

# Global Political Ecology

GOV 2470 / LAS 2540 / ENVS 2340  
Bowdoin College  
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## 1) Course Description

In light of the ecological changes exacerbated by the climate crisis, scholarly production in the humanities and social sciences has become increasingly preoccupied with the relationship between humans and nature, in a field of study that is loosely associated with the term “political ecology.” This course expands the current debates in this field beyond the intellectual circles of Europe and North America to consider contributions that have remained marginal. The course will include material from various disciplines ranging from writings by indigenous intellectuals and activists to academics, with a focus on the Global South, broadly construed to include communities of color in the north. The format of the course will focus primarily on discussion, with brief lectures to help students contextualize the material. Additionally, although we will consider the implications of these topics for policy, please note that the material to be used relies substantially on theoretical discussions.

## 2) Learning Goals and Objectives

- a) **Familiarity with critical views in Environmental Studies:** In this course, we will discuss alternative views of common, interconnected topics in Political Ecology and Environmental Studies such as climate change and the Anthropocene, knowledge creation, nonhuman agency, development, intersectionality, and relationship with land. Throughout the course and in your assignments, I will encourage you to remain attentive to alternative understandings of the relationship between humans and the environment to those promoted by mainstream media and education.
- b) **Critical Thinking:** Critical thinking is not simply about questioning the status quo, but also understanding the very terms we use to make sense of reality. For this reason, this course calls on us to reflect on how the material can teach us something about our own lives, independently of where we are from or are located at this moment. I encourage you to develop such connections in your assignments (weekly reflections, discussion board, and papers/projects).

**c) Interdisciplinarity:** This course opens the possibility of going beyond the disciplinary boundaries of Political Science by including materials from other disciplines such as Anthropology and History, and formats such as film, news, and blogs. You are free to explore interdisciplinarity in your assignments by using alternative formats to writing, and by engaging with sources outside of your discipline.

### 3) Synchronous sessions

For synchronous sessions, students will be divided into two groups to allow for a more intimate discussion. Each group will join one synchronous session on Zoom per week. However, please keep your schedule flexible during both sessions because we will meet twice a week on some weeks. You will be notified in advance when that happens.

Here is the [link](#) for the synchronous meetings, also available on Blackboard. You must be logged into your Bowdoin Zoom account if you want to bypass going through Blackboard.

**Group 1:** Wednesdays 3PM-4:20PM EST

**Group 2:** Fridays 10:30AM-11:50AM EST

### 4) Assignments

#### **a) Recurrent:**

- a.1) Eight (8) participations in the weekly discussion board on the class Padlet.
- a.2) Eight (8) 300-word or 3-5 min audio/video reflections on your individual Padlet.
- a.3) *Optional for extra credit:* Keep a course journal on your individual Padlet (instructions below).

#### **b) One time:**

- b.1) Moderate discussion board on class Padlet
- b.2) Midterm paper
- b.3) Final paper or independent project

## 5) Grade Distribution

- a) **Participation:** 40% (Reflections 20%, Synchronous meetings 10%, Discussion board posts 10%)
- b) **Discussion board moderation:** 10%
- c) **Midterm paper:** 20%
- d) **Final paper/project:** 30%

## 6) Where to find assistance

- a) **Contact me:** Do not hesitate to contact me if you need help! I am available via email at [tzille@bowdoin.edu](mailto:tzille@bowdoin.edu) and office hours to discuss matters related to the course, or any other matter you think I may be able to assist you with. I will point you to appropriate resources if I am not able to assist you. I will strive to respond to your emails within 24h, but I will generally not be available on evenings and weekends. Use [this](#) link to book an office hours appointment with me, and [this](#) Zoom link for the meeting (Links also available on Blackboard). Please contact me via email if you don't find a time slot that works for you.
- b) **Reach out to your Learning Assistants:** Noelia Calcano and Norell Sherman are both seniors at Bowdoin who have previously taken a course with me and are the designated learning assistants for this course. They are available to help you if you prefer to speak with a student. You can reach Noelia at [ncalcano@bowdoin.edu](mailto:ncalcano@bowdoin.edu) and Norell at [nsherman@bowdoin.edu](mailto:nsherman@bowdoin.edu).
- c) **Reach out to your peers:** Let me know if you would like me to facilitate connection with others in class.
- d) **Other campus resources:**
  - d.1) **Counseling and Wellness Services:** These are very stressful times, just know that you are not alone. Counseling is a great resource and you don't have to be in crisis to use it! Here is the link to [CWS](#) and phone number: 207-725-3145.
  - d.2) **Baldwin Center for Learning and Teaching:** The [BCLT](#) offers many forms of academic assistance, such as peer academic coaching and writing assistance.
  - d.3) **Accommodations:** Please feel free to discuss your need for accommodations with me. For more info on what the college offers, check out the Student Accessibility Office [here](#).

