Course Objectives

This course provides a critical introduction to environmental anthropology, beginning with a brief exploration of its historical roots and examining its subsequent iterations, but concentrating especially upon anthropology's contributions to the interdisciplinary field of political ecology, with a particular emphasis upon issues of environmental justice in terms of race, gender, class and nation.

Course Content

In the past thirty years, disciplines across the social sciences and humanities – from philosophy to history to sociology to political science to geography to cultural studies – have undergone a “greening” as the social aspects of nature have come to be seen as a legitimate, even sexy subject of scholarly investigation. For anthropology, this has constituted more a revival than an invention, for anthropology was “environmental” long before there was an identifiable “environmental anthropology” of which to speak. Yet Carole Crumley notes that the discipline is marked by a distinct contradiction, emphasizing the immense capacity of environment to shape human existence through the pressures of natural selection, yet progressively according it a smaller and smaller role as culture ascends and nature declines in explanations of the human condition – until it comes full circle in the recognition of contemporary environmental crisis, whereupon “the environment, marginalized in the latter portions of the story of human evolution, becomes again the central problem for the species” (1994:2-3). We will bear this central contradiction in mind as we examine the human place in what we colloquially call “nature,” attempting to deconstruct the complex and antithetical meanings embedded in the term while avoiding the reduction of nature to a mere social construct. Accordingly, this course investigates the way we produce nature and the way nature produces us, taking a dialectical approach to the anthropology of environment.
Course Structure

We will meet weekly for an hour-long lecture followed by a seminar, during which students will take it in turns to make short presentations based upon their own interests in environmental anthropology. We’ll use the seminar during the first week to organise panels of 2-3 presentations which “fit,” to the greatest extent possible, with the topic of each week’s lecture and readings. Depending on the number of students in each seminar, each student will be required to give at least two presentations. While we will not meet during Reading Week (Week 6), an optional module on “environment and development” will be available on the VLE for students to explore on their own during the break if they so choose.

Course Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction: Anthropology and the Denaturalisation of “Nature”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Politics of Nature: Perspectives on Green Political Theory</td>
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<td>Limits to Growth: Crisis, “Scarcity,” and Apocalyptic Environmentalism</td>
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<td>Space and Place: Landscape, Alienation, Consumption</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Optional Module: Environment and Development</td>
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<td>Epistemologies of Nature: Sacred and Secular</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>“Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?” Nature and Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Imperial Nature: Ecology, War and the Colonial Encounter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Course Readings

Due to the explosion of green literature in the social sciences (including anthropology) over the past few decades, one course cannot hope to cover the entire canon, and many of the texts listed in this syllabus are full-length books. However, students should not despair at the length of the reading list. I have placed three article/chapter-length texts from each section in a reader pack (available for purchase from the Anthropology office) and three more from each section on the VLE. These readings comprise articles and chapters which are (a) foundational to the weekly topic and (b) unavailable to Goldsmiths students electronically, in the DSLC or on the Goldsmiths Library shelves. Some readings which are readily available to students are also foundational to the weekly topics, and I will point these out specifically during the lecture; please obtain these texts on your own. Students are encouraged to explore the remaining texts according to their individual intellectual interests (for example, if you find an excerpt from a particular book interesting, follow up by tracking down and reading the rest of it, or mining its bibliography for associated references). Texts which are not physically available on campus in books or journals have been ordered and will be made available as soon as possible; however, in the interim students should be prepared to access readings through interlibrary loan, AnthroSource, Senate House, the British Library, and other resources available to University of London students.

Useful Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antipode</th>
<th>Harbinger</th>
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<tr>
<td>Capitalism Nature Socialism</td>
<td>Human Ecology</td>
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<tr>
<td>City and Society</td>
<td>Journal of Ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Geographies</td>
<td>Journal of Political Ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and History</td>
<td>Journal of Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Planning</td>
<td>Organization &amp; Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Ethics</td>
<td>Rural History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental History</td>
<td>Science and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Politics</td>
<td>The Journal of Rural Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics, Place &amp; Environment</td>
<td>The Trumpeter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Environmental Change</td>
<td>Urban Anthropology</td>
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**Week 1**

**Introduction: Anthropology and the Denaturalisation of “Nature”**

The introductory lecture provides a broad historical view on the concept of environment in anthropology, from the earliest inception of the discipline to the present day. We critically examine shifting anthropological perspectives on human-environmental relations through the development of the schools of cultural evolution, cultural materialism, human ecology, cultural ecology, historical ecology, and political ecology. We also consider the intersection of sociocultural anthropology with biological and linguistic anthropology and archaeology through the window of environment, as well as examining the role of environment in such topical subfields as cognitive anthropology. Although this section is intended to provide a very general overview, students are encouraged to pursue particular topics of interest through close reading of original texts on their own. The texts in this section are primarily historical, biographical and theoretical rather than ethnographic; however many of their themes are developed and contested through empirical research in the sections to follow.

