Fall Quarter 2003 Syllabus
ENVS 291-04: Advanced Readings in Political Ecology

METHODS

Time: Monday, Noon—1:45 PM
Place: Interdisciplinary Sciences Building (ISB) room 455
Call Number: #97978
Co-contacts: Rose Cohen rcohen@ucsc.edu, Dustin Mulvaney dustin@ucsc.edu
Faculty sponsor: David Goodman (Environmental Studies)

This graduate student led seminar is part of an ongoing effort to engage with political ecology in a way that strengthens its usefulness and enriches its possibilities, as well as improves our ongoing research work, collaborations and critical inquiries. This quarter focuses on reviewing methodologies in an effort to take a critical approach to their use in political ecology as well as their applicability to our own work. We will be discussing quantitative and qualitative research methods, including ethnographic approaches, comparative analysis and spatial analysis. As this course intends to engage with student’s own research projects, the formation of the syllabus will be a dynamic process.

Our critical analyses come into focus through a political ecological lens as described by Piers Blaikie in his 1999 piece, A Review of Political Ecology: Issues, Epistemology, and Analytical Narratives. (Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie 43 (3-4): 131-147). He defines political ecological approaches as taking two main forms: First, political ecology explores “the interaction between changing environments and the socio-economy, in which landscapes and the physiographic processes acting upon them, are seen to have dialectical, historically derived and iterative relations with resource use and the socio-economic and political sets of relations that shape them”, and second, political ecology examines “different states of nature, their change through time, and their contested representations under conditions of unequal power; this usually involves the production and/or critique of scientific interpretations as well as others such as by the mass media, policy makers, formal and informal institutions, and various other actors in civil society” (1999, p.132). Also useful is Tim Forsyth’s approximation that political ecology “should seek to conduct critical analysis of the political factors that underlie competing definitions and explanations of environmental reality” (in Critical Political Ecology: The Politics of Environmental Science, 2003 p. 278, Routledge: London).

This quarter will also feature 2 invited speakers. Daniel Press, Professor of Environmental Studies, UCSC, will be discussing the use of surveys (Week 3). Phil Howard, Post-Doctoral Researcher at the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Farming Systems (CASFS), UCSC, will be discussing the use of focus groups (Week 5).

Graduate students enrolled in the course will be expected to facilitate discussion with written reviews, discussion questions and verbal summaries of the week’s readings at least once during the quarter. This class is sponsored by the Political Ecology Working Group. For a description of the Working Group and its processes, see the description below (*).

Week 1 ~ September 29

Introduction to the fall course themes and discussion of course trajectory
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**Week 2 ~ October 6**

**Surveys**

**Readings:**


**Optional:**


**Week 3 ~ October 13**

**Invited Guest:** Dr. Daniel Press, Professor, Environmental Studies Department, UCSC

**Readings:**


**Week 4 ~ October 20**

**Interviewing**

**Readings:**


**Optional:**


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Week 5 ~ October 27

Focus Groups

Invited Guest: Dr. Phil Howard, Post-Doctoral Researcher, Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Farming Systems (CASFS), UCSC

Readings:


Optional:

Week 6 ~ November 3

Ethnography

Readings:


Week 7 ~ November 10

Comparative historical analysis

Readings:


Week 8 ~ November 17

Comparative policy analysis

Readings:


Optional:
Aristotle (350 BC) Politics. Available at: http://www.constitution.org/ari/polit_00.htm
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**Week 9 ~November 24**

Economic quantitative analysis

**Readings:**


**Week 10 ~December 1**

GIS

**Readings:**


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*Political Ecology Working Group*

The Political Ecology Working Group of UC Santa Cruz is a graduate student-led forum for the discussion of the foundational work and innovative research in the broadening field of political ecology. We define political ecology to be a critical recognition and exploration of the dynamics, properties, and meanings of 'politicized environments'. The format consists of a combination of weekly readings, speakers, and graduate student presentations. The group explores and debates the core issues of the field with the goal of strengthening and sharpening political ecology's conceptual, methodological, and theoretical tools for creating a more sustainable and just society. The broad foci of the group includes an inquiry of human/environment relations through the lenses of gender, race, class, livelihoods, hazards, resistance and resilience, environmental discourses and social movements, agroecology and food, health and embodiment, governance, science and technology, urban/rural issues, climate change, geographies of ethics and morality, and the polyvalent connections between production and consumption.

While mainly a forum for discussion, we are also concerned with creating real and practical links to resource dependent communities in both the global South and North. We wish to establish ties to progressive NGOs engaged in development, as well as with other research groups at UCSC and other institutions.

Graduate student professional development will be emphasized through presentation of works in progress and conference papers and a pragmatic interest in research proposal writing and critique. Future output will include individual and multi-authored working papers and workshops centered around the group's research foci.

**Working Group Processes**

The Working group is a democratically run collective and seeks to foster a collegial yet critical atmosphere in and around the weekly discussion meetings. Each meeting is facilitated by a member (or members) of the group who provides a short review of the material for the week. The review includes discussion questions, critique, and the ties that the material makes to other literatures and scholarly work. These short reviews should be made available before the meeting through email or the day of the discussion. Papers, when available, will be in electronic format and disseminated to the group on a future web page or will be available from a master set. Future syllabi will be generated in the previous quarter with input from all members as to focus and substance. Previous syllabi are available for review of the thematic trajectory the group.