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Remote Office hours: Weds. 3:00-5:00PM

IAFS 4500-400: Global Political Ecology



This course explores the relationship between politics (broadly defined) and the environment at the global level. We will consider a range of challenges and environmental issues that have explicit global impact and/or are nonetheless considered “global” because they are endemic in many places around the world. Drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of political ecology and case studies around the world, this course explores themes such as: global water politics; urbanization and city environments; constructions of nature and wildlife preservation; the production and consumption of food; disaster governance; and carbon offsets to address climate change. In the process, we examine and critically evaluate differing theoretical frames employed by political ecologists, including approaches to environmental knowledge and discourse, political economy, and environmental justice among others. Students of the course will take positions on key global environmental debates, as well as evaluate empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives, through discussions, reflection papers, and developing a final policy analysis paper.

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

A student completing this course will be able to:

- Discern and understand the core concepts and theorizations of differing political ecology approaches as applied to key global environmental issues and challenges (*readings, lectures, discussions, mid-term*)
- Distill and become familiar with the multiple methods used by scholars and practitioners to research political ecology questions with global relevance (*mid-term, final paper*)
- Evaluate debates around major global environmental issues as learned through paradigmatic case studies from around the world (*discussions, midterm*)
- Understand major environmental challenges in the Global North and South and their policy possibilities (*final paper, class readings, midterm*)
- Critically analyze empirical data pertaining to international affairs and key global environmental debates (*final paper, reflection papers*)
- Develop a policy analyses using a political ecology lens through a 15-page paper on a chosen key environmental issue with global consequence (*final paper*)
- Develop presentation skills through presenting their policy analysis to the class (*final verbal video presentation*).

Assignments, Examinations & Grading

Summary:

- Remote Class Participation & Citizenship (10%)
- Quizzes (Reading Comprehension Checks) (15%)
- Discussion Posts (4) (20%)
- Mid-Term Examination (20%)
- Final Policy Analysis Paper Project (35%)

Remote Class Participation & Citizenship (10%)

Students are expected to come to each zoom class fully prepared, having thoroughly read the assigned readings for that section and prepared questions or comments for the group discussion (see discussion guidelines below, which will be factored into determining your participation grade). We will also at times break into smaller zoom break-out groups and reconvene to report back during class time. Students are expected to distribute and share leadership of small-group work, so that everyone has a chance to contribute and report back when we share our small-group findings. Unexcused absences will result in a decrease in the participation grade.

Class and Discussion Participation

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT	ADEQUATE	NEEDS WORK
Frequency of participation in class	Student initiates contributions at least once each class.	Student initiates contribution at least in half of the classes.	Student does not initiate contributions & needs instructor to solicit input.
Quality of comments	Comments always insightful & constructive; uses appropriate terminology. Comments balanced between general impressions, opinions & specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions.	Comments are sometimes constructive, with occasional signs of insight. Grasp of the appropriate terminology.	Comments are uninformative. Lacking in appropriate terminology. Heavy reliance on opinion & personal taste, e.g., "I love it", "I hate it", etc.
Listening Skills	Student listens attentively and respectfully when others present materials, perspectives, as indicated by comments that build on others' remarks, i.e., student hears what others say & contributes to the dialogue.	Student is mostly attentive when others present ideas. Occasionally needs encouragement or reminders from the instructor to focus.	Student is often inattentive and needs repeated reminders to focus on the class discussion. Occasionally makes disruptive comments while others are speaking. Detracts from the discussion. Sleeps.

This rubric assumes students' attendance during remote class. An absent student cannot receive any participation grade.

Adapted from <https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/examples/courselevel-bycollege/cfa/tools/participationrubric-cfa.pdf>

Quizzes (15%)

Due Date: TBA on Canvas by 11:59PM before Assigned Class

Each student will complete 5 quizzes on Canvas before the start of class on the assigned quiz day. Please refer to course schedule as well as modules to see Quiz dates and deadlines. Students will be allowed to retake quizzes, as long as the final (highest) quiz score is taken and submitted before class.

Discussion Posts (4) (20%)

Each student will complete four discussion posts, with four responses to other students' posts. Details of each post, and deadlines, are available on the schedule as well as in the module page on canvas.

Mid-Term Examination (20%)

Due: October 15th (taken on Canvas remotely during class time)

The midterm exam will be an remote synchronous exam on Canvas covering the material from the first section of the course.

Final Policy Analysis Paper Project (35%)

In consultation with me, you will develop a paper topic, extended abstract, verbal policy briefing video, and 15-page final paper that offers a policy-oriented analysis (that is, a report making policy recommendations) based on your research on a current issue relevant to global environmental politics. The goal is for you to gain some fluency in a substantive, real-world issue relevant to global political ecology and the themes of the course and communicate your analysis in both written and verbal form. As part of this project, you will present a verbal policy briefing video that summarizes the main policy issues and your position. More details of the assignment will be provided in class.

