

GEOG 629 Cultural and Political Ecology

Course Syllabus – Fall 2021

Instructor:	Kathleen O'Reilly, Ph.D.
Meetings:	MW 4:10-5:25 203 Eller Building
Office Hours:	Through Calendly, M-F 9am-5pm E-mail koreilly@tamu.edu

Principle course texts:

Robbins, Paul. 2012. *Political Ecology: a critical introduction*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell. (any edition)
Carney, J. *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*. Harvard University Press.
Collard, R.C., 2020. *Animal Traffic: Lively Capital in the Global Exotic Pet Trade*. Duke University Press.

Course description

This course is an exploration of ideas and themes within geography called 'cultural ecology' and later, 'political ecology.' These terms themselves are contentious, but for purposes of introduction we can define political ecology as the study of unequal control and access of natural resources. Cultural ecology focuses on human-environment interactions, with particular attention to the social meanings of resources in the context of sustainable development and conservation processes. During this course, we will explore many theoretical and methodological approaches to political ecology as geographers have sought to broaden the impact of the field. We also look to other disciplines whose work has influenced political ecology in geography.

The course material covers a range of topics in order to give students breadth of knowledge about the foundations of current debates and potential future directions. The syllabus represents only a fraction of significant work in cultural and political ecology; further reading is imperative for serious students.

One important thread throughout this course will be attention to how debates have grown, changed, and been discarded by human-environment geographers of many stripes. This course aims to guide students through critical debates surrounding the answers to these questions theoretically, methodologically, and empirically. It traverses the history of ideas about relationships between humans, nature, political economy, and environmental change, while emphasizing the important geographic contributions to this body of thought. We will engage the work of important thinkers outside geography, whose work has had a profound influence on the study of political ecology, e.g., Karl Marx.

We begin by immersing ourselves in definitions of cultural ecology and discussions of the significance of 'human ecology' to geography, and survey the field of political ecology through Robbins *Political Ecology: a critical introduction*. We then trace the intellectual history of political ecology through nature-society theory, discourse analysis, feminist approaches, market environmentalism, poststructuralism, neoliberalism, and First World and Urbanpolitical ecologies. Included throughout are current and classical pieces linking theory and empirical data, as well as a variety of methodological approaches.

Course Format

This course will be conducted at an advanced level. This means that students are expected to come to class sessions prepared to discuss the readings in depth. I will be ready at any time to answer questions and/or define terms that are troubling anyone about the readings, their themes or their implications.

Course web site

We will set up a folder on Google Drive, or Canvas, or Dropbox for students to access all readings, and post their slidedecks.

Course Requirements and Assessment

Readings

Because the discussion of readings forms the core of the course, assignments must be read before coming to class. For each article, be able to identify:

1. Authors' primary objective and central arguments
2. Authors' theoretical, methodological or analytical assumptions
3. Papers' contribution to knowledge
4. Connections between week's paper and other papers we have read
5. 1-2 topics for discussion, including basic questions of understanding of the authors' meanings, approach or findings

Be prepared to do additional reading to help you make sense of the articles under consideration

Participation

All students are expected to be in class every day, prepared to participate and discuss. You will be graded on participation. Participation involves more than simply showing up. It entails contributing to discussion with thoughtful comments and questions about the material. You will be evaluated on your contributions to each class. For further information on the Texas A&M University attendance policy refer to <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm>

Your participation includes **creating and presenting a brief slidedeck** of not more than 5 slides addressing items 1-5 above. Bring this slidedeck to class on your laptop and we'll find the best way to make it visible to the entire class. Each student will create one slidedeck per week. That means that not all articles will have slidedecks to guide discussion.

You are not assessed on what you say in class—please feel free in this regard. You may be brilliant or less-than-brilliant on any given day, but that is not the point. **The point of participation is 1) to come-as-you-are; 2) to learn about political ecology, academic inquiry, and research production; 3) to help your classmates learn by taking risks yourself when you contribute to discussion.**

Book Review

All students will write a book review over *Animal Traffic*. Instructions on how to write a book review will be given in class.

Research Paper

A 20-25 page research paper is required for students. The topic will be selected by you, and you will discuss it with me in advance. The topic must be clearly related to the course, but I encourage you to use the opportunity to develop your own research interests. Write this paper as you would the preliminary sections of a publishable paper, with an introduction to the problem, thorough literature review and critical discussion of theory. Use Chicago Style for your bibliography. (This is the *Annals of the AAG* format. Aim high!) The following website offers some basic guidance on writing a literature review should you need assistance: <http://library.ucsc.edu/ref/howto/literaturereview.html>. I am also available to help.

