Environmental Geography  
Pols 310  
11-11:50, MWF  
Maybank 307

Instructor: Annette Watson  
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WatsonAM@cofc.edu  
Office: Political Science Dept, 114 Wentworth St. Rm 104  
Office hours:  
Mondays 3:30-5:30, Tuesdays 2-3 and by appointment

Class Syllabus

Course Description

How do humans, ecologies, and politics interact to shape global and local environments? How are global political and economic processes connected to local political and environmental struggles?

This class critically examines the relationship between humans and their environments, focusing on the politically volatile nature of human resource use. How resource distribution occurs (evenly or unevenly), who controls the distribution, and how the distribution impacts economic, social, and ecological systems are often the source of political conflict. Our aim is to understand the complexity of such multi-scale, multi-cultural dynamics.

We will review how resource patterns and political conflicts are a product of the geographies and histories of particular places and people. We will study how these political problems interrelate across different spatial and temporal scales, from the individual resource user to international regulatory bodies, and from colonial times to the present day. The societies in question can be based on subsistence, non-capitalist barter systems, well developed capitalism, or mixed economic systems; and the phenomena of interest can comprise a range of things, such as environmental governance, gender relations, soil erosion, Traditional Ecological Knowledge or water rights.

We will question conventional, simplistic explanations of environmental problems, such as overpopulation and poverty. The goals of this class are thus to challenge students' thinking about environmental problems, develop new frameworks for critical analysis, and discuss practical and conceptual alternatives. Differing ways of explaining environmental problems are important because they form the basis for the formulating political solutions.

The class time will be discussion-driven, punctuated with lectures, active learning exercises, student presentations, and video. Students will be evaluated based on their ability to critically approach questions, problems, and solutions to environmental conflicts through written assignments, oral participation and presentations, and a group project.
Student Learning Goals

- Be able to articulate the multi-scale nature of resource use and the political struggles for control of resources;
- To place environmental politics in the context of broader social and political dynamics;
- Understand the methodological and analytical tools for understanding multi-scale environmental problems;
- Gain skills in critical reading, research, and oral presentation, as well as skills in presenting complicated ideas to a lay audience.

Course Relevance:
Of interest to students pursuing careers in political science, law, geography/planning, NGOs, environmental politics and/or management, journalism, teaching, and environmental activism.

Readings
Textbooks are available at the College of Charleston Bookstore on Calhoun

Required texts:

All other required readings will be available on ERs

Assignments and Grading
Short breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Written Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholar-Activist Group Project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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</tbody>
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Participation Grade (25%)  

This class will be highly interactive, which means that your participation in class will be central to the success of the course (and also to how much you learn). I will expect you to ask questions of me, of the readings, and I will expect you to engage with each others’ ideas. Although I understand that sometimes it can be difficult to speak out in class, everyone is expected to participate in class discussion. If you really fear public speaking, participation also includes emailing me questions before class about terms or points of clarifications you’d like us to cover during class discussion. To succeed in this class you will need to critically evaluate ideas, question them, dispute them, or make them your own. Speak out!

Attendance is mandatory; you may request that your absence be excused only if you are required to participate in college-sponsored activities. If so, you must fill out the appropriate forms at 67 George St., or call Constance Nelson (953-3390). Notices I receive from the Absent Memo Office do not constitute excused absences, and you will be penalized for all unexcused absences.
Accruing the 15 points of the participation grade:

1. Attend and participate in class discussion. **5 points**, awarded at the end of the semester.
2. Assignments: researching the environmental politics of the Lowcountry, using primary data, and presenting this material to class: **10 points**.

**Pop Quizzes (15%)**

I will be giving a total of 10-15 pop quizzes based on the readings, for **15 points**.

**Exam (20%)**

The exam will be an in-class short answer and essay exam, given about 3/4ths of the way through the course. You will be able to choose between essay topics. Worth **20 points**.

**Scholar-Activist Group Project (40%)**

Students are to form working groups of 4-6 participants along similar/intersecting areas of interest, either self-chosen or assigned to groups by the instructor. These groups will research and articulate a specific contemporary resource issue, identifying key actors and their political conflicts. Although free to choose the topic, students must select a topic of ‘local’ concern: local to Charleston or the Lowcountry.

What do I mean by “Scholar-Activist”? For the “scholar” part of the assignment, you are expected to engage primary resources (government documents, oral history collections, newspaper/periodical analysis, diaries, etc.) as well as utilizing the analytical tools from class. The “activist” part of the assignment doesn’t have to mean that you are asked to be an environmental activist per se. But you are expected to use the theoretical and analytical tools we learn in class and apply them to real-world problems that are local to where we live. For example, you might ask an environmental law office or policymaker what kind of issues they are most interested in, and as a group you may produce a policy document. Or it might mean that you write a series of op ed pieces for newspapers, or create a zine, cartoon series, facebook debate pages, or a YouTube video. The idea is to create a project to either encourage dialogue or to talk about the issue or in ways that most people could understand—creating such opportunities for dialogue is inherent to the democratic process.

