

FALL 2013  
NATURE/SOCIETY THEORY  
HUMAN ECOLOGY 501

1 Course Description

2 Logistics

3 Requirements

4 Writing

5 Discussion

6 Schedule

7 Reading List



## 1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar is designed to provide students with a survey of theories and concepts in human-environment studies. We will examine how perspectives and arguments of oft-cited theorists (e.g. Foucault, Scott, Haraway) have been taken up in nature-society scholarship in geography, anthropology, development studies, environmental studies, and other disciplines. To do so, we will read selected writings from social theorists as well as contemporary nature-society scholars.

In this course we will explore readings together, making sense of writing and concepts through collective discussion and debate. All participants are expected to contribute to weekly discussion based on the assigned readings. In addition to thoughtful contributions to discussions, participants will write short response papers each week. **Please upload papers to appropriate folder (by week) in Sakai under "Resources" by 1pm each Wednesday. Also bring a hardcopy to class.** Finally, each student will lead one seminar discussion. Leadership dates will be determined at our first meeting, Sept. 4.

Each seminar will begin with a brief review lead by the instructors. During this review, participants can bring up topics or concepts from previous weeks requiring further clarification, or address new interpretations based on subsequent readings.

Following the review session, the seminar leader will take over. Each participant in the course must lead a seminar. Seminar leadership involves presenting a brief—no more than 10 minute--summary of the reading(s), including identification of main themes. In addition, the leader is expected to provide critical discussion questions to the group. Seminar participants are also encouraged to bring their own questions to class. The seminar leader should be prepared to provide critical commentary and facilitate discussion among participants.

## 2. LOGISTICS

**Time and place:** This class meets Wednesdays, 3:55-6:55pm, in Cook Office Building 226.

**Instructors:** Heidi Hausermann and Pam McElwee, assistant professors in the Department of Human Ecology, are lead instructors for this course. Our contact information is:

### **Pam McElwee**

Office: 215 Cook Office Building  
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Office phone: 848-932-9209; Email: [pamela.mcelwee@rutgers.edu](mailto:pamela.mcelwee@rutgers.edu)

### **Heidi Hausermann**

Office: 211 Cook Office Building  
Office hours: Wednesdays 10am-12pm & by appointment  
Office phone: 848-932-9146; Email: [heidi.hausermann@rutgers.edu](mailto:heidi.hausermann@rutgers.edu)

**Students:** This course is open to any interested graduate student and satisfies a course requirement for the Department of Human Ecology's graduate certificate in human dimensions of global change.

## 3. REQUIREMENTS

### ***Participation***

Participation is graded according to the quality of contributions to seminar discussion. High quality participation includes demonstrating thoughtful engagement with weekly readings. Insightful questions and/or interpretations also define quality participation. Participants are encouraged to consult with the instructors if interested in ongoing performance evaluation.

### ***Seminar Leadership***

This component of the course will be assessed according to the quality of presentation and discussion questions, which require careful reading and thoughtful assessment. Discussion leaders should also pay attention to the flow of discussion.

### ***Weekly Response Papers***

You are expected to write 10 short papers during the semester. They are due each week and should be no more than 2 pages, single-spaced. The short response papers allow you to explore an aspect or component of the material under discussion and consider its implications for your own work or life. *You are not being asked to regurgitate what you read;* you are being asked to process what you read. The short papers will be turned back to you each week with comments but no grades.

The pedagogic aim of the weekly response papers is to encourage the practice of careful, critical reading. This approach enables you to concentrate your time and energy in sustained weekly attention to the texts. In other words, the attention you would otherwise bring to writing a term paper should be expended throughout the semester in reading, writing weekly responses, and discussion preparation.

### ***Final Paper***

At the end of the semester, you are expected to turn in a short “wrapping up” paper (3-5 pages, single-spaced). This paper should reflect on impact the course material has had on your intellectual development. For instance, how have particular authors, arguments or concepts influenced the way you think about your research? How might you integrate material or ideas from this course into your work (or life)? Has anything from this course made you question something in your field more critically? You might also use the final paper to show how and why your perspective changed during the semester.