Argyrou, Vassos  

Balée, William  

Biersack, Aletta  

Childe, V. Gordon  

Crumley, Carole L., ed.  
2001 *New Directions in Anthropology and Environment: Intersections.* Walnut Creek and Oxford: AltaMira Press.


Descola, Philippe and Gíslí Pálsson, eds.  

Dove, Michael R. and Carol Carpenter, eds.  

Escobar, Arturo  

Haenn, Nora and Richard R. Wilk, eds.  

Harris, David, ed.  

Harris, Marvin  

Heider, Karl G.  

Ingold, Tim  


Kottak, Conrad P.  

Little, Paul E.  

Milton, Kay
Week 2

The Politics of Nature: Perspectives on Green Political Theory

As the social sciences have undergone a “greening” with the rise of the mass environmental movement, so too has political theory. In this section, we move beyond the disciplinary boundaries of anthropology to examine the intersection of ecology with socialism, feminism, anarchism, and critical race theory, drawing on inter- and cross-disciplinary approaches to green political theory. We examine the social ecology approach of Murray Bookchin, the green feminist socialism of Mary Mellor, the eco-anarchism of Brian Morris, James O’Connor’s second contradiction of capitalism, Neil Smith’s uneven development, Arne Naess’s deep ecology, and Donna Harraway’s cyborg feminism, among others. The texts in this section tend heavily toward theory rather than ethnographic example; however, as with week one, many of their themes are investigated empirically in ensuring sections. And again, students are encouraged to pursue personal topics of interest through close reading of original texts in order to augment the general overview provided by the lecture.

Benton, Ted, ed.
Week 3
Limits to Growth: Crisis, “Scarcity,” and Apocalyptic Environmentalism

Contemporary environmental discourses are frequently organised around the allegory of crisis: economic, ecological, political. The tropes which frame modern discussions of global warming, demographic explosion (or collapse) and eco-capitalistic contradiction, however, share certain themes in common with older, politically problematic theories of catastrophic ecology, including Malthusianism and the “tragedy of the commons.” In this section, we examine what geographer Cindi Katz terms “apocalyptic environmentalism,” critically analysing the political agendas implicit in various types of catastrophic ecological discourse and their outcomes in practice, including policy. To what extent are ecocidal narratives linked to the control of women? In what ways do overpopulation arguments legitimise racism, including anti-immigration sentiments? Does the framing of environmentalism in terms of apocalypse-versus-salvation actually, as Katz argues, obscure the source of environmental problems? What are the alternatives?

Boucher, Douglas H.

Carson, Rachel

Clark, Brett, John Bellamy Foster and Richard York

Davis, Mike
Ellis, Jeffrey C.

Ehrlich, Paul R.

Ehrlich, Paul R. and Anne H. Ehrlich

Goldsmith, Edward

Hardin, Garrett

Katz, Cindi

Keil, Roger et.al.

Kovel, Joel

Marco, Gino J., Robert M. Hollingworth and William Durham, eds.

McCay, Bonnie J. and James M. Acheson, eds.

Oliver-Smith, Anthony

Ross, Andrew

Shantz, Jeffrey

Mühlhäuser, Peter and Adrian Peace

Seccombe, Wally

Vanderheiden, Steve and John Barry

Vandermeer, John

Williams, Gavin

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**Week 4**

**State Agendas, Local Resistance: Capital, Regulation and Resource Control**

States play crucial roles in the regulation of environment, from pollution legislation to resource exploitation to the enforcement of private property. In this section, we draw on the work of the French regulation theorists to frame our discussion of state environmental management, with a particular eye on the role of the state in negotiating capitalistic relationships with nature within and between nation
states in the context of globalisation and neoliberalism. We pay special attention to the state regulation of common property resources, including parks, through preservation, conservation, and restoration. To what extent are such strategies reflective (or generative) of social inequality? In what ways to they subvert (or sustain) the process of capital accumulation? Has the power of the state to manage nature been eroded through the process of globalisation? To what extent are states effective units of environmental management in the context of global ecological crisis? How has environment been implicated in the discourse of rights, civil and human?


Brosius, Peter J., ed. 2005 Communities and Conservation: Histories and Politics of Community-Based Natural Resource Management. Walnut Creek: AltaMira.


