Course Description:
Over the past three decades, Political Ecology has emerged as a powerful interdisciplinary critique of ecological change. Simply put, Political Ecology is a strategy for mapping political, economic, and social factors onto questions of environmental degradation and transformation. Political Ecology has been a powerful strategy for reinserting politics into apolitical discussions of ecology and the environment; writing disposed groups—human and non-human—back into discussions about conservation; and unsettling common sense understandings of “the environment” as separate from “the social.” This course will provide an introduction to core tenets of political ecology. Particularly focusing on ethnographic approaches, this course will introduce students to key debates in the field—such as the relationship between environment and violence, the critique of Malthusian and neo-Malthusian notions of scarcity and limits, the links between conservation and dispossession, and more. It will further explore the uses of political ecology in key contemporary debates over social and environmental change—from food production to water management.
Course Format, Policies and Procedures

Course Format
This course is an upper-level, writing intensive seminar and will be primarily organized around class discussion and feedback on written work. Occasionally, it will combine lectures, in-class presentations, and small group work to explore specific cases. We will cover a range of different materials, including academic writings, case studies, and films. I expect your full, active, and professional participation in class. This means:

- Attending all class meetings
- Showing up on time (note—persistently showing up late will negatively affect your participation grade)
- Respectfully engaging with the course instructor and your peers
- Being responsible for all of the assigned reading and materials: this means that if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to do the reading and get class notes from one of your peers

Course readings and syllabus
I believe that a course and its instructor should be adaptable. This means that readings and course activities may change to suite course developments, forward fruitful discussions, or to address a student interests. For this reason, the readings in this syllabus should be regarded as provisional. For any given week, the readings will be available and listed in the “Modules” section of Canvas. For this reason, readings are not available for a given week until the previous week.

While readings may, from time to time change, the course policies and procedures listed in this syllabus will not. It is your responsibility to know them.

Reading Policy
All of the course readings for this class can be found on Canvas with the exception of four books which are required. Those are:


In some classes, we will spend significant time discussing particular readings. In others, we will treat them as background. In all cases, if there is something you don’t understand in the material, it is your responsibility to make sure that you gain an understanding of it by asking questions and raising issues. You are expected to arrive at class ready to discuss any and all of the required course readings. For most classes, I have included “Suggested” readings that are also available on Canvas. These are not required, but, should you be interested in a topic and wish to pursue it more (for a final paper, for example) these are good places to start.

Policy on Plagiarism
I strongly believe that learning is a collaborative venture. I encourage you to study with your peers, meet to discuss readings with them, and, on particular assignments, to work together with them. That said, the work that you produce for this course must be your own. There are no exceptions to this rule and no legitimate excuses for violating it.
In event that you fail to acknowledge others' work or that you are caught overtly plagiarizing from online or written sources, you will receive a zero on the assignment and may be subject to disciplinary procedures. See below (following course readings) for links to the University Policy on Academic integrity.

**Email and Office Hours policy**
Please, feel free to contact me via email ([jasoncons@utexas.edu](mailto:jasoncons@utexas.edu)). I prefer that you contact me directly rather than through Canvas. Please also keep in mind that I am as busy as you. Make sure you consult the course syllabus, other handouts, your peers and the course Canvas site before sending an e-mail. Note that e-mail should not be seen as an alternative to meeting with me during office hours. Nor should e-mail be used as a mechanism to receive private tutorials or to explain material that was covered in classes you missed (those are your responsibility to obtain from your peers). To ensure that your e-mail reaches my inbox, include the course code (ANT 324) and the nature of your question/comment in the subject of your e-mail. I will endeavor to respond within 24 hours, though I make no promises to do this on the weekend, so plan ahead. Contacting me the night before an assignment is due is, by definition, too late.