## **4. WRITING<sup>1</sup>**

### **Suggestions for Critical Writing**

The weekly response papers should be concise, critical reflections on what you read. A critique—the basis of critical writing—generally has two basic parts. This first part should be a summary demonstrating you comprehend the main thrust of what you wish to discuss in your paper. For instance, you might start by stating the argument you wish to focus on and what it attempts to explain.

The second part of the critique is typically more extensive. It should outline the limits of the argument, especially pointing out where the author does not do what s/he set out to do, and moreover, what important and relevant problems the author does not account for. Having stated the limits of an argument, you mark out a space for next scholar (potentially yourself) to work toward solving that problem.

In both sections of your critique, pay attention to what the author says *and* what happens in the argument. In other words, what moves are made in the argument? How are problems constituted? How is the argument constructed? What is the purpose of each component of the argument? How do empirics, if any, articulate with the argument? Does the author do all these moves well? Feel free to include references to other writers you feel support the points you are trying to make or provide alternatives to the arguments you are assessing.

### **Response Papers**

A critical response paper is a short piece that represents your reaction to, and engagement with, a week’s readings. It is a formal (if very short) piece of writing and should be structured according to the style of a critique. Remember: A reaction paper is more than a summary of the reading; it should include a brief summary of the readings, and then go beyond summary to critique. The paper need not embrace the entire scope of the week’s reading; it could focus more narrowly on those parts of the text that are especially interesting to you.

To develop a short paper consider the following starting points:

- Characterize your own reaction to the week’s readings: Are you stimulated, confused, in agreement, in disagreement (and so forth) with what you read? For any reaction you can identify, trace its origin in the reading in particular passages, terms, arguments, examples, and so on. Students often find it

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<sup>1</sup> Some of these writing suggestions were borrowed from Prof. Sallie Marston at the University of Arizona, with her permission.

useful to develop papers around the terms, ideas, themes, agreements, or disagreements to which they have strongest reactions.

- Identify central topic(s) or issue(s). Then think about the position the writer takes with respect to this central issue. With regard to this theme or issue, identify agreements and disagreements between the writer and other writers you have read.
- Each writer is making an argument of some kind. Arguments are based on assumptions, represented by claims, and backed by evidence (and sometimes more assumptions). It is a useful exercise to identify these parts, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each argument. Then, you'll be able to see the links, similarities, and differences between arguments/readings.
- Some writers are more careful than others about defining their terms. Pay attention to what key terms are, how they are defined, and note discrepancies in the ways different writers use particular terms.
- Imagine a conversation between two or more writers' whose work you've read. Pose a question for them in your mind, and work out how they might respond to you and to one another.

## 5. DISCUSSION

As discussion leader, strive to develop questions that stimulate debate. Avoid yes/no or close-ended questions and aim for questions that encourage participants to make and defend their own arguments about the readings.

Suggestions: Think about the strengths, weaknesses, assumptions, and omissions in each argument; pose alternative interpretations of a particular reading; question the implications of a given argument for some aspect of research or theory-building; develop open-ended questions around confusing aspects of the author's argument to solicit different interpretations.

## 6. THE SCHEDULE

### **September 4, 2013** *Introductions: What is theory good for?*

- Giddens, Anthony. 2004. Part 1: Marx. In *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, p. 1-64. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenberg, Alexander. 2012. (Rosenberg 2012a). What is the philosophy of social science? and The methodological divide: naturalism versus interpretation. In *Philosophy of Social Science*, p. 1-33. Boulder: Westview Press.

#### *Optional:*

- Rosenberg, Alexander. 2012. Philosophical Anthropology. In *Philosophy of Social Science*, p. 139-168. Boulder: Westview Press.

