



**Instructor:** Prof. Karen Bakker (Geog 142) ([bakker@geog.ubc.ca](mailto:bakker@geog.ubc.ca))  
Office hours: Wednesdays from 1 to 2 pm, or by appointment

**Course times:** Wednesdays from 10 to 1, Term 1

**Course Description:** Environmental geography has experienced a renaissance in recent years. This survey course introduces students to current debates, key conceptual approaches, and outstanding recent research within human geography, focusing on political ecology. Specifically, we will explore the ways in which political ecology has been challenged and "othered" in various ways, particularly given the fact that the both the "material turn" and the "cultural turn" have destabilized concepts like "environment" and "nature"--with significant consequences for political ecologists. Topics to be covered include: environmental racism; social construction of nature; animal geographies; and posthumanism and biopolitics.

*Students from a wide variety of backgrounds are welcome. The intent of the course is to familiarize students with current literature and debates as an aid to research and reflection on their particular areas of interest. I will support students in the development of outlines for term papers that are closely related to their individual research interests.*

**Readings:** We will read a few dozen articles (all available online) and several books. The books have been ordered by the UBC Bookstore, but *are not reserved for you at the store* (so get them early, or you may have to find them elsewhere). The books are also on reserve in the departmental library (the GIC). The more recent titles may also be available in electronic form via the UBC Library website.

### Assignments

1. Essay proposal 10%  
Due November 6<sup>th</sup>. This brief proposal (1 to 2 pages single-spaced) should identify your topic and sample sources you are likely to consult, as well as suggesting possible lines of argument. Detailed guidelines will be handed out in class. I will work with each student personally to develop a plan for your essay that suits your goals and disciplinary background.
2. Essay 50%  
Due December 18<sup>th</sup>. Topics to be determined by individual students in consultation with instructor. Length: flexible (you will be judged on the quality of your writing, not the quantity!). Detailed guidelines will be handed out in class.
3. Presentation and discussion facilitation 30%  
Throughout term. Deadline for signing up: September 25<sup>th</sup>.
4. Reflections 10%  
A 'reflection' is a short (one page) informal prose response to the assigned readings. The 'reflection' should explore your thoughts on the readings, and also include at least one question for class discussion. The reflections will not be graded; you will be given 1% towards your final term mark each time one is handed in.

**\*Unless otherwise stated, all journal article readings are available online via the UBC library website. Books are on reserve in the GIC (and some are also available online).\***

September 5 <sup>th</sup> – no class this week	
<b>September 11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Introductory Class</b>
<b>September 18<sup>th</sup></b>	All classes cancelled at UBC: Truth and Reconciliation event. See: <a href="http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3">http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3</a> <a href="http://www.myrobust.com/websites/vancouver/index.php?p=719">http://www.myrobust.com/websites/vancouver/index.php?p=719</a>
<b>September 25<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>This classic text on the 'Political Ecology of the American Lawn' will serve as a springboard for class discussion, as we debate the conceptual and methodological strategies used by political ecologists.</i>  Robbins, P. (2007) <i>Lawn People: How grasses, weeds, and people make us who we are.</i> Temple University Press. <b>(On reserve in GIC)</b>
<b>October 2nd</b>	<p><b>Political ecology: Overview and introduction</b> <i>What is political ecology? What are its intellectual origins? What are the different variants of political ecology?</i></p> <p>Selected chapters from: (i) Forsyth, T. 2002. <i>Critical Political Ecology: The politics of environmental science.</i> London: Routledge. <b>Online @ UBC library.</b> (ii) Robbins, P. 2004. <i>Political Ecology: A critical introduction.</i> Blackwell. <b>(GIC reserve)</b></p> <p><b>Optional readings:</b> Radcliffe et al (2010) Environmentalist thinking in/and geography. <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 34(1), 98-116 and the response: Eades, G L (2012) Determining environmental determinism <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 36(3), 423-427; Zimmerer, K., and T. Bassett. 2003. Political ecology: An integrative approach to geography and environment-development studies. New York: Guilford Press; Peet, R., and M. Watts, eds. 2004. <i>Liberation ecologies.</i> London: Routledge; Walker, P. A. (2005). "Political ecology: where is the ecology?" <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 29(1): 73-82 and "Political ecology: Where is the politics?" <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 31(3), 363-369</p>
<b>October 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<p><b>The social construction of nature</b> <i>Is there such a thing as 'untouched' wilderness? Are 'natural events' like famines also partially socially constructed? What about 'natural' human differences, such as race, or the category of 'human' in 'human geography'?</i></p> <p>1. Demeritt, D. (2002) What is the 'social construction of nature'? A typology and sympathetic critique. <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 26(6) 767 – 790. 2. Proctor, J. D. (1998) The social construction of nature: Relativist accusations, pragmatist and critical realist responses. <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> 88(3), 352-376. 3. Cronon, W. (1996) 'The problem with wilderness' in Cronon, W. (ed.) <i>Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature</i> New York, Norton, 69 – 90; <b>(On reserve in GIC)</b> 4. Latour, B. (2004) Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern. <i>Critical Inquiry</i> 30(2), 225-248.</p> <p><b>Optional readings:</b> Castree, N. and B. Braun (1998) The construction of nature and the nature of construction" in Braun, B. and N. Castree (eds.) <i>Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium.</i> London, Routledge, 3 – 42; Demeritt, D. 2001 ' Being constructive about nature' in Castree, N. and B. Braun (eds.) <i>Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics</i> Oxford, Blackwell, 22 – 40.</p>