Policy Paper Extended Abstract and Annotated Bibliography (5%)

Due: November 12th to peer reviewer via email and on Canvas (by 2:20PM start of class)

Students will submit a 2-page (double spaced) extended abstract that outlines the topic of their policy paper topic, key arguments, and possible implications and recommendations that is submitted on Canvas as well as emailed to your assigned peer reviewer. In addition, when you submit your abstract you will also submit a 2-page (double spaced) annotated bibliography. This is a bibliography that provides a brief summary of your most important sources and should include at least 5 relevant peer-reviewed articles/references they intend to utilize.

Policy Briefing Video Presentation (15%)

Due: December 4th 11:59pm on Canvas

You will present a concise verbal policy briefing video (5-8 minutes) that summarizes the main policy issues of your research and your position. More details will be provided in the assignment page on Canvas.

Final Policy Analysis Paper (20%)

Due: December 4th 11:59pm on Canvas

In consultation with me, you will develop a 15-page final paper that offers a policy-oriented analysis (that is, a report making policy recommendations) based on your research on a current issue relevant to global environmental politics. The goal is for you to gain some fluency in a substantive, real-world issue applicable to global political ecology and the themes of the course through conducting a policy analysis based on in-depth research. More details of the assignment will be provided on the assignment page in Canvas.

Grading

Student grades will be determined on the basis of the following scale: 98-100=A+, 94-97=A, 90- 93=A-, 87-89=B+, 84-86=B, 80-83=B-, 77-79=C+, 74-76=C, 70-73=C-, 67-69=D+, 64- 66=D, 60-63=D-, 59 and below=F. If you need an extension, **discuss it with me at least in advance**, except in cases of documented medical or family emergency. Late assignments will be penalized one third of a grade for each day they are late; for example, an A paper that is submitted two days late will receive a B+. I grade as follows: 98-100=A+, 94-97=A, 90- 93=A-, 87-89=B+, 84-86=B, 80-83=B-, 77-79=C+, 74-76=C, 70-73=C-, 67-69=D+, 64- 66=D, 60-63=D-, 59 and below=F.

Readings

All readings will be posted and/or linked to via the course website on CANVAS.

Remote Classroom Behavior

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline.

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Requirements for COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety due to the pandemic, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements, and public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Required safety measures at CU Boulder relevant to the classroom setting include:

- maintain 6-foot distancing when possible,
- wear a face covering in public indoor spaces and outdoors while on campus consistent with state and county health orders,
- clean local work area,
- practice hand hygiene,
- follow public health orders, and
- if sick and you live off campus, do not come onto campus (unless instructed by a CU Healthcare professional), or if you live on-campus, please alert [CU Boulder Medical Services](#).

Students who fail to adhere to these requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#). For more information, see the policies on [COVID-19 Health and Safety](#) and [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please see the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

Before returning to campus, all students must complete the [COVID-19 Student Health and Expectations Course](#). Before coming on to campus each day, all students are required to complete a [Daily Health Form](#).

Students who have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for or had symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and complete the [Health Questionnaire and Illness Reporting Form](#) remotely. In this class, if you are sick or quarantined, **please inform the professor as soon as possible that you are missing class due to illness, and arrange for any extensions that may be needed.** If you disclose to the instructor

that you have specifically tested positive for COVID-19 *or* are having symptoms of COVID-19 *or* have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, the instructor will submit that information to the Medical Services Public Health Office for the purposes of contact tracing (contacttracing@colorado.edu and/or 303-492-2937).

Accommodation for Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

Preferred Student Names and Pronouns

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu; 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that

individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, please inform me several weeks in advance of the holiday, and arrange for any make-up work needed. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Office Hours and Email

Coming to my office hours on zoom (Weds 3-5PM) is the best way to get immediate feedback. Email should be reserved for questions I can answer in a few sentences. I aim to reply to emails within 72 hours (excluding weekends).

Technology Policy

As class will be conducted remotely on zoom, and will involve student participation in class and group discussions, I am requiring all students to use their cameras as well as audio to attend and participate in class. If this poses an issue for you, please contact me individually via email to discuss further.

COURSE SCHEDULE & READINGS

Week 1: Course Overview and Introduction to Global Political Ecology

Welcome to the course! This week we begin with introductions and an overview of the course website (canvas), syllabus, expectations and guidelines. In our second session, we introduce ourselves to political ecology, global nature and environmental governance.

