From Struggles over the Environment and Human Livelihood to a Politics of Conviviality in a More-than-Human World

Since the 1970s, the interdisciplinary field of political ecology has pondered human-environment relations, paying particular attention to how human power dynamics at various scales influence the conceptualization and utilization of “nature” and the distribution of (and access to) natural resources needed for survival. After briefly reviewing the evolution, scope and limits of political ecology, this seminar considers how recent theoretical trends, which focus on human-nonhuman entanglements and question the culture/nature divide, might be re-configuring this field of inquiry. Specifically, this seminar encourages students to reflect on how the original interests of political ecology on environmental deterioration, social justice, and alternatives to development might be reframed or altogether ignored by new theoretical approaches that claim to be leading us towards an enlightened politics of conviviality in a more than human world.

Required Books


Note: Additional required readings are available online or, in the case of book chapters, can be found at the departmental library.

Required Assignments (further instructions will be given in class)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>2 oral presentations based on 2 non-consecutive sets of weekly readings</td>
<td>30% (15 percent per presentation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 debate questions posted to the group prior to class on four separate weeks when the student is not presenting</td>
<td>20% (5 % per question)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and engagement during in-class discussions</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Reflection Paper, 12-15 pages in length</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Oral Presentations

Two times during the term each student is expected to give a 15 minute presentation based on a set of weekly readings. During this time, the student will briefly identify and define key terms, summarize the author/s main arguments and critically assess their merits. As we advance through the term, it is expected that the student will also be able to reflect on how subsequent readings relate to, build on, or move beyond the questions or perspectives of previous readings.

Debate

During four weeks when the student is not presenting, s/he will email a question to the entire class on any of the week’s readings. This question will be used to structure and encourage seminar discussion and should be posted at least a day in advance of our Tuesday meeting. Please, proofread the question to ensure adequate contextualization, clarity, and conciseness.

In-Class Participation

As is the case in most seminars, students are expected to complete all readings and show engagement in class discussions.

Final Reflection Papers

During the term, students will be encouraged to identify theoretical and methodological approaches that might best suit their current research plans or simply perk their curiosity. In consultation with the professor, by the end of week 8, students should be able to narrow down a topic to explore in a final reflection paper which will primarily draw on seminar readings. The paper is due two weeks after the last class.

Graduate Course Health and Wellness

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western’s Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page http://www.music.uwo.ca/, and our own McIntosh Gallery http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/

Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html

To help you learn more about mental health, Western has developed an interactive mental health learning module, found here: http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/module.html. This module is 30 minutes in length and provides participants with a basic understanding of mental health issues and of available campus and community resources. Topics include stress, anxiety, depression, suicide and eating disorders. After successful completion of the module, participants receive a certificate confirming their participation.
PART I INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ECOLOGY AND ITS OBJECTIVES

WEEK 1  
Introduction

WEEK 2  
The Scope and Limits of Political Ecology


WEEK 3  
Forest Conservation, Resources, Farming, and Food Consumption: Considering Scale, Movements and Struggles


PART II QUERIING «THE GREAT DIVIDE»

WEEK 4  
Natures-cultures, ANT, and the non-Modern Perspective

Latour, B. We Have Never Been Modern, pp. 1-75

WEEK 5  
Natures-cultures and ANT, and the non-Modern Perspective (cont’d)

Latour, B. We Have Never Been Modern, pp. 76-145
**WEEK 6  OCTOBER 14**

**Rethinking Nature, the Environment, the Human and the Non-Human: Implications for Political Ecology**


**WEEK 7  OCTOBER 21**

**Dissolving Divides and Hybrid Networks: The Case of Forests, Gardens and Cheese Cultures**


**PART III CONVIVIALITY IN A MULTISPECIES WORLD**

**WEEK 8  OCTOBER 28**

**Companion Species and the Decentering of Humans (cont’d)**

Haraway, *When Species Meet*, pp. 1-67

**WEEK 9  NOVEMBER 4**

**Companion Species and the Decentering of Humans (cont’d)**


**WEEK 10  NOVEMBER 11**

**Companion Species and the Decentering of Humans (cont’d)**


**WEEK 11  NOVEMBER 18**

**The Politics of Living Cities and Living Landscapes**


**WEEK 12**

**NOVEMBER 25**

*Returning to the Forest, Engaging Non-Human Others and Reflecting on Transpecies Entanglements*


**PART IV RECONCILING PERSPECTIVES: THE FUTURE OF POLITICAL ECOLOGY**

**WEEK 13**

**DECEMBER 2**

*Reflections on Seminar Readings*