ENVS 411: Environmental Action in the Americas

CRN: 12742  MW 4-5:50pm  Room: 201 VIL

Instructors:
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Liz Veazey  email: veazey@uoregon.edu  Office Hours: Wed. 2-3:30pm in COL 47C
*we are also available to meet at other times by appointment*

Course Description

This course will discuss the recent history of environmental concern and action within social movements in North, Central and South America, highlighting the connections between environmental action and social justice, development, democracy and international relations issues. We will critically examine the tensions between environmental narratives and practices and between grassroots movements and institutions. A review of relevant sociology, political ecology, environmental justice and critical development studies in the first part of the course will frame a further discussion on the recent history of environmental action in the Americas. Cultural and political grassroots responses to socio-environmental degradation and resource conflicts across the Americas will be analyzed as emerging out of the interplay of social agents, institutions and political processes. This discussion will proceed through a series of thematic, interdisciplinary North/South comparative analyses of socio-environmental conflicts emblematic of their political, cultural or theoretical implications. Approaching the end, we will move to a consideration of transnational environmental problems and the equally transnational cultural and institutional responses and ways forward being developed in the Americas as we highlight their locus in environmental histories embedded in the region. The course will provide direct dialogue between students and at least five guest speakers engaged in environmental action in North and Latin America including in-person and video-conference guests. Students will be required to engage in an activity with a community organization, participate in group debates, and prepare final presentations on a comparative study of a topic of their choice – concerns and movements discussed in class or others, e.g. art, war, climate action, oceans, religion, etc. The creative application of the theoretical frameworks proposed at the beginning of the course to ‘real life’ scenarios presented throughout the class will be the main criteria for successful learning.

Goals of the class:
* Introduce and apply theoretical frameworks for an interdisciplinary understanding of environmental issues and movements across the Americas.
* Expand knowledge of environmental action in the Americas through a review of case studies, class discussions, talks with movement leaders, and a final project.
* Understand and be able to characterize similarities, differences and connections between movements within different contexts and areas of the Americas.
* Improve reading, writing, discussion, debate and research skills.
* Use a campus community connection activity and/or project to strengthen understanding of theories and ideas learned in the class by connecting them to local environmental action in our community.
* Prepare students for work in fields where they will engage with complex and evolving scenarios of environmental action.

Learning Objectives:
By the end of this course, participants will be able to:
* Acquire analytical skills by using tools from various disciplines and schools of thought in an integrated approach to environmental action.
* Be able to analyze case studies in terms of Political Ecology, Sociology of Social Movements and elements of Geography and Development Studies.
* Identify the overlaps of and/or connections between environmental, social justice and identity movements in the Americas.
* Identify similarities and differences of the contemporary environmental histories of North and South America.
* Communicate more effectively verbally and in writing about social movements and the environment in the Americas.

Methods of Instruction will include:
* Class discussion
* Small group discussion and presentation
* Tele-conference and in-person discussions with social movement leaders.
* Lecture
* In-class debates
* Short-films and movie clips
* Group presentations
* Community engagement

Grade Scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade Equivalent</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>C+ = 77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>C = 74-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>C- = 70-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>D+ = 67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>D = 60-66</td>
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Requirements:
- Come to class prepared and participate in class.
- Complete the readings for every class (except the first class and the last two classes, which will have no assigned reading).
- Prepare for and participate in one class debate with your debate group.
- Post at least five times on the class blog.
- Complete two take-home mid-term exams.
- Complete group research project including 30-minute class presentation.
- Participate in community connection project.

Required Materials
There is no required textbook. All readings will be posted as PDFs on Blackboard (https://blackboard.uoregon.edu) in the Course Documents folder. Some films will also be required. The links will be in the syllabus and on Blackboard. One reading will not be on Blackboard, but will be passed out as a hardcopy in class. **NOTE: All readings are subject to change. All changes will be made on Blackboard and emailed to the class.**

Attendance: You are expected to attend every class session, and attendance will be taken via your name card—please pick it up at the beginning of class. If you miss more than TWO classes, for any reason, your final grade will be lowered by a HALF letter grade for each absence. If you consistently arrive late or leave early, this will also lower your grade; 3 late arrivals / early departures equal 1 absence. Documentation is required for absences due to health or family emergencies. Absences for any other reason are not excusable.
Grading:

- **Participation: 20%**
  To be determined from attendance, preparation for class, and participation in class discussion and other classroom activities including the community connection project.