Tuesday (8/25): Course Welcome & Overview

Thursday (8/27): Introduction to Global Political Ecology

Robbins, P. (2011). "Chapter 1: The Hatchet and the Seed." *Political ecology: A critical introduction* (Vol. 16). John Wiley & Sons, pp 3-16.

To Do:

Discussion Post 1: Introductions & GPE Issue of Interest, DUE: Sunday 8/30, 11:59PM,
Response 1 Due: Monday 8/31, 11:59PM

Week 2: Social Constructions of Nature

This week, we examine the ways political ecologists engage with the social construction of nature. By looking at environmental discourse, science, and management, we trace differing dimensions of nature's social construction, and its connection to shaping environmental politics and practices across the globe.

Week 2.1 (9/1) The 'trouble' with Wilderness

Cronon, W. (1996). The trouble with wilderness: or, getting back to the wrong nature. *Environmental History*, 1(1), 7-28.

Week 2.2 (9/3) Social Constructions of Nature

Scarce, R. (1998). What do wolves mean? Conflicting social constructions of *Canis lupus* in "Bordertown". *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, 3(3), 26-45.

Week 3. Political Ecology of Global Water

This week, we examine global water politics and the hydro-social cycle, including the ongoing struggle to supply potable drinking water to the world's population. We then shift our focus to debates on public vs. private water regulation.

Tuesday (9/8): Global Drinking Water and the Hydrosocial cycle

Birkenholtz, T. 2016. "Drinking Water." In Jackson, Speiss and Sultana (Eds.). *Eating, Drinking: Surviving*. Springer, pp.23-30.

Thursday (9/10): Debating Privatization

Budds, J., & McGranahan, G. (2003). Are the debates on water privatization missing the point? Experiences from Africa, Asia and Latin America. *Environment and Urbanization*, 15(2), 87-114.

Bakker, K. 2007. Trickle down? Private sector participation and the pro-poor water supply debate in Jakarta, Indonesia. *Geoforum*. 38(5): 855–868.

To Do:

Quiz 1 (Before class starts (2:20pm))

Week 4. Urban Political Ecology & Urban Water Politics

This week, we shift our attention to cities, beginning with an introduction to urban political ecology. We then continue our examination of the political ecology of water, examining debates on public vs. private water regulation in cities. We also consider how water politics in cities shape patterns of inequity and urban exclusion.

Tuesday (9/15): Introduction to Urban Political Ecology & Urban Water Politics

Cousins, J. J., & Newell, J. (2019). Urban political ecologies of and in the city. In *Handbook of Urban Geography*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Thursday (9/17): Urban Water Politics

Meehan, K. (2013). Disciplining de facto development: Water theft and hydrosocial order in Tijuana. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 31(2), 319-336.

Truelove, Y. (2019). Gray zones: The everyday practices and governance of water beyond the network. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 1-17.

To Do:

Discussion 2: Complete post by Sunday 9/20 11:59PM, and **Response Post 2** by Monday, 9/21 at 11:59PM

Week 5. Waste and Discard Ecologies

The generation of municipal solid waste presents one of the most severe threats to urban health and sustainability globally. In many cities of the world, recycling work is carried out under dangerous and exploitative conditions by the urban poor. We will consider political ecological accounts of solid waste management and “poo politics”, as well as read and critically consider portions of Katherine Boo’s award-winning account of recycling and trash-work in a Mumbai slum.

Tuesday (9/22): Waste and Sanitation Politics

McFarlane, C., & Silver, J. (2017). The political city: "Seeing sanitation" and making the urban political in Cape Town. *Antipode*, 49(1), 125-148.

Njeru, J. (2006). "The urban political ecology of plastic bag waste problem in Nairobi and Kenya. *Geoforum*, 37 (6): 1047-1058.

To Do:

Complete **Quiz 2** before class

Thursday (9/24): Recyclers and Waste-Workers in a Mumbai Slum

Boo, Katherine. 2012. *Behind the beautiful forevers*. Random House LLC. (Prologue and Chapters 1 & 3)

Week 6. Disaster Governance and Environmental Justice

This week, we consider the political ecologies of environmental disasters by employing an environmental justice lens. We look at the historical origins and socio-political dimensions of environmental hazards, as well as non-human agencies, in shaping the production and responses to disasters, as well as their unequal outcomes. We do so through examining the case study of Hurricane Katrina in the US, and also watch portions of Spike Lee's documentary *When the Levees Broke*.

Tuesday (9/29): Introduction to Environmental Justice

Holifield, R. 2001. Defining Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism. *Urban Geography* 22 (1): 78-90.

