THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTHROPOLOGY 3379F

POLITICAL ECOLOGY and RESOURCE FRONTIERS

Instructor: Dan Jorgensen
Time: 
Place: 
Office: SSC 5403
Office Hours: 
Phone: 85085

Introduction:

This course is built around an emerging field known as political ecology, which draws upon several disciplines – anthropology, geography, political science, economics, ecology – that share an interest in the linkage between processes of globalization and changing environmental use. The point of departure for political ecology is the fact that such issues involve an interplay between local and non-local ("global") actors, who bring different kinds of power and interest to bear on human relations with the natural world.

The basic geometry of transnational resource exploitation is triangular – involving local people, developers and the state – but we will also have occasion to examine the interventions of NGOs or multilateral institutions such as the World Bank. Keeping this in mind, we start with a preliminary examination of ecopolitics by looking at how representations of indigenous people, national development and the values of conservation shape the arenas in which environmental debates get played out. This provides a nexus for thinking about issues at several scales (local, regional, transnational) and for becoming attuned to positional and perspectival differences.

We will go on to focus on a series of substantive or topical issues surrounding what I call "resource frontiers." The notion of resource frontiers draws attention to the historical dynamics of patterns of natural resource exploitation in which newly identified resources are found on the margins of the world system. As with all frontiers, this margin is mobile and shifts over time – a kind of wave-front of logging, mining and drilling. For the purposes of this course we will be particularly interested in three kinds of resources – timber, minerals, and oil. We will likewise focus on three particular regions – Southeast Asia, the Western Pacific, and South America.

The course concludes with a consideration of Anna Tsing’s arguments concerning environmental politics and what she terms “scale-making projects.”

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Midterm Exam (25%)
Research Essay (40%)
Final Examination (35%) – Date TBA

My general expectation is that you will attend lectures and prepare for them by doing the appropriate readings according to the topic sequence shown in this syllabus. My lectures often take the readings as a
context for what I say – in other words, I assume that you know what is going on in the readings as a backdrop for understanding my lectures.

If you have questions, ideas, or would just like to chat, I would encourage you to drop in during office hours (or, by making an appointment). Do not be shy about seeking advice or help with the course from either myself or from our TA.

**About research essays:**

The research paper will sum the outcome of your research on a topic related to the course. It must include a clear line of argument, drawing primarily from anthropological sources. The paper should be fifteen to twenty pages in length, double-spaced, inclusive of bibliography. In general, your work will be evaluated on the basis of several factors, including:

- overall coherence (consistency, logical construction)
- insight and originality of thought
- grasp of key issues
- ability to link ideas with ethnographic material

**Books (available in the bookstore):**

- Peet, Richard and Michael Watts, eds.  

- Sawyer, Suzana  

- Tsing, Anna  

The remaining readings will be available in a coursepack.

**TOPICS AND READINGS**

**ORIENTATIONS**

- Adger, W.N., T.A. Benjaminsen, K Brown, and H. Svarstad  

- Bryant, Raymond  

- Dove, Michael  
**ENVIRONMENTS, MOVEMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

Bebbington, Anthony  

Doyle, Timothy and Brian Doherty  

Forsyth, Tim  

Hecht, Susanna  

Rangan, Haripriya  

Zimmerer, Karl  

**THE POLITICS OF CONSERVATION**

Alcorn, Janis  

Filer, Colin  
Goldman, Michael  

Neumann, Roderick  

Vandergeest, Peter and Nancy Peluso  

West, Paige, James Igoe and Dan Brockington  

ECOPOLITICS AND REPRESENTATION

Brosius, J. Peter  

Conklin, Beth and Laura Graham  

Li, Tania  

Vandergeest, Peter  

Wood, Michael  

Zerner, Charles  
LOGGING AND RAINFOREST POLITICS

Brosius, J. Peter

Filer, Colin

Hviding, Edvard

McCarthy, John

Schieffelin, Edward L.

Wadley, Reed and Michael Ellenburg

MINING POLITICS IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC

Ballard, Chris and Glenn Banks

Banks, Glenn

Filer, Colin

Jorgensen, Dan

Kirsch, Stuart
2002 Anthropology and Advocacy: A Case Study of the Campaign Against the

Macintyre, Martha and Simon Foale
Oceania 74:231-251.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND OIL

Ferguson, James

Sagir, Bill
2001 The Politics of Petroleum Extraction and Royalty Distribution at Lake Kutubu. In
Mining and Indigenous Lifeworlds in Australia and Papua New Guinea, A. Rumsey and J.

Sawyer, Suzana
2004 Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador.

Watts, Michael
University Press.

FRICTION: A FRAME FOR UNDERSTANDING ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS IN THE
GLOBAL SOUTH

Tsing, Anna
1999 Becoming a Tribal Elder, and Other Green Development Fantasies. In
Transforming the Indonesian Uplands. Tania M. Li, ed. Pp. 159-202. Amsterdam:
2003 Agrarian Allegory and Global Futures. In Nature in the Global South: Environmental