- **Group Debate: 10%**
  The class will be divided into six debate groups and each group will participate in one in-class debate. Everyone in class will be expected to participate in the discussion by actively listening and asking questions to the debate groups. Grades will reflect both individual and group performance. An assignment sheet will give more a more detailed description. Extra readings for debate participants will be provided.

- **Postings on Class Blog: 15%**
  To encourage in-class debate, students will be required to make five posts to the class blog on Blackboard. A list of questions will be provided, and you should respond to the questions in the context of class speakers or debates. Your response should be about half a page single-spaced. An assignment sheet will give more a more detailed description.

- **Two Take-home Midterms 30%**
  Students will have two take-home midterm exams each with two essay questions to demonstrate what they have learned from the course. The response to both questions should be between 2 and 4 pages double-spaced. We will give you the questions on Wednesday in class and then the response will be due Friday. Midterm 1 will be assigned on Wednesday October 19 in class and due on Friday October 21 by midnight. Midterm 2 will be assigned on Wednesday November 9 and due on Friday November 11 by midnight.

- **Group Presentation: 25%**
  Students will do further research on an issue of environmental action discussed in class or another area of interest to the students. Group presentations will be the last two days of class with 30 minutes for each group. Grades will reflect both individual and group performance. An assignment sheet will give more a more detailed description.

**Additional Policies and Procedures**

**Academic Integrity**: Enrolling in this course constitutes your agreement to abide by the University Policy on Academic Misconduct. Please refer to the Student Conduct Code at the Office of Student Life website (http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/programs/student_judi_affairs/conduct-code.htm). Neither ignorance of these policies nor the lack of an intention to cheat or plagiarize will be considered a legitimate defense. To learn more about your rights and responsibilities concerning academic integrity and the procedures related to academic misconduct, I strongly advise you to familiarize yourself with the Student Conduct and Community Standards webpage (http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/programs/student_judi_affairs/index.htm). Please talk with us if you have any questions about academic misconduct issues.

**Access**: The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify us within the first week of the term if aspects of the instruction or course design present obstacles to your active participation. Such obstacles may include, but are not limited to issues concerning physical access and mobility, physical or mental health and well-being, and academic learning. For additional assistance and resources, I encourage you to contact the following campus services, as appropriate for your concerns:

- Disability Services, 164 Oregon Hall, 346-1155 or disabsrv@uoregon.edu; website: http://ds.uoregon.edu
Diversity: The University of Oregon is dedicated to the principles of equal opportunity in education and an acceptance of diversity as an affirmation of individual identity within a welcoming community. Open inquiry, freedom of expression, and respect for difference are therefore fundamental to a comprehensive and dynamic education. This course is committed to upholding these ideals by encouraging the exploration, engagement, and expression of divergent perspectives and diverse identities. Please notify us immediately if you feel aspects of the instruction or course design undermine these principles in any way. You may also notify the ENVS Program at 346-5954. For additional assistance and resources, I encourage you to contact the following campus services, as appropriate for your concerns:

- Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, 1 Johnson Hall, 346-3175; website: [http://oied.uoregon.edu](http://oied.uoregon.edu)
- Bias Response Team, 164 Oregon Hall, 346-1134 or brt@uoregon.edu website: [http://bias.uoregon.edu](http://bias.uoregon.edu)

Electronic Devices: Laptop computers, cell phones, iPads, mp3 players, Bluetooth devices, and other similar electronic devices must be turned off during class. The instructor will let you know if laptops can be used during class for class activities. You may be asked to leave and counted as absent if you do not comply with this policy. If you are involved in a situation that requires you to be contacted immediately by cell phone, e.g. an ill child / parent or pregnant spouse / partner, please see us before class.

Course Outline

**Topic 1: Background: Theoretical Approaches & History**

9/26: Day 1—Introduction/Overview of class and expectations.

