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.)?

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.

Jacoby, K.
Neumann, R. P.

West, P.

Other readings will be provided on iLearn. Prominent among these will be two recent special issues of *Antipode* (refs. for the introductions follow):

Castree, N., Chatterton, P., Heynen, N., Larner, W., and Wright, M. W.

Brockington, D. and Duffy, R.