My office hours are your time and you are welcome to drop by at any time during them. Because, at particular times in the semester, many of you will want to see me, I do recommend setting up an appointment ahead of time. Also, if you have a regular class conflict during my office hours, I am more than happy to set up an appointment with you at another time, however, I ask that you do not just drop by my office outside of office hours without checking with me first. I may be there, but I will be working on other things with pressing deadlines.

**Late Policy**
I adhere to the following late policy on assignments:

- All reading response papers must be turned in by **8PM the night before class**. Late reading responses will receive a zero. The responses must deal with the readings for that day. Post-facto responses are not acceptable.
- Other assignments turned in up to 12 hours late will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade.
- Assignments turned in between 12 and 24 hours late will be penalized a full letter grade.
- Assignments turned in between 24 and 48 hours late will be penalized two full letter grades.
- Assignments more than 48 hours late will not be accepted.

**Writing Policy**
This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers’ work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

- I have extensively detailed my policy on citation and bibliography on my website: [http://www.jasoncons.net/formatting-and-referencing-papers.html](http://www.jasoncons.net/formatting-and-referencing-papers.html)
- I have also provided advice for student writers that is applicable not just in my courses, but in any course you are likely to take as an undergraduate: [http://www.jasoncons.net/advice-on-writing.html](http://www.jasoncons.net/advice-on-writing.html)
Attendance Policy
Attendance at all course meetings is required. For the first few course sessions (until I know all of your names) I will take a roll call. After that, I will simply record your presence or absence in my notes.

You are permitted two unexplained course absences per semester. After that, each absence will reduce your overall participation grade by 3.33% (i.e., by 1/3 of a letter grade). If you have a legitimate reason to miss class, it is your responsibility to let me know by email before class.

Assignments and Grades
The following is a breakdown of how I will evaluate your performance in the class. More in-depth descriptions, rubrics, and prompts will be provided with each assignment.
- Class Participation: 20%—Active, informed, and respectful participation in class discussions and small group work. Course leadership on days you are a course leader is a significant factor in this grade.
- Reading Responses: 20%—You will write 4 brief (2 page) reading response papers over the course of the semester.
- Mid-Term Take Home Exam: 25%—There will be a mid-term take home exam designed to evaluate your familiarity with concept from the first half of the course and your ability to apply them to real-world cases.
- Final Paper: 35%—You will write a final research paper based on your own original research.

A note on class participation
The class participation is worth 20% of your overall grade. This is a famously fuzzy measure. Here is how I plan to assess it:
- 5% of total grade: Showing up on time
- 5% of total grade: Coming prepared to discuss the readings
- 5% of total grade: Making regular and productive contributions to class discussions
- 5% of total grade: Being an effective discussion leader during your designated course sessions

Learning Objectives/ Goals
Upon completion, students will be able to:
- Understand and explain the origins of and key debates in political ecology
- Understand the contributions of anthropology and ethnography to discussions of contemporary and historical environmental change
- Apply perspectives in political ecology to tease apart key assumptions in standard environmental debates (Neo-Malthusianism, scarcity, nature/culture, etc.)
- Use a political ecology lens to explain and evaluate real world problems in historical, geographical, and cultural context.
- Identify and analyze key challenges and complexities related to addressing specific problems in political ecology
- Analyze and understand different approaches to the study of ecological transformation
- Understand the mechanics of writing about, researching, and analyzing case-data on political ecology
- Write, speak, communicate, and think more critically and clearly about the politics of environmental change.
Course Introduction

Week 1: What is Political Ecology (part 1)?

January 17: Course Introduction
SUGGESTED:

January 19: The Origins and Futures of Political Ecology
SUGGESTED:

Week 2: What is Political Ecology (part 2)?

January 24: Political or Apolitical Ecology?