Thus this project is designed to build your skills in collaboration and in public outreach. More information on the project will follow. Note that there will be deadlines for the different phases of the project, and some of the work will be conducted during class time, especially early in the semester. The groups are also required to make a presentation on their project at the end of the course, and students will each submit to me your own “grades” for each of your collaborators.
General guidelines for grades:

A – achievement is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirement

B – achievement is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.

C – achievement meets the course requirements in every respect.

D – achievement is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.

S/P – achievement is satisfactory which is equivalent to a C- or better.

F – achievement is inadequate and no credit will be given for the course.

I (Incomplete) – assigned due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, which prevent the completion of work on time. Requires an agreement between student and instructor.

This course will use +/- grades, allocated as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A/A+</td>
<td>92% or above</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91-90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-88%</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>87-82%</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>79-78%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>69-68%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>67-62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>61-60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 59%</td>
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Other Class Policies:

It is assumed that all students will act with academic integrity and will not engage in behavior such as plagiarism, academic dishonesty, misrepresentation, or cheating. Please refer to the college’s policy on academic honesty. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will result in an XF in the class. The entire purpose of this class is to acquire useful skills; to cheat is to lose the opportunity to improve these skills. Please refer to the campus honor code for questions about academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism refers to the presentation of someone else's ideas, work, or words as your own, without attribution. If you use someone else's exact words, then you must use quotation marks in addition to a citation; simply naming the source is not enough. If you completely paraphrase someone else's
ideas in your own words, then you still have to cite the source, but you do not have to use quotations. When in doubt, cite the source. If you have questions about whether you have provided adequate citation, consult with me before the assignment is due.

Support Services:

Please take advantage of the College’s Center for Student Learning; they have walk-in labs for writing and speaking—two skills you will need to improve (and be graded on!) during this semester. The Center for Student Learning is located in the Addlestone Library (953-5635).

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me one week before accommodation is needed.
Class Outline

Readings must be completed by the class time they are listed to be discussed.

**Week 1**

**Monday, January 12**

Introductions and explanation of syllabus

**Wednesday, January 14**

Introducing the approach of political ecology in studying environmental geography

**Friday, January 16**

Class discussion on these readings:

Robbins, Ch 1: “The Hatchet and the Seed,” in *Political Ecology*

Entries from the *Dictionary of Human Geography* and the *Feminist Glossary of Human Geography* on ERes

**Week 2**

**M January 19**

**NO CLASS** – Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday

**W January 21**

Class discussion:

Chapters 3 and 4 in Robbins, *Political Ecology*

*Optional: Chapter 2*

**F January 23**

Introducing the Scholar-Activist project
Week 3: “Local” Communities and Knowledges

M January 26


W January 28


F January 30

First round of presentations of local environmental issues (part of your Participation grade)

Week 4
Monday February 2nd

Second round of presentations of local environmental issues (part of your Participation grade)

Wednesday and Friday NO CLASS

Week 5: Defining “Nature”

M February 9


W February 11

Discussion of possible or decided-on group topics, and finalizing groups for the Scholar-Activist projects.
F February 13

Robbins, Chapters 5 and 6


Week 6: Environmental Myths and Environmental Science

M February 16

Discussion of group process: division of labor, sources, strategies for doing the work

W February 18

Discussion of group process: division of labor, sources, strategies for doing the work

F February 20

Ch. 7 and 8 of Robbins, Political Ecology

Week 7: Environmental Myths and Environmental Science

M February 23


W February 25


F February 27

Continued discussion, and Groups announce their final topics/get feedback from peers
Week 8
MW March

NO CLASS
Spring Break

Week 9: Political Institutions, Political Subjects, and Social Movements
M March 9

Ch. 9 and 10, Robbins *Political Ecology*

W March 11

Continued discussion and video

F March 13


Week 10
M March 16


W March 18


F March 20

EXAM: in class, short answer and essays
Week 11

NO CLASS
AAG MEETING (Work on projects, read *Lawn People*)

Week 12
M March 30
Robbins, *Lawn People*, chapters 1-4

W April 1

F April 3
Continued discussion of *Lawn People*…and possible pop quiz (hint hint)?

Week 13: First World Environmental Governance
M April 6
Meetings with me on your group projects; scheduled during class time

W April 8


F April 10
Meetings with me on your group projects; scheduled during class time

Week 14
M April 13
Class discussion and video

W April 15
No Class: work on your group projects—I will be available to meet with groups
F April 17

No Class: work on your group projects—I will be available to meet with groups

Week 15
MWF April 20, 22, 24

Presentations of group work to the class

Week 16
Monday April 27th

Last day of presentations