Monbiot, George
Week 5

Space and Place: Landscape, Alienation, Consumption

Week five provides a brief introduction to the burgeoning literature on “space and place,” which considers the ways in which people form cultural and psychological attachments to general spaces and particular places through concepts such as freedom and security, risk and comfort, independence and collectivity. We begin with an analysis of the historical development of the western concept of “landscape” before moving on to consider the politics of the built environment. Cross-cutting many of the themes addressed in other sections, we relate space and place to gender, race, class and nation, looking especially at gendered metaphors of nature as they relate to tropes of nationalism and manifest destiny, as well as the relationship between race, landscape and eugenics. We also attempt to deconstruct the well-worn shibboleths which divide urban and rural into discreet spheres, examining the mutually-reinforcing historical, material and ideological relationships between them, and evaluating the commonalities between the political ecology of the city and that of the countryside.
Bender, Barbara, ed.

Cronon, William

Darby, Wendy Joy

Darling, Eliza


Desai, Madhavi, ed.
2004 Gender and the Built Environment in India. New Delhi: Zubaan.

Dickens, Peter

Eiesland, Nancy L.

Green, Nicholas

Hirsch, Eric and Michael O’Hanlon, eds.

Keith, Michael and Steve Pile, eds.

Kolodny, Annette

Lawrence, Denise L. and Setha M. Low

Levinson, Stephen C.

Light, Andrew and Jonathan M. Smith, eds.

Low, Setha M.

Low, Setha and Neil Smith, eds.

Nash, Roderick

Massey, Doreen
2005 For Space. London: SAGE.

Marx, Leo

Mitchell, TWJ., ed.
2002 Landscape and Power. 2nd ed. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
Week 6
Optional Module: Environment and International Development

“International development” refers to the global debt industry which arose with American empire in the wake of WWII, defining relationships between rich and poor nations and constituting a proxy battleground for the Cold War. Because development has been driven by modernisation, it has entailed an often brutal reworking of nature at the scale of landscape. This course contains no formal section on development, as many students will already have taken Anthropology of Development: Critical Voices, which includes a section on environment and development. This section offers an optional reading list for students who have not taken this course, or students who wish to explore the intersection of environment and development in further depth. Because the materials for this week are optional, they will not be formally examined; however, because “development” cross-cuts so many general themes in anthropology, students may find the readings listed in this section relevant for other sections of the course, including the weeks on gender, race, imperialism, and regulation.

Adams, W.M.

Braidotti, Rosi et.al.

Carruyo, Light

Chatterjee, Pratap and Matthias Finger
Croll, Elisabeth and David Parkin

Dove, Michael R.

FitzSimmons, Margaret and David Goodman

Goodman, David and Michael Redclift

Greenberg, James B.

Helmreich, Stefan

Johnston, Barbara Rose, ed.

Kurian, Priya A.

Leff, Enrique

McAfee, Kathleen

Nygren, Anja

Peet, Richard and Michael Watts

Thomas-Slayter, Barbara P. and Dianne Rocheleau

Shiva, Vandana

Shiva, Vandana, ed.

West, Paige

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**Week 7**

**Environmental Justice: Race, Waste, and Indigeneity**

In this section, we examine the relationship between environment and race, focusing on two central problematics. First, we consider the literature inspired by the landmark findings of the United Church
of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, which in 1987 established a strong correlation between race and the placement of hazardous waste in the United States, spawning a generation of research into environmental racism on a global scale and a subsequent political struggle for environmental justice. Second, we consider the debates around the concept of the “ecologically noble savage,” in which indigenous peoples are posited (and often posit themselves) as natural conservationists by dint of historical, spiritual, or biological ties to particular landscapes and concomitant modes of sustainable living. In both cases, we critically analyse the centrality of “nature” to the construction of race and racism, questioning the extent to which struggles for racial justice can be effectively linked to environmentalism without reinforcing the very ideologies underpinning racism itself.


Johnston, Barbara Rose, ed.
Week 8

**Human Nature? The Construction of Gender and the Regulation of Reproduction**

Following on the themes raised in weeks three, five and seven, in this section we consider the relationship between environment and gender, taking as a central problematic the shopworn maxim that “women are to nature as men are to culture,” which has been effectively exploited in the control, oppression and dehumanisation of women as well a counter-deployed in struggles for women’s liberation. Expanding on some of the readings from week two, we take a closer look at feminist approaches to environmentalism, exploring their “internal” controversies and contradictions (e.g., mysticism versus materialism) as well as exploring their relationship to environmental justice struggles based on race, class and nation. Finally, we pay particular attention to the relationship between gender, reproduction, technology and demography, considering the relationship between scales of gender oppression, from the body to the household to the nation to the region, and their political parallels with similar scales of struggle in environmentalism.

Bacigalupo, Ana Mariella  
2007 *Shamans of the Foye Tree: Gender, Power, and Healing among Chilean Mpuche.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Biehl, Janet  

Blum, Elizabeth D.

Buckingham, Susan

d'Eaubonne, Françoise

Di Chiro, Giovanna

Engelhardt, Elizabeth Sanders Delwiche

Gaard, Greta, ed.

Hessing, Melody, Rebecca Ragion and Catriona Sandilands, eds.

Jackson, Cecile

Janes, Craig R.

Kanaaneh, Rhoda Ann

Lorentzen, Lois Ann

Low, Alaine and Soraya Tremayne, eds.

Lowe, Marian and Ruth Hubbard, eds.

Martin, Emily

Merchant, Carolyn.

Peña, Devon Gerardo.

Plumwood, Val

Riley, Glenda

Silliman, Jael and Ynestra King

Shiva, Vandana

Smedley, Audrey
2004  Women Creating Patriliney: Gender and Environment in West Africa. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

Sperling, Susan

Stephens, Sharon
In week nine, we examine the ways in which human-environmental relationships – material and discursive – are mitigated through the seemingly disparate epistemological categories of science, religion and spirituality. Building on the themes introduced in week eight, we begin with the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, examining the decline of classical understandings of the natural world with the rise to dominance of mechanistic views which would come to embody the principles of rationalisation, modernisation, progress, and creative destruction. We then contextualise this relationship by comparing and contrasting it with sacred, spiritual or faith-based epistemologies of nature, including global monotheistic religions as well as the vast variety of indigenous belief systems documented by anthropologists. Importantly, we avoid positing the secular and the sacred as oppositional categories (as well as reifying these systems geographically as a contrast between “the west and the rest”) instead critically scrutinising their contradictions, commonalities, and overlaps.


Stoll, Mark
Week 10

“Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?” Nature and Class

While struggles for environmental justice are frequently linked to the liberatory politics of feminism, anti-racism and anti-colonialism, the significance of class in the production of exploitative human-nature relationships is increasingly on the scholarly and political agenda. This week, we consider the problem of class in environmental justice, drawing on much of the literature introduced in week two (especially that on social ecology, uneven development and the ecological contradictions of capitalism), paying particular attention to the most visible struggle for working class environmental justice through the occupational health and safety movement, but considering broader alliances (potential and realised) between workers and environmentalists as well. We also apply a critical class analysis to environmental movements, considering the historical antagonism between labour and environmental activists. Finally, we consider how the struggle for working class environmental justice relates to environmental movements based on race, gender and nation.

Darling, Eliza

Dewey, Scott

Estabrook, Thomas

Field, Rodger C.

Foster, John Bellamy

Germic, Stephen A.

Hansen, Edward C.

Heiman, Michael K.


Jerrett M., J. Eyles, D. Cole and S. Reader

Kazis, Richard and Richard L. Grossman
Week 11

Imperial Nature: Ecology, War and the Colonial Encounter

In the final week of the course, we analyse environment as an instrument of empire, wielded by powerful states in the process of colonialism, neocolonialism and expansionist wars. We examine nature as both object of conquest and strategic instrument in the form of space, territory, and resources, beginning with a general overview of the role of ecology (intended and inadvertent) in European colonialism and subsequent postcolonial struggle, before turning to the neocolonial aspects of contemporary environmental movements, including those driven by conservation, preservation, and...
“sustainable” development agendas. We also look at the use of nature as a tool of war, from the production and deployment of biological weapons to the calculated destruction of ecological resources, drawing on the themes of mechanistic science and creative destruction introduced in week nine and examining the consequences for civilian populations. We conclude the course by considering the intersection of ecological and anti-imperialist resistance in the quest for a global environmental justice.


Mills, Sara
Course Essays

1. To what extent have shifts in the concept of “environment” in anthropology constituted a process “denaturalisation?”

2. Critically discuss Bruno Latour’s contention that political ecology has nothing to do with nature.

3. Critically discuss the political implications of apocalyptic environmentalism for gender OR race.

4. In what way can preservation be described as a new accumulation strategy for capital?

5. In what sense is wilderness not “wild?”

6. Critically discuss the social implications of the green revolution.

7. Must the marriage of indigenous rights movements and environmentalism necessarily entail an evocation of the “ecologically noble savage?”

8. Discuss the contradiction of mysticism versus materialism in ecofeminist politics.

9. Critique the notion that workers are a “threat” to the environment.

10. Is environmental conservation a form of neocolonialism?
A guide for writing and presenting course essays and examined reports

These guidelines have been designed to ensure that you are aware of the basic expectations of written coursework and examined reports. In addition to general comments concerning essay structure, they include details about how to reference work and issues regarding plagiarism and overlap. Please note that in the marking of work, both of these issues will be taken into account.

1. General essay guidance

An essay should present a well-organized argument that responds to a set question. It should include a review and discussion of relevant literature, and should also present an argument for your own perspective. Aim to convince the reader that your angle on the topic is valid, but make sure you demonstrate knowledge of other possible approaches.

a. The Introduction

You should begin with an introduction setting out the issue to be discussed, and tell the reader how you will approach it. Avoid wasting space on definitions unless a particular question requires them. Make a clear argument and proceed from one point to the next so that the narrative builds on what went before.

b. The main body of the essay

Tell the reader where a line of reasoning you refer to is helpful or flawed and, using your own judgment and the work of previous commentators, explain why. Keep the essay focused on the argument and avoid meandering. Critique is appropriate in an essay but unsubstantiated, moralistic and generalized polemic is not.

You can use subheadings to provide structure to the essay and guidance for the reader. Make the sections build on each other. In general, arguments should not be purely abstract or theoretical, but should use examples (from ethnography, history, the media and popular culture, and your own experience, where appropriate). Make sure that the relevance of your examples is clearly stated. Your essay should have a clear and succinct conclusion.

c. Footnotes and Endnotes

Footnotes may be used for points of amplification, but are not generally necessary. Endnotes are discouraged.

2. References

Sources listed in the reading guide will provide good starting points, but you may introduce other material. You may locate further references through bibliographies in articles and books that you already have, through browsing relevant journals, through library catalogues, or through searching the web. Bear in mind that material on the web, especially, is very uneven in quality; you need to make judgements as to whether data are likely to be accurate, and whether interpretations are justifiable or opinionated.

In order to be clear and professional, you should cite and list your sources in a standardized way. In anthropology, the most common system uses 'author-date' citations within the text rather than footnotes or endnotes.

- General reference to writer/text within a sentence: for example,
  ‘…as Leach (1972) influentially argued…’
  ‘…as critics of Said have noted (e.g. Clifford 1988)…’

- Reference to a specific passage/quotation: all direct quotations must be accompanied by specific page references, for example,
  ‘…Fry and Willis are suspicious of the emphasis they see on traditional Aboriginal artists (1989: 160-62)…’
  ‘…Myers has suggested that “the appeal of the acrylics is the sense of their rootedness in the world” (1995: 84)…’

Any quotation longer than three lines should appear as a separate, indented paragraph, without
quotation marks.

- **The Bibliography**

  Full references should be consolidated in a bibliography at the end of your essay, not in the form of endnotes. It should be in alphabetical order by author and should include all and only those works cited. It is important that you include all the information for a reference, and not only date, author and title. Although there are a number of set bibliographic styles, we strongly recommend that you use the following form:

  **Book:**

  **Edited book:**

  **Article in journal:**

  **Chapter in book:**

  **Film/Video:**
  *Harlan County, USA* (1976) Barbara Kopple. Cabin Creek Films, USA. 103 minutes. [name after date is that of director].

  **Web pages:**
  Where appropriate, refer to the specific page, rather than the site in general, and include details of the title and author of specific material, for example:

3. **The issues of plagiarism and overlap**

In addition to the general rules of plagiarism, as stated in the Student Handbook, you must ensure that the same work is not submitted for more than one examination, and that it does not overlap with other formally assessed work. Please note the College’s chief concern is that you do not use material in examinations as a means of deception. These guidelines do not therefore stipulate against you making links between courses, or establishing the cross-over of material, or against the answering of an examination question that may partially relate to a coursework essay.

*Plagiarism* is the use of someone else’s work - either direct quotation or minor rephrasing - that is not cited, and is passed off as your own work. The form of the original source is irrelevant - for example, it can be from a book, the Internet, or another student's essay. Work where the author is unknown should be listed as ‘anonymous’.

*Self-plagiarism* is the use of your own work - either direct quotation or minor rephrasing - that has already been submitted to a Department, either in the form of a coursework essay or examination. Self-plagiarism is a particular issue where an essay, or section of an essay, is reproduced completely unchanged through ‘cut and paste’ facilities.

*Overlap* is the use of the same material in more than one examination, either within this Department or another. In addition to self-plagiarism, overlap can include the use of virtually the same general argument or virtually the same sources of reference material.

Note that the College is very strict on these matters, and if found guilty students are likely to be severely penalised. If you have any queries regarding these issues you must contact the Anthropology Examinations Officer.