

Syllabus  
**States of Extraction:**  
**Nature, Women and World Politics**



Gonkar Gyatso, "Shangri La" (2014)

Professor Manuela L. Picq

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All classes online

Office hours: all by appointment via zoom

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:**

Silvia Federici. 2018. *Witches, Witch-Hunting and Women*. PM Press.

Robin Broad and John Cavanagh. 2021. *The Water Defenders: How Ordinary People Saved a Country from Corporate Greed*. Penguin Random House.

### **Suggested books**

Charles C. Mann. 2006. *1491: The Americas Before Columbus*. Second Vintage Books.

Elizabeth Kolbert. 2014. *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural history*. Henry Holt and Cie.

Ann Tsing and cie. 2018. *The Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*.

## **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 ...**

- Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen and John R. McNeill. 2007. “The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?” *Ambio* Vol. 36(8): 614-621.
- 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](#))
- Donna Haraway. 2017. “Making Oddkin: Story Telling for earthly Survival”, Public Lecture at Yale ([talk here](#))

### **February 24. Class 4. Valuing nature: capitalism in the web of life**

- JW Moore. 2011. “Wall Street is a way of organizing nature: an interview with Jason W. Moore”
- JW Moore. 2017. “Work, Energy, and the Value of Nature” ([talk here](#))

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

- Silvia Federici. 2018. *Witches, Witch-Hunting and Women*. PM Press.

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

- Silvia Federici. 2018. *Witches, Witch-Hunting and Women*. PM Press.

**March 8. Class 7. Conservation as colonialism**

- Mark Dowie. 2009. *Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native peoples*. London/ Cambridge: MIT Press. (introduction)
- Documentary film ‘Victim of the WWF’;  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHH\\_vlhnC0I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHH_vlhnC0I)

**March 10. Class 8. Banking on nature**

- Sian Sullivan. 2012. “Banking Nature? The Spectacular Financialisation of Environmental Conservation.”
- Mollet, Sharlene. 2015. “The Power to Plunder: Rethinking Land Grabbing in Latin America.” *Antipode* 48(2), 412-432.

**March 15. Class 9. Potosi: mining the New World**

- Magda Von Der Heydt-Coca. 2005. “Andean Silver and the Rise of the Western World” *Critical Sociology* 31(4) ([here](#))
- Kris Lane. 2019. *Potosí: The Silver City that Changed the World*. University of California Press (introduction).

**March 17. Class 10. Development as extraction**

- Anna C. Revette. (2017) [This time it's different: lithium extraction, cultural politics and development in Bolivia](#). *Third World Quarterly* 38(1):149-168.
- Film “American Outrage” (and / or “Gold Fever”)

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

- Arsel, Murat, Barbara Hogenboom, Lorenzo Pellegrini. 2016. “The extractive imperative in Latin America.” *The Extractive Industries and Society* 3(4): 880-887.
- Maristella Svampa. 2015. “Commodities Consensus: Neoextractivism and Enclosure of the Commons in Latin America.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 114(1): 65-82.

**March 24. Class 12. Drilling ‘wilderness’**

- Martí Orta-Martínez and Matt Finer. 2010. “Oil frontiers and Indigenous resistance in the Peruvian Amazon”. *Ecological Economics* (2010): 207-218.
- Global Witness. 2019. “The US is set to drown the world in oil” ([report](#))

**March 29. Class 13. Agribusiness**

- Ben McKaye and Gonzalo Colque. 2015. “Bolivia's soy complex: the development of ‘productive exclusion’” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 43(2): 583-610. ([here](#))
- Global Witness report. 2018. “At What Cost? Irresponsible Business and the Murder of

environmental defenders in 2017” ([here](#))

**March 31. Class 14. The myth of green energy**

- Anderson & all. 2018. “Fragmentation of Andes to Amazon connectivity by hydropower dams.” *Science Advances*.
- Ed Atkins. 2017. “Dams, political framings, and sustainability as an empty signifier: the case of Belo Monte,” Royal Geographical Society ([here](#))

**April 5. Class 15. Water grabbing**

- Dell’Angelo, Jampel, Maria Cristina Rulli, Paolo D’Odorico. 2018. “The Global Water Grabbing Syndrome,” *Ecological Economics* 143(1), 276-285.
- Caroline Winter, “Nestle Makes Billions Bottling Water It Pays Nearly Nothing For”, September 21, 2017, *Bloomberg* ([here](#))

**April 7. Class 16. Decolonizing water**

- Hidalgo, Juan Pablo, Boelens and Vos. 2017. “De-colonizing water: Dispossession, water insecurity, and indigenous claims for resources, authority and territory,” *Water History* 9:67-85.
- Anne Salmond. 2014. “Tears of Rangi: water, power, and people in New Zealand,” *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4(3): 285-309.

**April 12. Class 17. Nature defenders and the rights of nature in praxis**

- Documentary film “Green Blood” (or film “500 years”)
- Francesc Badia I Dalmases, Series Defenders of the Forest ([here](#))
- Kauffman, Craig and Pamela Martin. 2018. Constructing rights of Nature Norms in the US, Ecuador, and New Zealand. *Global Environmental Politics*. 18(4), 43-62.
- Manuela Picq. 2020. “Resistance to Extractivism and Megaprojects in Latin America” in Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost (eds) [\*The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latin American Politics\*](#), Oxford University Press.

**April 14. (ISA)**

**April 19. NO CLASS**

**April 21. Class 19. Class 18. Water defenders in El Salvador**

- Robin Broad and John Cavanagh. 2021. *The Water Defenders: How Ordinary People Saved a Country from Corporate Greed*. Penguin Random House. (entire book)

**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**

- Michelle Daigle. 2018. “Resurging through Kishiichiwan: The Spatial Politics of Indigenous Water Relations.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 7(1): 159-172.

- Sheryl Lightfoot and David MacDonald. 2017. “Treaty Relations Between Indigenous Peoples”

### **May 3. Class 22. Plasticocene?**

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### **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?
- Tim Lindgren. 2018. “Ecocide, genocide, and the disregard of alternative life-systems”  
*The International Journal of Human Rights* 22:4, 525. 549.

### **May 10. Sacred instructions: microbial worlds, quantum physics, and relationality**

- Sherri Mitchell. (talk)
- Margaret McFall-Ngai. “Noticing microbial worlds: the postmodern synthesis in biology”  
in *The Arts of Living in a Damaged Planet*. Duke University Press (p.51-69).

### **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](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>