Grading

Final Paper	100pts
Book review	50pts
Participation	150pts
Total	300pts

The grade breakdown is as follows:

A 90-100	225
B 80-89	200
C 70-79	175
D 60-69	150
F 59 and below	below 150 pts

Classroom Policies

Graduate level discussion involves taking risks with ideas, questions, and insights. For this reason it is imperative that we all behave respectfully towards others. TAMU is committed to providing an educational and work climate that is conducive to the personal and professional development of each individual. See <http://student-rules.tamu.edu>

University Policies

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility.

Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to Student Rule 7 in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to Student Rule 7 in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor” (Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1).

“The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” (Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See Student Rule 24.)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

“Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case” (Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at <https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>.

NOTE: Faculty associated with the main campus in College Station should use this Academic Integrity Statement and Policy. Faculty not on the main campus should use the appropriate language and location at their site.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit <https://disability.tamu.edu>. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

NOTE: Faculty associated with the main campus in College Station should use this Americans with Disabilities Act Policy statement. Faculty not on the main campus should use the appropriate language and location at their site.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see University Rule 08.01.01.M1):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University’s goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University’s Title IX webpage.

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student’s academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from

4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24- hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800- 273-8255) or at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.

COVID-19

- If you have not already done so, please be sure to take your COVID test prior to September 10, 2021. Information about testing locations can be found at tx.ag/GetTested.
- As a reminder, vaccines are readily available on campus through [Student Health Services](#) or through your health care provider and pharmacies in the community. Texas A&M encourages you to take advantage of these opportunities and become vaccinated. If you are vaccinated and can provide proof, you become eligible for a random drawing that will provide the winners with one of a number of prizes. More details will follow regarding drawing rules. For more information on the incentive program, please see this [fall 2021 update](#).
- Close contact for COVID-19 continues to be defined as being within 6 feet of an infected individual for a cumulative 15 minutes, with or without a mask, within a 24-hour period.
- If a student has been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, they must use the [COVID-19 report form](#).
- Procedures for those exposed to infected individual or ill: www.tamu.edu/coronavirus/sick-campus-members/exposed.html)
- Students requesting an excused absence must provide documentation consistent with [Student Rule 7](#). Students may use positive test notifications generated by the COVID-19 report form for documentation purposes. Students must understand that falsification of these reports constitutes a violation of [Student Rule 24.4.1](#) and the Aggie Honor Code.
- Students requesting an excused absence must provide appropriate documentation per [Student Rule 7](#) and will be allowed to recover from the illness before making up missed work.
- Students quarantining for exposure should not attend in-person classes but are expected to keep up with course work in collaboration with the instructor of record.

Copyrights

All course materials are copyrighted. These materials include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless permission is expressly granted. Taping and reproducing of course material for other than personal use will be regarded as copyright infringement and referred to University lawyers for action. Before recording, ask me first. Professional note-takers must be enrolled in this course (university policy) and receive my permission prior to any commercial transaction involving course notes (state law).

WEEK	DATE	THEMES	Monday	Wednesday
1	8/30/21	Introduction	No Class, Read Robbins	No Class, Read Robbins
2	9/6/21	Beginnings	Robbins Denevan, William. 1983. Adaptation, variation, and cultural geography. <i>Professional Geographer</i> . 35:399-407	Robbins Watts, M. 1983. "On the poverty of theory: natural hazards research in context". In <i>Interpretations of calamity</i> , ed. K Hewitt, pp. 231- 262. Boston: Allen and Unwin.
3	13-Sep	Early Classics	Blaikie, P. and H. Brookfield. 1987. <i>Land Degradation and Society</i> . Chapters 1, 4, and 10A. Bassett, T.J. 1988. "The Political Ecology of Peasant-Herder Conflicts in the Northern Ivory Coast." <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> . 78(3): 453-472. Rocheleau, D. and L Ross. 1995. "Trees as tools, trees as text: Struggles over resources in Zambrana-Chacuey, Dominican Republic". <i>Antipode</i> 27: 407-428.	Cronon, W. 1996. <i>Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature</i> . Norton. Chapter "The Trouble with Wilderness" Demeritt, D. 2002. What is the 'social construction of nature'? A typology and sympathetic critique. <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 26:767- 790. Forsyth, T. (2003). <i>Critical Political Ecology: The Politics of Environmental Science</i> . London, Routledge. pp. 1-22
4	20-Sep	Neoliberalism & Ecosystem Services	McCarthy, J. and Prudham, S. 2004. Neoliberal nature and the nature of neoliberalism. <i>Geoforum</i> . 35:275-283. Castree, N. (2008). Neoliberalising nature: The logics of deregulation and reregulation. <i>Environment and Planning A</i> , 40(1), 131–152. https://doi.org/10.1068/a3999 Prudham, S. 2004. Poisoning the well: neoliberalism and the contamination of municipal water in Walkerton, Ontario. <i>Geoforum</i> . 35:343-359.	McAfee, K. (1999). "Selling Nature to Save it? Biodiversity and the Green Developmentalism." <i>Environment and Planning D: Society and Space</i> 17(2): 133-154. Shapiro-Garza, E. (2013). Contesting the market-based nature of Mexico's national payments for ecosystem services programs: Four sites of articulation and hybridization. <i>Geoforum</i> . 26, 5-15 Dempsey, J. and D.C. Suarez. 2016. Arrested Development? The Promises and Paradoxes of "Selling Nature to Save It." <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> . 106(3): 653-671

5	27-Sep	Anthropocene	Ribot, J. (2014). Cause and response: vulnerability and climate in the Anthropocene. <i>Journal of Peasant Studies</i> . https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2014.894911	Davis, H., & Todd, Z. (2017). On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene. <i>ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies</i> , 16(4), 761–780. Retrieved from https://www.acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1539
			Haraway, D. (2015). Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin. <i>Environmental Humanities</i> , 6, 159–165.	Davis, J., Moulton, A. A., Van Sant, L., & Williams, B. (2019). Anthropocene, Capitalocene, ... Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises. <i>Geography Compass</i> , 13(5), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12438
			intentionally blank	Fagan, M. (2019). On the dangers of an Anthropocene epoch: Geological time, political time and post-human politics. <i>Political Geography</i> , 70, 55–63. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.01.008
6	4-Oct	Feminist PE	O'Reilly, K. 2006. "'Traditional' women, 'modern' water: Linking gender and commodification in Rajasthan, India." <i>Geoforum</i> , 37:958-972.	Schroeder, R. A. (1993). Shady practice: gender and the political ecology of resource stabilization in Gambian garden/orchards. <i>Economic Geography</i> . https://doi.org/10.2307/143594
			Rocheleau, D., Thomas-Slayter, B., & Wangari, E. (1996). <i>Feminist Political Ecology: Global Issues and Local Experiences</i> . London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.2307/3060380	Elmhirst, R. (2011). Introducing new feminist political ecologies. <i>Geoforum</i> , 42(2), 129–132. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.01.006
			Moeckli, J. and B. Braun 2001. Gendered Natures: Feminism, Politics, and Social Nature. <i>Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics</i> . N. Castree and B. Braun. London, Blackwell: 112-132.	Jarosz, L. (2011). Nourishing women: toward a feminist political ecology of community supported agriculture in the United States. <i>Gender, Place & Culture</i> , 18(3), 307–326. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2011.565871
7	11-Oct	Essential	Carney, <i>Black Rice</i>	Carney, <i>Black Rice</i>
8	18-Oct	First Worlds & Decolonization	McCarthy, J. (2002) First World Political Ecology: Lessons from the Wise Use Movement, <i>Environment and Planning A</i> . 34(7): 1281-1302.	Zanotti, L., Carothers, C., Apok, C., Huang, S., Coleman, J., & Ambrozek, C. (2020). Political ecology and decolonial research: Co-production with the inupiat in Utqiagvik. <i>Journal of Political Ecology</i> , 27(1), 43–66. https://doi.org/10.2458/v27i1.23335
			Robbins, P., & Sharp, J. T. 2003. "Producing and consuming chemicals: the moral economy of the American lawn." <i>Economic Geography</i> , 79(4): 425-451.	Li, T. M. (2000). Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot. <i>Source: Comparative Studies in Society and History</i> , 42(1), 149–179. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500002632
			Biehler, D. and Simon, G. 2011. The great indoors: Research frontiers on indoor environments as active political ecological spaces. <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> , 35: 172-192.	Curley, A. (2019). <i>T'áá hwó ají t'éego</i> and the Moral Economy of Navajo Coal Workers. <i>Annals of the American Association of Geographers</i> , 109(1), 71–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2018.1488576

9	25-Oct	Urban PE	Heynen, N. (2014). Urban political ecology I: The urban century. <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> , 38(4), 598–604. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132513500443	Lawhon, M., Ernstson, H., & Silver, J. (2014). Provincializing urban political ecology: Towards a situated UPE through African urbanism. <i>Antipode</i> , 46(2), 497–516. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12051n
			Heynen, N. (2016). Urban political ecology II: The abolitionist century. <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> , 40(6), 839–845. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132515617394	Doshi, S. (2017). Embodied urban political ecology: five propositions. <i>Area</i> , 49(1), 125–128. https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12293
			Heynen, N. (2018). Urban political ecology III: The feminist and queer century. <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> . https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132517693336	Ranganathan, M., & Bratman, E. (2021). From Urban Resilience to Abolitionist Climate Justice in Washington, DC. <i>Antipode</i> 53(1), 115-137.
10	1-Nov	Institutions & Water	Emel, J. and Roberts, R. 1995: Institutional form and its effect on environmental change: the case of groundwater in the southern High Plains. <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> 85, 664–83.	Linton, J., & Budds, J. (2014). The hydrosocial cycle: Defining and mobilizing a relational-dialectical approach to water. <i>Geoforum</i> , 57, 170–180. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2013.10.008
			Harris, Leila. 2009. Gender and emergent water governance: comparative overview of neoliberalized natures and gender dimensions of privatization, devolution and marketization. <i>Gender, Place and Culture</i> 16 (4):387-408.	Birkenholtz, T. (2016). Dispossessing irrigators: Water grabbing, supply-side growth and farmer resistance in India. <i>Geoforum</i> , 69, 94–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.12.014
			Li, T. M. (2007) Practices of assemblage and community forest management, <i>Economy and Society</i> , 36(2): 263-293. DOI: 10.1080/03085140701254308	Karpouzoglou, T., & Vij, S. (2017). Waterscape: a perspective for understanding the contested geography of water. <i>Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Water</i> , 4(3), e1210. https://doi.org/10.1002/wat2.1210
11	8-Nov	Race & the Body	Sultana, F. (2012). Producing Contaminated Citizens: Toward a Nature-Society Geography of Health and Well-Being. <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> . https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2012.671127	Tschakert, P. (2012). From impacts to embodied experiences: Tracing political ecology in climate change research. <i>Geografisk Tidsskrift</i> . https://doi.org/10.1080/00167223.2012.741889
			Guthman, Julie 2012. <i>Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapters 1 & 3	Truelove, Y., & O'Reilly, K. (2020). Making India's cleanest city: Sanitation, intersectionality, and infrastructural violence. <i>Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space</i> . https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848620941521
			Mansfield, B. 2012. Race and the new epigenetic biopolitics of environmental health. <i>BioSocieties</i> , 7: 352-372.	Pulido, L., Bruno, T., Faiver-Serna, C. & C. Galentine. Environmental Deregulation, Spectacular Racism, and White Nationalism in the Trump Era. <i>Annals of the American Association of Geographers</i> , 109(2), 520-532,
12	15-Nov	Final Papers	Final papers one-on-one meetings	<i>Animal Traffic</i> book review preparation

13	22-Nov	Book Review	<i>Animal Traffic</i> , book review due and discussion	Thanksgiving
14	29-Nov	Looking ahead	Rangan, H., & Kull, C. (2009). What makes ecology 'political?': rethinking 'scale' in political ecology. <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> , 33(1), 28–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132508090215	Loftus, A. (2019). Political ecology I: Where is political ecology? <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> , 43(1), 172–182. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132517734338
			Svarstad, H., Benjaminsen, T. A., & Overå, R. (2018). Power theories in political ecology. <i>Journal of Political Ecology</i> , 25(1), 350. https://doi.org/10.2458/v25i1.23044	Loftus, A. (2019). Political ecology II: Whither the state? <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> , 30(6): 730-746
			McCarthy, J., & Thatcher, J. (2019). Visualizing new political ecologies: A critical data studies analysis of the World Bank's renewable energy resource mapping initiative. <i>Geoforum</i> , 102, 242–254. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.03.025	Loftus, A. (2020). Political ecology III: Who are 'the people'? <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> , 44(5), 981– 990. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132519884632
15			LAST DAY: work on final papers	