course material more generally.
- A judgement about the relevance/usefulness/validity of each author's analysis and conclusions.
- A suggestion about further questions with which the articles leave us.

**3) Format:** Please observe the following instructions closely:

- Each position paper must be *3-5 pages in length* (1000-1500 words), *double spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font, with standard margins (one inch top and bottom; 1.25 inches left and right—with page numbers inside these margins)*. Position papers will be returned to students for revision (with attendant late penalty) if they are more than ½ page over the limit, use a different size or style of font (such as to alter length), or do not have appropriate line spacing and margins. Papers that are shorter than three pages will be graded, but likely unfavorably.
- *Correct citation methods must be used, so as to avoid charges of academic dishonesty.* All direct quotes must be registered as such and correctly referenced. All paraphrases of ideas that are not your own must be appropriately acknowledged and referenced as well. No bibliography is required, unless one of the articles comes from outside the course kit or (in exceptional circumstances) an additional outside source is used.

➤ Each position paper should have a cover page, with your name, student number, the course number, the instructor's name, and an indication of the articles reviewed in the paper. *Do not* put your name in the header or footer of the rest of the document.

➤ Do not submit papers in folders, binders, plastic covers, or other devices. Just use a staple.

**4) Audience:** The course instructor is the obvious audience for the assignment. That said, students are encouraged to write as if to a broader academic audience, assuming that the reader has not read the articles in question or attended the course.

**5) Resources:** Your only resources should be the articles that are the topic of the position paper. In rare circumstances it may be appropriate to cite an outside authority or opinion, but generally you should need no other supporting documentation.

**6) Evaluation:** your papers will be evaluated according to standard criteria for academic writing, such as clear introduction and conclusion, solid paragraph and sentence structure, effective presentation and substantiation of arguments, and coherent integration of the parts. I also expect student writing to employ good diction, spelling, and grammar. In addition, I will be looking for the successful inclusion of the various components outlined in the "purpose" section of this assignment. In particular, this should include (a) a sophisticated analysis and comparison (i.e., an appropriately complex and nuanced treatment of the texts, rather than merely a checklist of superficial similarities and differences); and (b) the exercise of academic judgement, whereby students "position" themselves relative to the articles being reviewed, presenting reasoned opinions as to the value of each article's contribution to relevant debates.

**7) Deadlines:** The position papers must be handed in at the beginning of class (*no more than ten minutes into class*) on or before the day on which one or both of the two readings considered therein is covered in lecture. That is, students *must* analyze at least one of the readings without the benefit of having first heard my treatment of it in class. If you want to hand in the paper before *both* articles are covered in lecture, you are encouraged to do so. All students must submit their first position paper on or before (January 30th), and their second on or before (February 27th). Extensions to the submission deadlines may be granted only with a doctor's note. **Please note, however, that due to the nature of the assignment requirements, NO paper may be submitted after BOTH the articles it compares have been covered in lecture.**

## Essay Assignment

**1) Assignment :** Write a critical analysis of either a concrete instance of environmental politics, or a particular theoretical perspective in environmental politics. You are encouraged to pursue a topic that interests you. Nevertheless, the essay must show a clear relationship with concepts covered in the course, and *at least* two course readings must be *substantively* integrated in the essay. We will discuss possible topics in the first week of the course.

**2) Purpose:** The purpose of the essay is to encourage students to engage directly with contemporary theoretical issues in environmental politics. This offers an opportunity for students to more deeply explore questions and ideas that they find interesting and for the instructor to gauge students' abilities to employ ideas from the course and develop original critical analyses. In the essay you should express your own reasoned opinions about the issues or theories you examine.

**3) Components:** The essay will be written and graded in two phases, as follows:

**Phase I: *The Proposal* (Due March 6th)**

The proposal must include the following components:

- A brief title indicating the proposed essay topic
- A 300-400 word explanation of the proposed essay, in which you tell me why the topic is interesting, how it relates to the course, which course readings you will draw upon, and what you intend to say about the topic (a preliminary thesis statement).
- An annotated bibliography of 5-7 sources *beyond the course readings* that you will use for the paper. Each bibliographic entry should be no more than 150 words and should explain briefly what the source is about and how it is useful to your proposed analysis. The sources you choose for this annotated bibliography can be of several kinds. You are required to include *at least three* that are academic books or articles from academic journals. Other sources may include “artifacts” of various kinds, such as media articles (one long article or five news length articles count as one source), government or private sector documents, web pages, literature from NGOs or other private actors etc.