January 26: The Political Ecology Toolkit

Themes, Strategies, Practices

Week 3: Unsettling the Nature/Culture Divide

January 31: Troubling Nature and Wilderness

February 2: Untangling Histories of Nature and Culture

Week 4: The Production of Boundaries

February 7: Enclosures and Boundary Making
SUGGESTED:

February 9: Displacement, Development, and Surplus Populations
SUGGESTED:
Week 5: The Critique of Violence

February 14: Scarcity/Security


February 16: Violence, Nature, Poverty


SUGGESTED:


Week 6: Resource Management and Environmental Governance

February 21: Disciplining the Environment


SUGGESTED:


February 23: Contesting Environmental Management

Split discussion


Week 7: Fictitious Commodities

February 28: Understanding Fictitious Commodities

⇒ Instructions for final paper distributed


March 2: Inside The Political Forest

⇒ Mid-term exam distributed


SUGGESTED:

Week 8: Environmental Subjects  
March 7: Flammable, Part 1  

March 9: Flammable, Part 2  
⇒ Mid-term exam due: Thursday by midnight on canvas  

Topics in Political Ecology

Week 9: Political Ecology of Food  
March 21: Meat  

March 23: Plantations and Farms  
⇒ Abstracts for final paper due  
Split discussion  
• Seth Holmes. 2007. “‘Oaxacans Like to Work Bent Over’: The Naturalization of Social Suffering among Berry Farm Workers.” International Migration. 45(3).

Week 10: Political Ecology of Water  
March 28: Fields and Streams, Part 1  

March 30: Fields and Streams, Part 2  

Week 11: Political Ecology of Infrastructure  
April 4: Waterways  
• Ashley Carse and Joshua Lewis. 2016. “Towards a Political Ecology of Infrastructure Standards: Or, How to Think About Ships, Waterways, Sediment, and Communities Together.” Environment and Planning A

April 6: Pipes and Drains  
SPLIT DISCUSSION  
**Week 12: Political Ecology of Swamps**

**April 11: Swamplife, Part 1**

**April 13: Swamplife, Part 2**

**Week 13: Political Ecology of Toxicity**

**April 18: Toxic Environ**

**SPLIT DISCUSSION**

**April 20: Research Working Session**
- In-Class Peer Review Workshop
- Draft due on Canvas by start of class.
- Bring 2 copies of paper to class

**Week 14: Political Ecology Beyond Humans**

**April 25: Beyond Human**

**April 27: Animal/Human Relations in the Himalayas**
- Draft of final paper due on canvas by midnight

**SPLIT DISCUSSION**

**Course Conclusion**

**Week 15: Wrapping Up and Final Papers**

**May 2: Writing Workshop**
- Papers returned.
- In-class writing workshop.

**May 4: Course Conclusion**
- Final Paper Due on Tuesday, May 16 at Noon according to University Exam Schedule
Policies & Resources

University Policies

Religious Holy Days
By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Q Drop Policy
If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you’ll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see: http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop

Student Accommodations
Students with a documented disability may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/
- Please request a meeting as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations
- Please notify me as soon as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible
- Please notify me if any of the physical space is difficult for you

Academic Integrity
Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code:

“As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

This means that work you produce on assignments, tests and exams is all your own work, unless it is assigned as group work. I will make it clear for each test, exam or assignment whether collaboration is encouraged or not.
Always cite your sources. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must make that clear otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course.
You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty Policy which can be found at the following web address: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

University Resources for Students
The university has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning, use these to help you succeed in your classes

The Sanger Learning Center
Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center’s classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).
The University Writing Center
The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance we provide is intended to foster students’ resourcefulness and self-reliance.  
http://uwc.utexas.edu/

Counseling and Mental Health Center
The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) provides counseling, psychiatric, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students’ academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. http://cmhc.utexas.edu/

Student Emergency Services
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/

ITS
Need help with technology? http://www.utexas.edu/its/

Libraries
Need help searching for information? http://www.lib.utexas.edu/

Canvas
Canvas help is available 24/7 at https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials

Important Safety Information

BCAL
If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn’t feel right – it probably isn’t. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Evacuation Information
The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, http://www.utexas.edu/safety/

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when an alarm or alert is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside, unless told otherwise by an official representative.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency