Political Ecology

**Instructor:** Prof. Tom Bassett

**Office Hours:** Thursday: 1-3:00 or by appt (bassett@uiuc.edu), 125 Davenport Hall.

**Organization:** Political ecology integrates social and biophysical processes in the study of environmental problems at multiple scales. This seminar explores the conceptual origins of political ecology, its problem areas and research gaps, and identifies influential bodies of research and promising research directions. Readings will focus on the emergence of political ecology as a sub-field of Geography, the different emphases of this approach within Geography, and its cross-fertilization with similar but distinctive approaches in History, Sociology, and related fields. Emphasis is placed on the contributions of political ecological research to explaining nature-society relations.

**Course Requirements**

Grades will be based on weekly 2-page written commentaries on assigned readings (60%) and a 15-20 page research paper (40%).

a) Commentaries should focus on conceptual, theoretical, or methodological aspects of the readings scheduled for that week. They are due on Tuesday (no later than 5:00) and should be sent via e-mail to each member of the class. These commentaries will serve as a basis of discussion of our meetings.

b) Term papers can take a variety of forms: a chapter in a M.A. thesis, a journal article, or a research paper. Whatever the project, its core should reflect an engagement with the readings and discussions of this course. Be sure to discuss your project with me early in the semester. Term papers are due in class on May 1.

**Course Texts**


**Course Themes and Readings**

What is Political Ecology?
   **Readings:** Robbins, Chap. 1-4; Zimmer and Bassett, Chap 1.

Cultural & Political Ecology in Geography
   **Readings:** Peet and Watts, Chap. 1


Conceptual and Methodological Challenges
Readings: Robbins, Chaps. 2-3;


Ecological Analysis and Theory in Resource Management
Readings: Zimmer and Bassett, Chaps 6-8; Robbins Chap. 7

Protected Areas and Conservation
Readings: Zimmer and Bassett, Chaps 2-3; Robbins. Cap. 8

Political Ecology and the Politics of Environmental Science I
Readings: Forsyth, Chaps 1-4

Political Ecology and the Politics of Environmental Science II
Readings: Forsyth, Chaps 5-7

Urban and Industrial Environments
Readings: Zimmer and Bassett, Chaps 4-5

Geospatial Technologies and Knowledges
Readings: Zimmer and Bassett, Chaps 9-10

North-South Environmental Histories
Readings: Zimmer and Bassett, Chaps 11-13

Democratizing Environmental Explanations
Readings: Forsyth, Chaps 8-10

Environmental Discourses and Practices
Readings: Peet and Watts, Chaps 4-6

Environmental Institutions and Governance
Readings: Peet and Watts, Chaps 7-9

Environmental Conflict and Struggle
Readings: Peet and Watts, Chaps 10-12, Robbins, Chap. 9.

Environmental Social Movements
Readings: Peet and Watts, Chaps 13-15, Robbins, Chap. 10

Future Directions in Political Ecology
Readings: Zimmer and Bassett, Chap 14; Robbins, Chap. 11
Recommended Readings

Texts


What is Political Ecology?


Cultural & Political Ecology in Geography


Conceptual and Methodological Challenges


domain. Political Geography, 19, 673-705.


Ecological Analysis and Theory in Resource Management

Geography, 25(1), 79-85.

M. Turner (1993) ”Overstocking the range: A critical analysis of the environmental science of

K. Zimmerer (1994) ”Human geography and the 'new ecology:' the prospect and promise of

L. Heasley & J. Delehanty (1996) ”The politics of manure: Resource tenure and the agropastoral

W. Meyer and B. Turner (1992) ”Human population growth and global land-use/cover change,”

Protected Areas and Conservation

and Natural Resources 9:159-175.

R. Schroeder (1999) ”Geographies of environmental intervention in Africa,” Progress in Human
Geography 23(3): 359-378.

K. Zimmerer (2000) ”The reworking of conservation geographies: Nonequilibrium landscapes

J. Fischer (2000) ”Creating common spaces: Natural resource management in Fuuta Jalon,

S. Stevens (1997a) ”The legacy of Yellowstone,” in S. Stevens (ed) Conservation through

S. Stevens (1997b) ”New alliances for conservation,” in S. Stevens (ed) Conservation through

B. Nietschmann (1997) ”Protecting indigenous coral reefs and sea territories, Miskito Coast,
RAAN, Nicaragua,” in S. Stevens (ed) Conservation through survival: indigenous peoples and

York: Columbia University Press.

Political Ecology and the Politics of Environmental Science

D. Demeritt (1996) ”Social theory and the reconstruction of science in geography” Transactions of
the Institute of British Geographers 21 (3) 484-503.


**Urban and Industrial Environments**


**Geospatial Technologies and Knowledges**


**North-South Environmental Histories**


**Environmental Discourses and Practices**


**Environmental Institutions and Governance**


**Environmental Conflict and Struggle**