### **September 11, 2013** *Marxist Nature: second contradiction and accumulation by dispossession*

- Benjaminsen, T.A. and Bryceson, I. 2012. Conservation, green/blue grabbing and accumulation by dispossession in Tanzania. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39(2): 335-355.
- Harvey, David. 2003. Accumulation by Dispossession. In *The New Imperialism*, p. 137-182. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- O'Connor, James. 1996. The Second Contradiction of Capitalism. In *The Greening of Marxism*, ed. T. Benton, p. 197-121. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Perreault, Tom. 2012. Dispossession by Accumulation? Mining, Water and the Nature of Enclosure on the Bolivian Altiplano. *Antipode* doi: 10.1111/anti.12005.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. 2005. Dispossessing H2O: The Contested Terrain of Water Privatization. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 16(1): 81-98.

#### *Optional:*

- Büscher, B., Sullivan, S., Neves, K., Igoe, J., and Brockington, D. 2012. Towards a Synthesized Critique of Neoliberal Biodiversity Conservation. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 23(2): 4-30.
- Castree, Noel. 2002. False Antithesis? Marxism, Nature and Actor Networks. *Antipode* 34(1): 111-146.

### **September 18, 2013** *Post-structural Nature: governmentality and subject-making*

- Foucault, Michel. 1980. Body/Power and Questions on Geography. In *Knowledge/Power: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon, p. 55-77. New York: Pantheon Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1991. Governmentality. In *The Foucault Effect*, eds. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller, p. 87-104. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gordon, Colin. 1991. Government rationality: an introduction. In *The Foucault Effect*, eds. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller, p. 1-51. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rose, Nikolas. 1999. Governing. In *Powers of Freedom*, p. 15-60. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

#### *Optional:*

- Butler, Judith. 2002. Bodies and power, revisited. *Radical Philosophy* 114: 13-19.
- Gordon, Colin. 1980. Afterward. In *Knowledge/Power: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon, p. 229-259. New York: Pantheon Press.

**September 25, 2013** *Post-structural Nature: governmentality and subject-making*

- Agrawal, Arun. 2005. Environmentality: Community, Intimate Government, and the Making of Environmental Subjects in Kumaon, India. *Current Anthropology* 46(2): 161-190.
- Elmhirst, Rebecca. 2011. Migrant pathways to resource access in Lampung's political forest: Gender, citizenship and creative conjugality. *Geoforum* 42(2): 173- 183.
- Robbins, Paul. 2000. The Practical Politics of Knowing: State Environmental Knowledge and Local Political Economy. *Economic Geography* 76(2): 126-144.
- Sundberg, Juanita. 2004. Identities in the making: conservation, gender and race in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala. *Gender, Place & Culture* 11(1): 43-66.

**October 2, 2013** *Post-colonial Nature: buried epistemologies*

- Braun, Bruce. 2002. *The Intemperate Rainforest*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

*Optional:*

- Childs, Peter and Patrick Williams, R.J. 1997. Introduction: Points of departure. In *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, p. 1-25. London: Prentice Hall Press.

**October 9, 2013** *Post-colonial Nature: techno politics*

- Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *Rule of Experts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

**October 16, 2013** *States of Nature*

- Scott, James. 1998. *Seeing like a State*. Yale University Press. Ch 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10.
- Ferguson, James. 2005. Seeing like an oil company: Space, Security, and Global Capital in Neoliberal Africa. *American Anthropologist* Vol. 107, Issue 3, pp. 377–382
- Li, Tania. 2005. Beyond 'the State' and Failed Schemes. *American Anthropologist* Vol. 107, Issue 3, pp. 383–394

**October 23, 2013** *Practice Theory*

- Bourdieu, P. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*, Ch 1-6.
- Ohja, HR, J. Cameron and C Kumar. 2009 . Deliberation or symbolic violence? The governance of community forestry in Nepal. *Forest Policy and Economics* 11: 365–374
- Ozaki, R, I Shaw, and M Dodgson. 2012. The Coproduction of “Sustainability”: Negotiated Practices and the Prius. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, p. 1-24
- Gomez, M-L & Bouty, I. 2011. The Emergence of an Influential Practice: Food for Thought. *Organization Studies* 32(7): 921-940

