Syllabus

States of Extraction:
Nature, Women and World Politics

Gonkar Gyatso, “Shangri La” (2014)
The global energy boom has increased states’ dependency on commodities across the world. From the Arctic to the Amazon, nation-states are putting large territories up for sale in an effort to turn nature into ‘quick cash.’ The unparalleled levels of extraction are accompanied by unparalleled violence against women, with levels of femicide on the rise in most of the world. Governments have expanded the extractive frontier, mining highlands, damming rivers, and clearing forests without prior consultation. As ecosystems are collapsing, contaminated and set ablaze, nature defenders activate social resistance to defend their territories, lifeways and nature. Many of these defenders are women, who are fighting the commodification of nature as well as their own bodies and work. We analyze the extraction of resources in nature and women as two sides of a coin, positing the fight against the climate crisis and gender equality as complementary processes.

This class offers an activist approach to study political ecology with a gender lens. We analyze the politics of extraction at large: the class discusses water struggles and extractive industries like oil and agribusiness from the Philippines to Peru, Indigenous resistance on the ground and the legal advocacy pushing for the rights of nature framework. We use the work of feminist economists like Silvia Federici and analyze the leadership of women defenders like Berta Caceres to explore the ways in which extraction of nature and bodies are fundamental aspects of capitalist states. The course engages theoretical tools and comparative perspectives to grasp current debates in political ecology, gender studies, and indigenous politics to help students identify alternatives for the future. It also seeks to foster a critical inquiry to bridge lasting divides between academia and activism in local and global contexts.

Syllabus subject to change depending on current events and collaborative dynamics
Students are invited to contribute suggestions to influence course contents and assignments

Proposed grading structure

20% Class participation – Students are expected to attend all classes having read all the assigned materials; everyone should be prepared to engage in class discussion, collaborative exercises, and quizzes. Participation also includes weekly news posting online with news related to the course materials of each week in our closed social media group.

20% Case-study – Groups of two students will present a case-study of their choice related to the theme of the day: 10min oral presentations in class followed by Q&A + essay to be emailed to professor prior to class (500 words + list of references).
20% Interventions – Groups of students will realize interventions to spread class discussion into their community. Guidelines to follow.

20% Podcast – “The cost of extraction”: students will pair up to make a 15min podcast explaining the costs of extraction through a case study of their choice. Guidelines to follow.

20% Policy proposal – This report provides concrete policy proposal on a topic of your choice. To be presented in class on May 19; written report to be emailed to the professor May 29 (800-1200 words). Ex: the economy of water- how can water lead to a circular economy that ends with dependency on extractivism? Guidelines to follow.

Required books:

Suggested books

COURSE OUTLINE

February 15. Class 1. Introductions
- In-class discussion: should we criminalize ecocide? (“international lawyers draft plan to criminalize ecosystem destruction,” The Guardian)

February 17. Class 2. Anthropocene …
- Paulla Ebron and Anna Tsing - “Feminism and the Anthropocene”
- In-class exercise: document the climate crisis.

February 22. Class 3. … or capitalocene?
- Françoise Vergès. 2017. “Racial capitalocene?” in Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin Futures of Black Radicalism (here)

March 1. Class 5. Feminism and the politics of the commons: self-determination over land and bodies

March 3. Class 6. Feminism and the politics of the commons (continued)

March 8. Class 7. Conservation as colonialism
- Documentary film ‘Victim of the WWF’;
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHH_vlhnC0I

March 10. Class 8. Banking on nature

March 15. Class 9. Potosí: mining the New World

March 17. Class 10. Development as extraction
- Film “American Outrage” (and / or “Gold Fever”)

March 22. Class 11. Enclosing the commons in Latin America

March 24. Class 12. Drilling ‘wilderness’
- Global Witness. 2019. “The US is set to drown the world in oil” (report)

March 29. Class 13. Agribusiness
environmental defenders in 2017” (here)

March 31. Class 14. The myth of green energy

April 5. Class 15. Water grabbing

April 7. Class 16. Decolonizing water

- Documentary film “Green Blood” (or film “500 years”)
- Francesc Badia I Dalmases, Series Defenders of the Forest (here)

April 14. (ISA)

April 19. NO CLASS


April 26. Class 20. Women and climate justice
- Feminist pathways to Just and Sustainable Futures, Symposium (here)

April 28. Class 21. All of our relations
• Sheryl Lightfoot and David MacDonald. 2017. “Treaty Relations Between Indigenous Peoples”

May 3. Class 22. Plasticocene?

May 5. Class 23. Finding solutions: ecocide as genocide?
• In-class debate: is ecocide a form of genocide? should it be frame into law? How?

May 10. Sacred instructions: microbial worlds, quantum physics, and relationality
• Sherri Mitchell. (talk)

May 12. Workshop on final policy proposals

May 17. Final Projects: policy reports

May 19. Final projects and Conclusions

~~ End of Semester ~~

Replace women climate with plastic?

https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/plastic-problem-recycling-myth-big-oil-950957/
https://theconversation.com/recycling-isnt-enough-the-worlds-plastic-pollution-crisis-is-only-getting-worse-144175
https://ourworldindata.org/plastic-pollution?utm_source=newsletter

infographic: our world in data
https://slides.ourworldindata.org/plastic-pollution/#/8

2019. Politics and the plastic crisis: A review throughout the plastic life cycle

“Evaluating scenarios toward zero plastic pollution”
https://science.sciencemag.org/content/369/6510/1455.abstract

Sherri Mitchell-
https://www.google.com/search?q=Sherri+Mitchell+talk+sacred+instructions&oq=Sherri+Mitchell+talk+sacred+instructions