Seminar in Political Ecology

Anthropology 277
University of California, Riverside
Fall 2010
Watkins 1347
Wednesday, 5:10 PM-8:00 PM

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Course Overview

Since the 1980s, the field of political ecology has emerged in geography and anthropology from the intersection of political economy and cultural ecology. While generally maintaining these theoretical groundings, recent scholarship in political ecology has drawn upon a range of fields: environmental history, phenomenology, postcolonial and poststructuralist theory, governmentality studies, science and technology studies, and neo-institutional economics, among others.

For fall 2010, the course focuses on the relationships between political and economic policies of neoliberalization on one hand, and changes in conservation policy and practice on the other. Over the past thirty years, neoliberal policies aimed at downsizing the state, empowering "civil society," privatizing and commercializing state and public resources, and facilitating investment, have spread worldwide, reshaping human relations to the environment in the process. Concurrently, the proportion of the earth's land designated as protected areas (parks, nature reserves, etc.) has expanded dramatically, even as conservation policy and practice have shifted from exclusionary "fortress conservation," to community-based/joint management approaches, to more recent efforts to create trans-boundary multi-national protected areas and to take "rights-based" approaches to conservation.

The course interrogates the interconnections between these transformations in political economy, on one hand, and conservation, on the other, drawing upon diverse theoretical perspectives and ethnographic approaches. The questions we will ask include what is "neo" about neoliberalism, and what are its implications for the use, protection and commercialization of natural resources? How do people come to care about "nature" and participate in projects of environmental conservation? How has conservation articulated with and challenged processes of capitalist accumulation, governmental regulation (and/or deregulation and reregulation), and the formation and transformation of civil society in its various guises (non-governmental organizations, indigenous communities, consumer movements, etc.)?

Requirements

This class will be run as a graduate-level reading-intensive research seminar. Preparation for class discussion by careful reading of the week's readings is required. This seminar relies upon the participants' capacity to participate in a fruitful discussion in the seminar meeting. This means that each student should be familiar with the central arguments of the required readings,
and be able to develop thoughts on the connections/disconnections in the larger body of readings for the week and across the term.

Additionally, each student will be expected to:
i) Prepare a one page critical commentary on the week’s readings to be circulated electronically by 10 AM on Tuesday. For each week, the syllabus includes several “preliminary questions” which may be useful; these are often deliberately vague or ambiguous, and are meant only as a starting point.

ii) Lead/chair at least one class discussion. (The exact number will depend on the number of students in the class). This involves three things: 1) a short (10-minute) presentation of the key arguments made in the readings pertaining to that week; 2) using other materials to locate them in one or more debates or to show something of their intellectual genealogy; 3) leading the class discussion on the readings. Again, the presentation should be no more than ten minutes.

iii) Submit a paper or research proposal of 15-20 pages, no later than Wednesday, December 8th. Papers or proposals should use some of the readings from the class (probably in theoretical or context sections) and should not be the same as papers or proposals submitted for other classes or program requirements.

iv) Give a presentation of no more than 15 minutes on the paper / proposal in week 8, 9 or 10 of the course.

Auditors: Auditors are welcome in this class on two conditions: they need to come to most (preferably all) of the classes and they should be prepared to do all the readings and fulfill qualification (i) above, i.e. prepare a weekly commentary. Auditors can add a great deal to the discussion in the class but only if they prepare in the same way as students taking the class for credit.

Grading:
Participation (including commentaries and discussion leading): 45%
Papers / proposals: 45%
Presentation: 10%

**Required Texts**

The following books are required for the course:

Braun, B.  

Brockington, D.  

Heynen, N., McCarthy, J., Prudham, S., and Robbins, P., eds.  

Hughes, D. M.


Besides these books, there will be several articles and/or book chapters assigned most weeks, distributed via iLearn.

**Optional Text**


Robbins and/or other background readings listed below will be helpful for students without a background in environmental anthropology, geography and/or social theory. Additional optional texts are provided for each week of the course.

http://www.kent.ac.uk/anthropology/courses/postgrad/SE831/outline.pdf - syllabus for Raj Puri’s graduate seminar in Environmental Anthropology at the University of Kent with an extensive and current bibliography.


Class Schedule

**Week One - September 28**
Introduction: Political Ecology and Neoliberal Conservation


**Week Two - October 5**
The Origins of Modern Conservation


Schelhas, J. 2002  The USA national parks in international perspective: have we learned the wrong lesson?. *Environmental Conservation* 28(04):300--304.

optional readings:


Preliminary Questions:
- how do the origins of the parks movement relate to capitalism, class, and pre-capitalist social formations?
- how do place and space shape the politics of conservation?
- what theoretical approaches might help us understand the creation of parks and the origins of conservation?
Week Three - October 12
Colonialism and Conservation

Neumann, R. P.