<p><b>October 16<sup>th</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Environmental justice (I): Environmental Racism</b>  <i>What is environmental racism? How have analyses of the distribution of environmental pollutants informed the broader debate over environmental racism? How do different kinds of environmentalisms embody specific class, race, and gender biases? Is (environmental) geography "white"?</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pulido, L. (2000) Rethinking Environmental Racism: white privilege and urban development in Southern California. <i>Annals of the American Association of Geographers</i> 90(1):12-39.</li> <li>2. Pulido, L. (2002) "Reflections on a White Discipline" <i>Professional Geographer</i> 54(1): 42-49.</li> <li>3. Cutter, S.L., J.T. Mitchell, and M.S. Scott (2000) "Revealing the Vulnerability of People and Places: A Case Study of Georgetown County, South Carolina," <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> 90 (4):713-737</li> <li>4. Moore, D., Kosek, J. and Pandian, A. (2002) <i>Race, Nature, and Politics of Difference</i>. Duke University Press. Introductory chapter and Chapter 6.</li> </ol> <p><b>Optional readings:</b> Holifield, Ryan (2001) Defining environmental justice and environmental racism. <i>Urban Geography</i>, 22(1): 78-90.; Heynen, N., Perkins H., and Roy, P. (2006) The Political Ecology of Uneven Urban Green Space: The Impact of Political Economy on Race and Ethnicity in Producing Environmental Inequality in Milwaukee <i>Urban Affairs Review</i> September 2006 vol. 42 no. 1 3-25; Cutter, S.L., M. E. Hodgson, and K. Dow, 2001. "Subsidized Inequities: The Spatial Patterning of Environmental Risks and Federally-Assisted Housing", <i>Urban Geography</i> 22 (1): 29-53; Di Chiro, G. (1996) 'Nature as Community: The convergence of environmental and social justice' in Cronon, W. (Ed.) <i>Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature</i>. New York: W W Norton, pp 298 – 320; Pulido, L. and Peña, D. (1998) "Pesticides and Positionality: The Early Pesticide Campaign of the United Farm Workers' Organizing Committee, 1965-71" <i>Race, Class &amp; Gender</i> 6(1): 33-50; Anderson, K. (2001) 'The Nature of 'Race in Castree, N. and Braun, B. (eds.) <i>Social Nature</i> Oxford: Blackwell, 64 – 83. <b>(on reserve in GIC)</b></p>
<p><b>October 23<sup>th</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Environmental Justice (II): Feminist Political Ecology</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rocheleau, D. (1995). Maps, Numbers, Text, and Context: Mixing Methods in Feminist Political Ecology. <i>The Professional Geographer</i>, 47(4), 458-466.</li> <li>2. Nightingale, A. (2003) A Feminist in the Forest: Situated Knowledges and Mixing Methods in Natural Resource Management, <i>ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographers</i> 2(1) p.77-90.</li> <li>3. Nightingale, A. (2011) Bounding difference: Intersectionality and the material production of gender, caste, class and environment in Nepal <i>Geoforum</i> 42(2), 153-162.</li> <li>4. Bavington, D. et. al. 2004. A feminist political ecology of fishing down: Reflections from Newfoundland and Labrador. <i>Studies in Political Economy</i>. 73, Spring/Summer, 159-182.</li> </ol> <p><b>Optional readings:</b> D. E. Rocheleau, B. Thomas-Slayter and E. Wangari (eds.). 1997. <i>Feminist Political Ecology: Global Perspectives and Local Experience</i>. London: Taylor &amp; Francis. Selected chapters. Rocheleau, D. E. (1995), Gender and Biodiversity: A feminist political ecology perspective. <i>IDS Bulletin</i>, 26: 9–16; Sultana, F. (2011) Suffering for water, suffering from water: Emotional geographies of resource access, control and conflict <i>Geoforum</i> 42(2), 163-172; Salleh,</p>