*Optional:*

- Sandberg and Dall'Alba. 2009. Returning to Practice Anew: A Life-World Perspective. *Organization Studies* 30(12): 1349–1368

**October 30, 2013** *Risk Society*

- Beck, Ulrich. 1995. *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*. Intro, Ch 2, 3, 4, 6, 7
- Jensen, M and A Blok. 2008. Pesticides in the Risk Society: The View from Everyday Life. *Current Sociology* Vol. 56(5): 757–778

- Robbins, Paul. 2007. *Lawn People: How Grasses, Weeds and Chemicals Make Us Who We Are*. Temple University Press. Ch 1, 4, 6, 8

**November 6, 2013 Science and Technology Studies**

- Kuhn, T. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Ch 1 & 2. U of Chicago Press.
- Latour, B and S. Woolgar. 1979. Ch 1 & 3, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton U. Press.
- Latour, B. 1999. "Circulating Reference". From *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Harvard U. Press.
- Jasanoff, S. 2004. *States of Knowledge: The Co-Production of Science and Social Order*. ch 1 & 2. Routledge.

*Optional*

- Kinchy, A and Kleinman, DL. 2003. Organizing Credibility: Discursive and Organizational Orthodoxy on the Borders of Ecology and Politics. *Social Studies of Science* 33(6): 869-896.

**November 13, 2013 Actor Network Theory**

- Callon, M. 1986. Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St. Brieuc bay. *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by John Law. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Law, J. 1992. Notes on the theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, strategy and heterogeneity. *Systems Practice* 5(4): 379-393.
- Murdoch, J. 1997. Inhuman/nonhuman/human: actor-network theory and the prospects for a non dualistic and symmetrical perspective on nature and society. *Environment and Planning D* 15(6): 731-756
- Latour, B. 2005. Selections from *Reassembling the Social*, p 2-138. Harvard University Press.

*Optional:*

- Rutland, T and A. Aylett (2008). The work of policy: actor networks, governmentality and local action on climate change in Portland, Oregon. *Environment and Planning D* vol 26: 627-646.

**November 20, 2013 Environmental History**

- O'Neill, Karen, 2006. *Rivers by Design: State Power and the Origins of US Flood Control*. Duke University Press.

**December 4, 2013 Feminist Theory**

- Butler, J. 1990. Ch1 from *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.
- Haraway, D. 1988 [1999]. Situated Knowledges. In *The Science Studies Reader*. Ed. Mario Biagioli, New York Routledge.
- Nightingale, A. 2003. A Feminist in the Forest: Situated Knowledges and Mixing Methods in Natural Resource Management. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 2 (1), 2003
- Nightingale, A. 2011. Bounding difference: Intersectionality and the material production of gender, caste, class and environment in Nepal. *Geoforum* 42, 153–162

- Sturman, S. 2006. On Black-boxing Gender: Some Social Questions for Bruno Latour, *Social Epistemology: A Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy*, 20:2, 181-184

*Optional:*

- Morris, R. 1995. All Made Up: Performance Theory and the New Anthropology of Sex and Gender. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 24, pp. 567-592

**December 11, 2013: New ontologies**

- Whatmore, Sarah. 2002. Ch 1-3 of *Hybrid Geographies*. Routledge.
- Braun, B. 2008. Environmental issues: inventive life. *Progress in Human Geography* 32(5), pp. 667–679
- Carolan, M. 2004. Ontological Politics: Mapping a Complex Environmental Problem. *Environmental Values*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 497-522.
- Blaser, M. 2009. The Threat of the Yrmo: The Political Ontology of a Sustainable Hunting Program. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 111, Issue 1, pp. 10–20
- Shaw et al (2010). A bug's life and the spatial ontologies of mosquito management. *AAAG* 100: 373-392.

*Optional:*

- Woolgar and Lezaun, 2013. The wrong bin bag: A turn to ontology in science and technology studies? *Social Studies of Science* 43: 321