9/28: Day 2—Political Ecology and Power
We will start with Political Ecology as the main theoretical frame for the class, and a discussion of environmental justice in our communities.

Readings


Note: you only need to read 416-18, the rest of the article is optional.

10/3: Day 3—Global Power and Environmental Crisis
World-system and post-structural analyses will be the main theoretical references used to frame the discussion on globalization, social change and environmental crisis.
Readings:


Optional:


10/5: Day 4--Development in Latin America and the post-structural approach
Critical development studies and post-colonial approaches will enable an introduction into the issues of (under)development, neo-colonialism and social exclusion, as well as their contestation in Latin America, as they shape the environmental history of the region.
Speaker: Alison Guzman, Community Outreach Coordinator from Oregon Toxics Alliance (now Beyond Toxics) and El Centro Latino. She is coordinating the West Eugene Industrial Corridor Environmental Health Project.

Readings

TIPNIS conflict in Bolivia:

Optional


10/10: Day 5—Ecological Debt: Does the North Owe an Ecological Debt to the South?
To finalize our discussion on global inequality and its socio-environmental consequences, we will examine the idea of an ecological debt owed to developing countries by industrialized countries. We will discuss successes and limitations of market-based eco-modernization in the global scenario with an in-class debate on these topics.
* First group debate on ecological debt.

Readings

Optional:


**10/12: Day 6--Social Movements**

Environmental action will be framed in the context of late 20th century social movements. New Social Movements, Resource Mobilization, Beck’s Risk Society and Castell’s Networks sociological approaches will frame the more specific discussion on the connection between environmental/EJ concerns and organized expressions of citizenship, labor, livelihoods and identities.

* Speaker: Arturo Segura, coffee farmer from Costa Rica on direct trade coffee and cleaner burning cooking stoves. He is a co-founder of the direct trade coffee company Sol Colibri that brings together more than 1800 small coffee farmers in Costa Rica.

Readings


*note:* only pages 508-25 are assigned, the rest of the article is optional.

Optional


**Topic 2: Case Studies**

**10/17: Day 7--Struggles Against Coal Mining in Appalachia and Colombia.**

We will explore social movements in the Appalachian region of the US and in Colombia against the impacts of coal mining including their history, tactics, and relationships to other movements. In addition to class discussion we will watch a short clip of a coal company CEO and have a video-speaker from Appalachia.

* Speaker: Patricia Tarquino a former organizer for Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC) involved in fight against mountaintop removal mining and environmental impacts of coal mining who is from Colombia and has worked on building connections between Appalachians and Colombians organizing against impacts of coal mining.
Reading:
note: not on Blackboard, but print copies will be distributed in class


10/19: Day 8--Identity and Resistance to Oil Extraction and Oil Spills.
We will start by briefly discussing the short- and long-term social and environmental impacts of oil extraction and then will look at a number of social movements addressing these in creative ways. We will end with discussion of what past experiences could mean for the future of the US Gulf Coast and the strenghts and challenges of movements in the North and South in coping with complex scenarios marked by oil money and power.
* Speaker: Mercedes Lu, Peruvian researcher, activist, and UO Geography PhD candidate, will adress oil conflict and indigenous rights & environmental narratives in the Peruvian Amazon.
Note: Midterm 1 will be assigned today in class and due on Friday October 21 by midnight.

Readings:

Statement of Gulf Coast Fishermen, Seafood Worker, and Maritime Communities on the Gulf of Mexico Oil Drilling Disaster. 2010. Pgs: 1-3.

Optional:

More on the impacts of oil spills:


Corporate Campaigns and Actions Against Oil Companies http://ran.org/content/ran-yes-men-punkd-chevron
http://changechevron.org/about/

10/24: Day 9--Resource Access and Human Rights
Emerging water conflicts and their relation to trade, water, livelihoods, human rights and environmental degradation, as well as catalysts of social and political change –the Bolivian water wars case. Clips will be shown in class on the Cochabamba water privatization/water war
and Maine water privatization struggle from the movie *Blue Gold*:

Readings:


Optional:

UN Declaration of Water as Human Right.  

