

Political Ecology and Environmental Decision-making (4 graduate credits)

MES (open to graduate students and upper division undergraduates)

Martha Henderson, PhD

First Summer Session T/Th 6-10pm

Description

Environmental decision-making plays a significant role in American society. The current 'environment' is the sum total of ecological and social relationships, cultural values, and political decision-making at all levels of society. We will investigate the origins of American environmentalism and the institutionalization of environmental decision-making to the present. Historical events, cultural values, and political and economic conditions have transformed the ecology of North America. The current landscape is a social and political process often entwined with efforts to promote sustainability and embedded in the American corporate/military complex. Students will read texts, discuss ideas, seminar and engage in primary research. Effective leadership methods will be explored. Students will also be asked to report on a decision-making process around an environmental issue.

Student projects during the session will include a mid-session project as an analysis of an environmental leader and their decision-making process, and a final project reviewing the environmental history and political process in a specific environmental issue such as an analysis of leadership roles to protect habitat for a threatened and endangered species, transportation policy, community based agriculture or energy and climate security or the militarization of the environment

Class work will include discussion, speakers, seminar and presentation of research. Students will be asked to participate in leadership of the class.

Textbooks

Anker, Peder. "The Ecological Colonization of Space," *Environmental History* 10(2): pp. 238-268. (April 2005)

Kowalewski, David. *Deep Power: The Political Ecology of Wilderness and Civilization*. Nova Science Publishers, 2000. (145 pages)

Robbins, P. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Wiley & Sons, 2012. (298 pages)

Schedule: The class will meet on Tuesday and Thursday nights for five weeks.

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| Week 1 | What is political ecology? An alternative way of thinking about the environment as the product of political decision-making.
Seminar/Lecture on political theory/accessing govt. docs
Reading Assignment: Robbins, Parts I-III. |
| Week 2 | If the environment is the product of political decision-making, what, where, who, how does this happen? Invited local political decision-makers, agency representatives, and citizens to address the class.
Seminar/Map Exercise/political leader bio assignment
Reading Assignment: Robbins, Part IV |
| Week 3 | Do I make political decisions about the environment? The everyday life of environmental activists and citizens. Share biographies.
Begin work on research paper and political action diary. Turn in political leader bio.
Reading Assignment: Kowalewski (entire text) |
| Week 4 | Militarization of the environment and its political consequences.
Invited speaker/seminar/work on your research paper.
Reading Assignment: Peder |
| Week 5 | Presentation of research/self-reflection and review of diary/ |