*I will make extensive comments on the proposal, in order to guide students toward a more fruitful approach to their papers.*

**Phase II: *The Essay* (Due April 3rd)**

The essay, which should be *no less than 12 pages and no more than 15 pages*, not including bibliography (3500-4500 words, not including bibliography), should comprise the following components:

- A title page, with the title of the essay (be creative please), your name and student number, the date submitted, the course number and the instructor’s name.
- The essay itself on numbered pages, with *12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, with standard margins (one inch top and bottom; 1.25 inches left and right—with page numbers inside these margins)*.
- Citations, which may be either of the parenthetical style or an *endnote* style (no footnotes, please, since they make it difficult to calculate overall length). I do not mind which style you use, so long as you are consistent and provide the appropriate information (i.e. at least the author’s name and page number in the case of the parenthetical style). If you are unsure about the way in which information should be presented, use an academic book or journal as a model, or consult a style guide. All direct quotes must be registered as such and correctly referenced. All paraphrases of ideas that are not your own must be appropriately acknowledged and referenced as well. Citations *do not* count toward the page limit for the essay.
- A bibliography of the sources cited in the essay. Please include all sources cited, and do not include any sources not cited.
- Papers which do not follow these style guidelines will be assigned a 5% penalty. I will not read more than one page over the assigned page limit, so submitting a longer paper will be to your detriment.

*I will make fewer comments on the final papers, since I expect that students will be less likely to read such comments.*

**4) Audience:** The course instructor is the obvious audience for this analysis. Nevertheless, you should write as if to a broader audience. This audience should be considered to be generally "aware" of environmental politics, but do not assume familiarity with specific terminology, concepts etc. that have been covered in the course. You might imagine that you will deliver the paper at a conference on environmental politics, where the audience will have a good background in the subject but may not know the specific area of research you seek to address. Taking this kind of group as your audience will encourage you to be more aware of how you use concepts and terms, and will ensure that *you* understand the concepts and terms you employ (since you will have to explain them).

**5) Resources:** As noted in the assignment, you must use *at least* two articles from the course readings in your essay. I expect you to engage substantively with these readings in the development of your arguments. There are a couple different ways you could employ these course readings. First, you could take them as points of departure, using them to frame a particular problem or delineate the lines of debate around a particular theoretical approach. Second, you could use these course readings in a more incidental way, drawing on them in order to support one of the central arguments that you make in your essay. In addition to these course readings, you should draw upon a selection of other sources, not necessarily limited to those indicated in your Phase I assignment. The number of sources you use will depend on the kind of essay you write. A more theoretical essay may engage more closely with a smaller literature, while a more empirical essay may draw on a larger array of sources.

**6) Evaluation:** Your papers will be evaluated according to standard criteria of academic writing: clear introduction and conclusion, solid paragraph and sentence structure, effective presentation and substantiation of arguments, coherent integration of the parts, successful use of non-textual information (where appropriate), good diction, spelling and grammar. In addition, I will be looking for the following:

- Successful engagement with the ideas of other observers/analysts of the topic you have chosen.
- A successful use of theoretical argument. While I am happy to allow students to engage in more empirical research, in order to accommodate their personal strengths/interests, I do not wish to receive papers that are entirely empirical, with little theoretical reflection on the meaning of cases or events.
- Evidence of critical judgement, in the context of a clearly presented and well defended thesis.
- A successful academic voice, which is able to authoritatively (or otherwise) make a claim on my attention as a reader.

**7) Deadlines and Late Submissions:** The *essay proposal* and *final essay* are due **at the beginning of class** on the due dates indicated. All assignments submitted after ten minutes into the class will receive a 5% late penalty. Assignments submitted on the day following the due date will also receive a 5% late penalty. *So don't bother missing class to finish your essay!* Every additional day of lateness will result in an additional 5% late penalty (weekends excepted). In *exceptionally rare* circumstances I may entertain requests for minor extensions, but only if these requests are discussed with me *at least 24 hours in advance of the class in which the assignment is due*. Crashed computers or lost research materials will not be deemed an acceptable reason for an extension, *so back up your files and keep your notes under lock and key.*