Igoe, J.

Vanderveest, P. and Peluso, N. L.

optional readings:
Williams, R.
1975 *The Country and the City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA.

Scott, J. C.

Peluso, N.

Carruthers, J.

West, P., Igoe, J., and Brockington, D.

Preliminary Questions:
- what is territorialization, and how does it differ from and transform other modes of rule?
- what are the connections between East African and U.S. conservation?
- how has conservation impacted the livelihoods of East African cultivators and pastoralists?
**Week Four - October 19**  
Environmentalism and the Politics of Representation

Hughes, D. M. D.  
2005  Third nature: making space and time in the Great Limpopo Conservation Area.  

Braun, B.  
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Optional readings:  
Foucault, M.  

Latour, B.  
1987  *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society.* Cambridge, MA:  
Harvard University Press.

Cronon, W.  

Smith, N.  
2008 [1984]  *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space.* University of  
Georgia Press.

**Preliminary Questions:**  
- what is third nature?  
- how do the lenses of science studies, postcolonial theory, and/or poststructuralism transform  
  political ecological analysis?  
- what *is* the temperate rainforest?
Week Five - October 26
“Roll-Back” Neoliberalism and The Environment: Commodification, Privatization and Deregulation

Polanyi, K.  

Braun, B.  

Heynen, N., McCarthy, J., Prudham, S., and Robbins, P., eds.  

Huber, M. “Fossilized Subjectivities: Petro-Privatism, Neoliberalism, and Entrepreneurial Life” (unpublished ms.)

Optional Readings:
Harvey, D.  

Foucault, M.  

Sawyer, S.  

Ferguson, J.  

Preliminary Questions:
- what is neoliberalism and how can we recognize it?  
- how have anthropologists and geographers understood neoliberalism’s effects on the environment?  
- how might neoliberal conservation resemble or differ from the neoliberalization of extractive industries?
**Week Six - November 2**

Governmentality, Governance and Conservation

Agrawal, A.


Goldman, M.


Heynen, N., McCarthy, J., Prudham, S., and Robbins, P., eds.


Brockington, D., Duffy, R., and Igoe, J.


Brockington, D.


Optional Readings:

Foucault, M.


Miller, P. and Rose, N.


Chapin, M.


Brockington, D. and Schollfield, K.


Preliminary Questions:

- what is governmentality?
- how does neoliberal governmentality differ from or resemble prior “arts of government”?
Week Seven - November 9
Community, Belonging and Conservation
McCarthy, J.

McCarthy, J.

Hughes, D. M.

Büsch, B.

optional:

Li, T. M.

Igoe, J. and Fortwangler, C.

Dominy, M.

Duffy, R.

Preliminary Questions:
- how do community-based approaches relate to prior conservation strategies?
- what are the relationships in theory and practice between property, belonging, and conservation?
**Week Eight - November 16**
Integrated Conservation and Development

**Presentations 1**

West, P.


Wittemyer, G., Elsen, P., Bean, W. T., Burton, A. C. O., and Brashares, J. S.


Hoffman, D., Fay, D., and Joppa, L.


Hoffman, D.


Optional Readings:


Joppa, L. N., Loarie, S. R., and Nelson, A.


Davis, Fay and Pellegrino articles forthcoming in *Conservation and Society*.

Foucault, M.


**Preliminary Questions:**
- how do ICDPs reconfigure the political ecology of conservation?
- to what degree can ICDPs be considered to attract migration?
- are ICDPs a solution or part of the problem?
Week Nine - November 23
Conservation, Production and Spectacle

Presentations 2

Garland, E.

Fortwangler, C.

Duffy, R. and Brockington, D.

Büscher, B.

King, B.

Brockington, D.

Additional Readings:
Brockington, D., Duffy, R., and Igoe, J.

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Preliminary Questions:
- how do parks relate to capitalism and neoliberalism?
- what are the roles of spectacle and celebrity in conservation?
Week Ten - November 30

The Challenges of Rights-Based Conservation

Presentations 3

Stevens, S.

Larson, A. M., Barry, D., and Ram Dahal, G.

Walker, C.

Comaroff, J. L. and Comaroff, J.

Fay, D.
ms. Why Political Ecology Needs Legal Anthropology: Neoliberal Conservation and Lawfare at Dwesa-Cwebe, South Africa

Additional Readings:

Kepe, T.

Dekoninck, V.

Robins, S. and van der Waal, K.

Metcalfe, S. and Kepe, T.

Preliminary Questions:
- how might rights-based conservation reconfigure the politics of conservation?
- what are the strengths and weaknesses of legal and rights-based approaches to community engagement with conservation?