To Do:

Quiz 3 (complete before start of class)

Thursday (10/1): Disaster Governance & Hurricane Katrina Case Study

To Do:

Watch Documentary Excerpts: *When the Levees Broke*

Complete Discussion Post 3 by Sunday 10/4 11:59PM, and **Response Post 3** by Monday 10/4 11:59PM

Optional Reading:

- Bullard, R. and B. Wright. 2009. Introduction and Chapter 1. *In Race, Place and Environmental Justice after Hurricane Katrina: Struggles to Rebuild and Revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. 1-48.

Week 7. Global Environmental Governance: Carbon Credits Debate

This week we examine global environmental governance and carbon credits.

Tuesday (10/6): Global Environmental Governance and Carbon

Bumpus, A. G., & Liverman, D. M. (2008). Accumulation by decarbonization and the governance of carbon offsets. *Economic Geography*, 84(2), 127-155.

Thursday (10/8): Carbon Credits Debate (*Be prepared to take a position in class based on the readings*)

Martinho, F. (2019) An even more inconvenient truth: Why carbon credits for forest preservation may be worse than nothing. *ProPublica*

To Do:

Discussion Post 4: Complete post by 10/11 11:59PM and **Response Post 4** by 10/12 11:59PM

Week 8. Midterm Examination

This week is devoted to the midterm, which will be an in-class exam with both short answer and essay questions.

Tuesday (10/13): Midterm Prep

Thursday (10/15): Midterm

Week 9: Feminist Political Ecology & Research Policy Paper Prep

This week students will learn about feminist political ecology, a framework that complements and deepens other political ecology approaches studied to date. We also receive a visit and tutorial from the library that will be of use in helping your research for your final policy analysis paper.

Tuesday (10/20): Intro Feminist Political Ecology

Elmhirst, R. (2015). Feminist political ecology. In *The Routledge handbook of gender and development* (pp. 82-90). Routledge.

Thursday (10/22): Feminist Political Ecology & Preparing for Writing Final Paper

Mollett, S and Faria, C. (2013). Messing with gender in feminist political ecology. *Geoforum* 45 (2013): 116-125.

To Do:

Quiz 4 (Complete before class)

Week 10-11: Research Meetings

During this week's sessions, each student will meet in designated time slots with Prof Truelove to discuss their final policy analysis paper topic. You will be informed in previous sessions of your time slot and how to prepare.

Tuesday (10/27): Individual Research Meetings

Thursday (10/29): Individual Research Meetings

Tuesday (11/3): Individual Research Meetings

Thursday (11/5): Individual Work Session

Week 12: Extended Abstract, Peer Review, and Policy Briefing Workshop

This week, students will send their policy abstract to their peer reviewer. We will also have a policy briefing workshop to go over tips and tricks to both written and verbal policy analyses.

Tuesday (11/10): Writing a Policy Analysis/Delivering a Verbal Policy Briefing

Thursday (11/12): Extended Abstract & Peer Review (*Email your abstract to your partner, and be ready to complete a peer review on another's work, complete during class time on your own*)

To Do:

Submit: your own extended abstract to canvas before class (2:20PM)

Send: extended extract to peer reviewer by beginning of class (2:20PM)

Complete: Peer Review of partner's extended abstract and submit to Canvas (due end of class (3:35pm))

Week 13. The Political Ecology of Food: Fair Trade and Hunger

Over the next two sessions, we examine a set of frameworks and case studies for examining differing dimensions of the political ecology of food globally. We begin this week by how differing political ecological imaginaries and moral economies serve to shape and regulate global food politics. We also evaluate a case study on fair-trade and organic certifications of coffee in small-scale plantations in Mexico and Central America, and consider how hunger discourses shape food policy in the US.

Tuesday (11/17): Fair Trade

Sherman, S. (2012). The brawl over fair trade. *The Nation*. Sept. 10th. Access: <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/brawl-over-fair-trade-coffee/>

Méndez, V. E., Bacon, C. M., Olson, M., Petchers, S., Herrador, D., Carranza, C., ... & Mendoza, A. (2010). Effects of Fair Trade and organic certifications on small-scale coffee

farmer households in Central America and Mexico. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 25(3), 236-251.

Thursday (11/19): Hunger in the US

Jarosz, L. (2015). 22. Contesting hunger discourses. *The International Handbook of Political Ecology*, 305-315.

To Do:

Quiz 5: Complete before class

Week 14. Policy Paper Check-in & FALL BREAK

Tuesday (11/21): Policy Paper Check-In & Questions

Thursday (11/23): FALL BREAK

Week 15. Paper Finalization & Verbal Briefing Video

Students will work asynchronously to finish their final papers and turn in their verbal policy briefing video.

Final Paper & Verbal Briefing Video Due: December 4th by 11:59PM on Canvas