### 10/26: Day 10--Resistance to GMOs and Monocultures.

Green revolution, agri-business, monocultures, tree farms and their impacts North and South, as well as the social conflict and cultural and practical alternatives being proposed in both hemispheres.

* Second Group debate: Are fair trade and organic/sustainable forestry certifications a way forward?

Readings:
RECOMA(2009)*Declaration by the Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations 1 August 2009 – Villa Serrana, Uruguay* (2 pages)


Optional:


10/31: Day 11--Legislation in US, Oregon, Ecuador & National Level
In the United States, we will focus on the incorporation of environmental justice into federal and state policies. In Latin America, we will look at social movements and environmental legislation between the authoritarian legacy and the empowerment of civil society in the Ecuadorian and Chilean cases.

Readings:

Ecuador’s new constitution excerpts. http://www.elaw.org/node/5395 (3 pages)


Optional:

11/2: Day 12--Conservation Conflicts: Resist or Negotiate?
Overview of environmental history of conservation conflicts and discussion of several topics from the North and the South. The ‘Yellowstone model’ and idea of wilderness: Are Biosphere Reserves a model to reconcile peoples and biodiversity? Environmental governance: from incentives to ‘environmentality’. Discussion on relationship (and friction) between indigenous peoples and conservationism: the Makah Whale Hunt case, the Amazon conservation-indigeneity politics. Endangered species act: people v/s biodiversity?
* Speaker: Sierra Deutsch, UO Environmental Studies and Sociology PhD candidate, with a background in marine biology to speak about the Makah case, which she is currently studying.

Readings


Internet resources on the Makah Case (required):

Makah Nation website http://www.makah.com/whalingtradition.html

Optional:


**Topic 3: Moving from Fighting Pollution to Creating Solutions**

**11/7: Day 13--Tourism: Between opportunities for sustainability and embedded neo-colonialism**

We will examine the dilemmas confronted by entrepreneurial communities using responsible travel or eco-tourism as a tool for economic recomposition, socio-environmental conservation and the assertion of land and resource rights. We will also discuss environmental impacts of non-sustainable tourism development and neo-colonial practices, reviewing cases of straightforward local resistance and evaluating the elusive right for local communities to say no to tourism and other development pressures.

**Readings**


**11/9: Day 14--South moving forward: peasant, indigenous, and other contemporary environmental-related social movements and their proposals.**

Review of decolonization, new agrarian reform and food sovereignty proposals and their trajectories and prospects. Discussion on Andean socio-environmental values/concepts: Is ‘good living’ (buen vivir) a contribution of ancient Americas to a sustainable post-developmental civilization?

Speaker (teleconference): Maria Jose Araya, sociologist and environmental justice activist in south-central Chile.

**Note:** Midterm 2 will be assigned today in class and due on Tuesday November 15 by midnight.

**Reading**


Altieri M (2009) *Small farms as a planetary ecological asset: Five key reasons why we should support the revitalization of small farms in the global South*. Third World Network.(6 pages)

Optional:


11/14: Day 15--North moving forward: Occupy, green jobs and native rights
We will discuss the potential of and the challenges to contemporary environmental-related social movements with a focus on green jobs and a success story of indigenous action.

Readings and a Video Clip:


Optional:


11/16: Day 16--Climate Justice and Transnational Problems in General
We will discuss global environmental issues including a return to the theory of world system theory and ecological debt to understand the recent rise of a global climate justice movement.
* Speaker: member of Occupy Eugene.


11/21: Day 17—International cooperation and antagonism from intergovernmental agreements to civil society and social forums.
International cooperation and conflict: Global socio-environmental crisis and North/South debates on ways forward. REDD+ and Yasuni model. Regional alternatives such as ALBA. * Final Debate

Readings


2010 Cochabamba Declaration - http://pwccc.wordpress.com/support/

Optional (Exceprts) NO REDD! A READER - indigenouspeoplesissues.com


11/23: Day 18—no class (we are giving you these two hours to spend on your community connection volunteer activity)

Final Topic: Group Presentations

11/28 & 11/30: Day 19 & 20--Group presentations