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Anth/Envir 459, Spring 2003

[Course E-Post](#)

Culture, Ecology, Politics

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Syllabus

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Course Description

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Critical studies of race, class, and gender differences in environmental politics. The political-economic dimensions of ecological change.

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Contemporary environmental movements including the varieties of bioregionalism, deep ecology, ecofeminism, ecosocialism, environmental justice, and social ecology.

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Grading Requirements

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1. **Critical review essay (due April 29).** Each student will prepare 1 book review essay on a selected text from course readings or a related work. Students will be expected to work in pairs to evaluate and offer critiques of earlier drafts of the essay. Please consult Instructional Handout #1 (20 points).
2. **Peer evaluation (due April 22).** All students reciprocate with evaluations for each of the two essays written by their partner in the pair. Note that due dates for peer evaluations run a week before the due date for the critical review essays. Please consult Instructional Handout #1 (10 points).
3. **Annotated bibliography (due May 29).** Each student will prepare an extensive annotated bibliography on a topic in political ecology. An introductory overview, or interpretive essay, 7 to 10 pages in length, will accompany the annotations and summarize your take on the state of the literature in your chosen subfield. Please consult Instructional Handout #2 for details (50 points).
4. **Presentation (short lectures scheduled for May 29, June 3, and June 5).** Each student will make an oral PowerPoint presentation on the results of the research for the annotated bibliography. Please consult Instructional Handout #3 for details (20 points).
5. **Participation in class and email discussions.** Each student should submit at least ten questions or comments (related to course discussions, lectures, and readings) to the Epost list-server at the course website. This “virtual” community is an important forum for the exchange of ideas in our classroom; it also serves as a network for the

sharing of information including announcements of campus activities, resources, and community events. Class participation counts for extra grade points and is used in assigning the final course grade (bonus points).

Course Texts

1. Agyeman, J., R. D. Bullard, and B. Evans. 2003. *Just sustainabilities: Development in an unequal world*. London: Earthscan.
2. Biehl, J. 1998. *The politics of social ecology: Libertarian municipalism*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
3. Burger, J., E. Ostrum, R. B. Norgaard, D. Policansky, and B. D. Goldstein. 2001. *Protecting the commons: A framework for resource management in the Americas*. Washington D.C.: Island Press.
4. Fischer, F. 2000. *Citizens, experts, and the environment: The politics of local knowledge*. Durham: Duke University.
5. Goldman, M. 1999. *Privatizing nature: Political struggles for the global commons*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University.
6. Gottlieb, R. 2003. *Environmentalism unbound: Exploring new pathways for change*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
7. Peña, D. G. 1998. *Chicano culture, ecology, politics: Subversive kin*. Tucson: University of Arizona.

Supplemental readings will be available on-line or will be distributed in class.

Course Overview

Political ecology is an interdisciplinary field of research that integrates the methods and materials of anthropology, economics, geography, history, political theory, and sociology. Some scholars define the field to the integrated study of the interrelations of states, markets, and civil societies as forces articulating relations of power in the making of a “politicized environment” (Bryant and Bailey 1997). Others emphasize the study of the political process in environmental law and regulation. Adherents of this approach seek to understand the interests, characteristics, and strategies of differently positioned actors holding a stake in the definition and resolution of environmental problems. The study of discursive politics as a force shaping, directing, and

constraining these conflicted interrelations is thus a primary concern of many political ecologists.

My approach to political ecology is framed by my position as an environmental anthropologist. Thus, for me political ecology is a framework for the study of the intersections of culture, power, and difference in ecological politics. While this field has a strong third-world focus, political ecological perspectives are also useful in the context of the study of the history and politics of American and global environmentalism.

Broadly, this course focuses on four select problem sets or themes of salient concern to researchers in contemporary political ecology. These include research literatures on:

1. the history of environmentalism from conservationist to environmental justice paradigms;
2. common property resources, place-based knowledge, and environmental management;
3. sustainable development, globalization, and ecological social movements; and
4. science, knowledge, and democracy in the politics of environmental risk.

This is not an exhaustive set of problems for a wide-ranging field, but these four areas embody some of the most controversial debates and conflicts in the theory and practice of ecological politics. Our approach will emphasize the role of the study and conceptualization of culture in these four areas of conflict and discourse.

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