		A. (ed.) (2009) <i>Eco-sufficiency and Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology</i> . Pluto Press; Emel, J. 1995. "'Are You Man Enough, Big and Bad Enough': An Ecofeminist Analysis of Wolf Eradication in the United States" <i>Society and Space: Environment and Planning</i> . 13: 707-734;
October 30 <sup>th</sup>	No class – preparing essay proposals	
November 6 <sup>th</sup> <b>ESSAY PROPOSAL DUE</b>	<b>Frontiers of Political Ecology (I): Political Ecologies of the Body</b>	Guthman, J. (2011) <i>Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism</i> . Berkeley, University of California Press.  <b>Additional reading:</b> Guthman J (2009) Teaching the Politics of Obesity: Insights into Neoliberal Embodiment and Contemporary Biopolitics. <i>Antipode</i> 41(5): 1110-1133.
November 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Frontiers of Political Ecology (II): Animal geographies</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Escobar, A. 1999. After Nature: Steps to an Anti-essentialist Political Ecology." <i>Current Anthropology</i> 40(1): 1-30, 1999.</li> <li>2. Mitchell, T. 2002. Can the Mosquito Speak? <i>Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity</i>. University of California Press.</li> <li>3. Sundberg, J. 2011. Diabolic Caminos in the Desert &amp; Cat Fights on the Río: A post-humanist political ecology of boundary enforcement in the United States-Mexico borderlands. <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i>. 101(2), 318-336.</li> <li>4. Preface and Chapter 1: "Witnessing the Animal Moment" by Jody Emel and Jennifer Wolch, in Wolch, J. and J. Emel (eds.) (1998) <i>Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands</i>. London: Verso. (<b>Online via UBC library</b>).</li> </ol> <p><i>Optional readings:</i> Additional chapters in: Wolch, J. R., Emel, J. (1998). <i>Animal Geographies: Place, Politics and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands</i>. Verso; Shukin, N. 2009. <i>Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times</i>. University of Minnesota Press; Wolfe, C. 2009. <i>What is Posthumanism?</i> University of Minnesota Press; Emel, J. and J. Wolch (1998) (Eds.) <i>Animal Geographies</i>. London: Verso. <b>On reserve in GIC.</b></p>
November 20 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Frontiers of Political Ecology (I): Post-humanism</b>  Bennett, J. 2009. <i>Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things</i> . Duke University Press. (Selected Chapters). <b>On reserve in GIC.</b>  <i>One of the most highly cited and influential books on theoretical approaches to political ecology in recent years.</i>	
November 27 <sup>th</sup>	Final class	
<b>December 18<sup>th</sup> – essays due in Geography Main Office (Rm 217) before 4 pm.</b>		