Seminar in Cultural and Political Ecology

Geography/Environmental/International Studies 477
Comparative Environment and Development Studies: A Seminar in Cultural and Political Ecology¹
Fall Semester, 2023

Class Time and Location: 3-4:30 PM, Tuesdays & Thursdays, Rm Carnegie 105
Instructor: Bill Moseley (he/him/his)
Office: Rm 104d, Carnegie Hall
Office Hours: 1:30-2:30 MTWR or by appointment. Sign-up by cutting/pasting this link into your browser (https://calendar.app.google/bMgkT7wA6rauAvLy8)
Phone: 651-696-6126
Email: moseley@macalester.edu
Class email: fa23-geog-477-01@groups.macalester.edu

Course Description and Objectives
A concern for the relationship between nature and society has been one of the pillars of geographic inquiry, and has also been an important bridge between other disciplines. By the 1960s, this area of inquiry was referred to variously as ‘human ecology’ or ‘cultural ecology.’ Over the last two decades certain forms of inquiry within this tradition have increasingly referred to themselves as ‘political ecology.’ Much of the empirical work within these two traditions has been conducted in social and physical environments that might in some sense be called ‘marginal.’ They have been areas of environmental fragility, aridity and resource constraint; areas of socio-economic poverty; regions of indigenous populations; and local communities confronting rapid modernization and commodification.

The purpose of this seminar is to review major works within the traditions of cultural and political ecology; examine several areas of interest within these fields (e.g., agricultural modernization, environmental narratives, conservation, sustainable development); and explore nature-society dynamics across a range of geographical contexts. Towards the end of the course we will explore how one might begin to think in practical terms about facilitating development in marginal environments.

As a junior-senior level seminar, there will be considerable emphasis placed on writing, reading and discussion in this course. This is a good thing because I truly believe that, in a few years time, you will have forgotten most of what I have said in lecture. My hope, however, is that you will remember what you have discovered on your own by reading about it, writing about it, and discussing it inside and outside of class.

Format
The class will meet twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Most class periods will be devoted to discussion, interspersed with occasional lectures. Discussions will be led by students

¹ We acknowledge that Macalester College is located on the traditional, ancestral and contemporary lands of the Wahpékhute band of Dákȟóta Oyáte, the Dakota nation. We recognize that this acknowledgment is but a first step in recognizing and dismantling aggressive and persistent policies of settler colonialism that continue to oppress to this day. The work of acknowledgement must be paired with active practices like the amplification of Indigenous voices and land repatriation in order to be substantive and meaningful.
and focused on a related set of readings. In addition to a significant amount of out-of-class time devoted to reading, students will prepare and present a major research paper.

This is your class, and I want to know how it's going. Please let me know if you would like to see changes, from lecture topics to grading. You are welcome to speak with me after class or to visit me in my office. The surest way to contact me is to send me e-mail (moseley@macalester.edu), which normally will be responded to promptly during normal business hours.

Disabilities
I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please meet with the Coordinator of Disability Services, Josie Hurka, who serves as the coordinator for services for students with disabilities. It is important to meet with her at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place to begin the semester successfully. The director may be reached in the Kagin Commons, Rm 004, by phone at 651-696-6974, or email disabilityservices@macalester.edu.

Health and Wellness
You are encouraged to make your health and well-being a priority throughout this semester and during your career at Macalester. Taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, cultural, financial, etc., and how they can have an impact on your academic experience. I encourage you to remember that you have a body with needs. In the classroom, eat when you are hungry, drink water, use the restroom, and step out if you are upset and need some air. Please do what is necessary so long as it does not impede your or others’ ability to be mentally and emotionally present in the course. Outside of the classroom, sleeping, moving your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you be resilient at Macalester. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please don’t hesitate to contact me and/or find support from Health & Wellness Center. I have included contact information for health and wellness resources on the course moodle page.

Academic Misconduct
Plagiarism and cheating are both academic crimes. Never (1) turn in an assignment that you did not write yourself (including material wholly or partially written by a chat bot), or (2) turn in an assignment for this class that you previously turned in for another class. If you do so, it may result in a failing grade for the class, and possibly even suspension from the college. Please see me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism. Anyone caught cheating on an exam will be reported to the provost in line with recognized college procedures.

Texts

In addition to the texts, there are a number of readings available electronically via the course moodle page (see reading list below).
# Semester Overview and Important Due Dates

Please note that this is tentative and subject to change.

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<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Important Due Dates, Other events</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Important Due Dates, Other events</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5-7 Sept</td>
<td>Course business, Introductions</td>
<td>1. Geography and the Social-Natural Science Divide</td>
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<td>Schedule appts <a href="https://calendar.app.google/YyXh3qBc5Z6Na92t7">https://calendar.app.google/YyXh3qBc5Z6Na92t7</a></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>12-14 Sept</td>
<td>Lecture + 2. The Study of Human-Environment Interactions in Geography</td>
<td>No collective class. Meet with Bill individually on Fri, 9/15 to discuss research topics</td>
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<td>Research proposal due Sun, Sept 24 @11pm via moodle</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3-5 Oct</td>
<td>Writing planning discussion</td>
<td>Library session for capstone paper.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>10-12 Oct</td>
<td>7. Political Ecology Critiques</td>
<td>8. First World &amp; Urban Political Ecology</td>
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<td>Outline/prelim bibliography/writing schedule due Sun, 10/15 @ 11pm via moodle</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>24-26 Oct</td>
<td>11. Political ecology of health, Urban Food Security &amp; EJ</td>
<td>No class. Midterm break</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>7-9 Nov</td>
<td>14. Political Ecology of Mining</td>
<td>15. Alternative Development Paradigms</td>
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<td>Half draft due Sun, 11/12 @11pm via moodle</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>14-16 Nov</td>
<td>16. Field work, Development and Scholarship</td>
<td>No collective class. Meet w/ Bill individually on Thurs-Fri to discuss half draft</td>
<td>Optional talk: 11/16, 4:45pm, Kagin: Eric Carter lecture</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>21-23 Nov</td>
<td>Lecture and Discussion: “Life after Macalester”</td>
<td>No class. Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>28-30 Nov</td>
<td>Political ecology alumni panel</td>
<td>No class. Writing Day</td>
<td>Full paper draft due Sun 12/3, at 11pm via moodle to Bill &amp; peers via email</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>5-7 Nov</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>12 Dec</td>
<td>Peer review in class</td>
<td>Research Presentations</td>
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<td>Final Research Paper (Wed, 12/13, 11pm)</td>
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## Grading

**Grade Components**

- Seminar Participation: 30%
- Discussion Leadership: 9%
- Research Proposal: 3%
- Outline/Bibliography/Schedule: 3%
- Half Paper Draft: 4%
- Full Paper Draft: 8%
- Peer Review of Paper Draft: 2%
- Research Presentation: 10%

**Final Paper:** 31%

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66%</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>&lt; 60%</td>
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Final grades are based on a weighted average for the term. Grade cutoff points (in terms of percentage) are as follows: A = 93-100%; A- = 90-92%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- = 80-82%; C+ = 77-79%; C = 73-76%; C- = 70-72%; D+ = 67-69%; D = 63-66%; D- = 60-62%, NC = < 60%.
Assignments

Reading: The amount of reading required for this course is substantial. Reading assignments related to discussion sessions are listed on the outline of topics that follows. Students are expected to have done all assigned reading before coming to class, and be prepared to discuss it.

Participation and Discussion: The course will be oriented towards discussion about three-quarters of the time (see schedule). The purpose of discussion is to facilitate critical analysis of key works within the field of cultural and political ecology. Class participation accounts for roughly a third of your grade in this course and the majority of class participation points will be derived from your comments in discussion. Participation points are relatively easy to obtain if you keep up with the reading and speak up during discussion. Please see me if you have difficulty speaking in class.

In my opinion, the best discussions are those in which: 1) students listen (and learn) from one another and build on what each other is saying; 2) the discussion is focused on understanding the main argument of each reading and breaking down and analyzing this argument to see if it makes sense; 3) making connections between readings (when several are assigned on the same day) by identifying where authors agree and disagree; and 4) relating insight gained from reading and discussion to other texts or real life events. In sum, I want you to approach discussion as an ongoing scholarly debate in which we (as a community of scholars and learners) are attempting to advance our collective knowledge.

Discussion Leaders: At least two student discussion leaders will be assigned to facilitate each discussion session. Students will lead approximately three discussion sessions during the semester (depending on class size). Discussion leaders will be expected to summarize the main points of each reading and to have prepared discussion questions on more debatable aspects of each article.

Capstone Paper

A major component of this seminar is to undertake a research paper. This will entail posing an interesting problem or question related to environment and development studies, and then setting out to answer this question through library research, and in some instances, the analysis of relevant data sets. You will be graded for content and ideas as well as effectiveness of writing (organization, clarity, citations, spelling, punctuation). In order to facilitate the research and writing process, and limit the possibility of a last-minute effort, a number of intermediary due dates have been established, including: 1) research proposal; 2) outline/bibliography/schedule; 3) half draft; 4) full draft; 5) peer review exercise, 5) presentation; and 6) final research paper. Late assignments will be penalized 10% per day.

The research proposal should include your research question, plus a summary of your thesis and a preliminary library and/or data sources. We will have a special session with a research librarian to help address any problems you may have encountered in collecting materials related to your research question.

Your final research paper should not exceed 30 double-spaced pages (about 7500 words). All projects must be typed. Projects should be organized, written clearly and free of errors. Include parenthetical citations within the paper as well as references for supporting maps, figures and tables. All sources used in preparing your paper must be cited, including data sources. Use
standard APA citation and presentation forms (e.g., Kate Turabian’s *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*). Examples of past student papers may be found at: [http://www.macalester.edu/geography/courses/geog488/moseley/f06_capstone.htm](http://www.macalester.edu/geography/courses/geog488/moseley/f06_capstone.htm)

Peer Review Exercise:
In addition to receiving feedback on your draft paper from the course instructor, each of you will receive comments from at least three other class members (and you, in turn, will provide three students with feedback). Peer review will occur in class on December 5. The guiding principles for a useful peer review are as follows: 1) engage at the level of ideas; 2) back up your comments with specific examples from the draft; and 3) be precise when giving advice.

Research Presentation
You will be asked to share your research paper findings with the class through a conference style presentation. You will have 20 minutes to make your presentation, followed by a 3-5 minute question and answer period. Use of visual aids is recommended. Because asking informed and interesting questions of a speaker is an important component of attending conferences, the other class members will be required to come up with questions for each presenter. In class time for presentations is scheduled the last full week of class on Thursday, Dec 5 and Tues, Dec 12.

### Detailed Lecture and Discussion Schedule

**PART I: ENVIRONMENT/DEVELOPMENT STUDIES IN GEOGRAPHY & THE EMERGENCE OF CULTURAL/POLITICAL ECOLOGY**

**Tuesday, September 5**
Introductions, Overview of Course

**Thursday, September 7**
Discussion leader assignments

1st Discussion: Geography and the Social-Natural Science Divide


**Tuesday, September 12**
Short Lecture: The Study of Human Environment Interactions in Geography: Traditions, Tensions and Debates

2nd Discussion: The Place of the Human-Environment Tradition in Geography


**Thursday, Sept 14**
No class. Meet with Bill individually to discuss research topics. Make an appointment here ([https://calendar.app.google/YyXh3qBc5Z6Na92t7](https://calendar.app.google/YyXh3qBc5Z6Na92t7))

**Tuesday, September 19**
**Short Lecture: Cultural Ecology**

3rd Discussion: Cultural Ecology (concepts and theory)


**Thursday, September 21**
4th Discussion: Cultural Ecology (classic case studies)


**Sunday, September 24**
Capstone research proposal due at 11pm via moodle

**Tuesday, September 26**
**Short Lecture: Political Ecology**

5th Discussion: Political Ecology I (concepts and theory)


**Thursday, September 28**

6th Discussion: Political Ecology II (early case studies)


**Tuesday, October 3**

Writing planning discussion. (note: there is some chance that Bill will be traveling this day. If yes, then this discussion will be moved to the first part of class on Thurs, Sept 28 or Thurs, Oct 5)

**Thursday, October 5**

Library session to prepare for capstone research.

**Tuesday, October 10**

7th Discussion: Political Ecology Criticism and Extension


**Thursday, October 12**

8th Discussion: First World & Urban Political Ecology


**Sunday, October 15**
Detailed outline, preliminary bibliography and writing schedule due at 11pm via moodle

**PART II: INVESTIGATION OF SELECTED ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT THEMES**

**Tuesday, October 17**
9th Discussion: Environmental Narratives, Forests & Ecotourism


**Thursday, October 19**
10th Discussion: Political Ecology of Climate Change, Vulnerability & Migration


**Tuesday, October 24**
11th Discussion: Political Ecology of Health, Urban Food Security and Environmental Justice


**Thursday, October 26**
No class. Midterm break

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Tuesday, October 31
12th Discussion: Agriculture, Food Sovereignty & Food Systems


Thursday, November 2
13th Discussion: Feminist Political Ecology, Water and Marginal Crops


Tuesday, November 7
14th Discussion: Political Ecology of Mining


PART III: ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PRAXIS: WHAT TO DO?
Thursday, November 9
15th Discussion: Alternative Development Paradigms
Gibson-Graham, J.K. 1996. Selections from Preface (pp.vii-xi) and Ch. 1 (pp.1-11). The End of Capitalism (as we know it): A feminist critique of political economy.


Sunday, November 12  
Half draft due Sunday, 11/12 at 11pm via moodle.

Tuesday, November 14  
16th Discussion: Fieldwork, Development and Scholarship  


Thursday, November 16.  
No collective class. Meet with Bill individually on Thurs-Fri to discuss half draft. Make an appointment here (https://calendar.app.google/tmGxENQL4yfQf9MW6).

Tuesday, November 21  
Lecture/discussion led by Bill: “Life after Macalester.”

Thursday, November 23  
No class. Thanksgiving break

Tuesday, November 28  
Political ecology alumni career panel. Engage with several alums of the course in terms of what they have done post-Macalester.

Thursday, November 30  
No class. Writing day. Full paper draft due Sunday, 12/3 at 11pm via moodle.

Tuesday, December 5  
Peer review in class

Thursday, December 7  
Student Presentations

Tuesday, December 12  
Student Presentations and course evaluations

Wednesday, December 13  
Final Research Paper by 11pm on Wednesday, 12/13 via moodle

*Welcome to the course! I look forward to working with you this semester.*