## 7) Course Policies:

- a) **Timeliness:** Things happen! I also understand that the pandemic has affected our personal lives in various ways. However, please notify me in advance if you must be absent from synchronous meetings and asynchronous activities. And if you must submit your work late, please let me know in advance so we can work out alternatives together.
- b) **Readings and other materials:** The quality of discussion and your learning will depend heavily on you being able to read/watch the assigned instructional material. I try to assign a realistic amount of readings, and I am willing to reconsider the amount assigned if necessary. In return, I ask that you stay on track with the material to the best of your ability.
- c) **Plagiarism:** Don't do it... it's a terrible idea. It's really easy to figure it out when a student does it. Seek assistance if you need help with an assignment. Here is a link to Bowdoin's [Academic Honor Code](#).
- d) **Netiquette:** I realize we are all kind of zoom fatigued. However, for the sake of the quality of discussions, I require that you keep your camera on during our synchronous sessions, unless you have particular circumstances that justify leaving it off. If this is the case, you must ask me for permission ahead of time. Moreover, since this is not a lecture based course, be prepared to participate frequently and help us maintain a cordial and inclusive discussion environment. I also ask that you check your Bowdoin email and the Blackboard page for this course daily for announcements and updates.

## 8) Assignments, explained:

### a) **Recurrent assignments:**

**a.1) Discussion board on our Class Padlet (weekly):** Padlet is a platform that allows for a more fluid discussion than Blackboard, and you can post in many formats. The links to your Padlets are listed on the left side bar on the course's Blackboard page. Please contribute no later than Thursdays at 10pm. Ways to participate include, but are not limited to: responses to questions by facilitators, comments to your peers' responses, thoughts on course material or items discussed in class, connections with current events, news links (with comments) related to the course and region, images and videos relevant to discussion. Padlet lets you post video or audio messages in addition to written posts, so feel free to experiment with formats. I will also participate in the discussion, although it will be mostly moderated by you. **You are required to actively participate in the discussion board for eight (8) weeks of your choice.**

**a.2) Individual reflections:** Please post a 300-word or 3-5 min audio/video response and a question related to the week's material on your individual Padlet, due by 10pm EST the night before your synchronous session. Only you and I will have access to this Padlet. This response must demonstrate that you have thought about the material you have read/watched, but the exact format is open. Rather than a summary of readings, think of this as a chance to ask the following guiding questions: why were you particularly moved by specific points in the readings? How do different materials speak to each other? In what ways did they invite you to think differently? These are pass/fail, and I will give you feedback on them two times during the semester. Please add the date and reflection number (#) to the title of your post. **You are required to submit eight (8) reflections over the course of the semester.**

**a.3) Optional course journal:** For extra credit, you can keep a course journal on your individual Padlet. This is how it will work: in addition to your individual reflections, use your personal Padlet to compile all your work for this class, including discussion board posts, synchronous meeting notes, readings notes, paper outlines, thoughts, etc. This is not meant to give you extra work. This is simply a way for me to track your progress at the end of the course, as well as for you to leave the course with a tangible collection of what we did throughout the semester, which you will be able to download if you choose.

**b) One-time assignments:**

**b.1) Discussion board moderation:** You will sign up with one or two of your peers, once during the semester, to moderate the discussion board on our course Padlet. In order to moderate the discussion, please collaborate with each other to offer a brief set of provocations (in the form of questions, short videos, images, news links, etc., or a combination of these), pertaining to the relevant week's material by Mondays at 10pm. During the week, you should monitor the discussion by offering at least three (3) comments on your peers' responses and posts, suggesting connections between posts, etc. In short, you are expected to be more active in the discussion board on the week you moderate it.

**b.2) Midterm paper:** a 1000-word paper to be submitted on Friday, Mar 26 at 5pm EST. You will have the option to respond to a prompt that I will circulate in advance, or to write your own reflection in consultation with me.

**b.3) Final paper/project:** a 1250-word paper or an independent project (individual or group) to be submitted by Tuesday, May 18, at 5PM EST. Prompts will be circulated in advance. Please consult with me in advance (by May 7) if you choose to do an independent project. In the past, students have done projects such as interviews, art, websites, webinars, among others.

**9) A note on Participation:**

I will do short interventions during our synchronous sessions to go over the material. However, I anticipate this course to be primarily discussion based. Your participation is key (hence 40% of your grade) and should include active contributions to the class discussion board on Padlet and to our synchronous meetings, as well as timely submission of your reflections, in addition to attendance of office hours. I will also offer extra credit opportunities during the semester, which will be added to a special folder on Blackboard.

**10) Feedback:**

I will give you feedback on your reflections at least twice during the semester, once before Spring Break, and once after. I will also let you know if you need to rewrite a reflection to meet the standards of the course. If you would like additional feedback on particular reflections, feel free to contact me individually.

## Course Schedule

(The following table contains a description of each week of the semester along with a schedule of readings and assignments. All materials are available on Blackboard unless otherwise noted)

Week	Title	Objectives	Instructional Materials	Assignments
<b>1</b>  <b>2/8-2/12</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	On week 1 we will meet on the same day (Wednesday, Feb 10, 3pm) to get to know each other briefly, have an informal discussion about current events and the idea of Political Ecology. We will also get a chance to ask any questions about the course.	<u>Read:</u> a) Optional articles posted on Blackboard	None
<b>2</b>  <b>2/15-2/19</b>	<b>Anthropocene and Climate Crisis</b>	On week 2 we will explore the idea of the “Anthropocene” in the context of the climate crisis, and how it has been approached from non-Western perspectives.	<u>Read:</u> a) Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History” b) Whyte, “Indigenous Climate Change Studies” <u>Watch:</u> c) Ghosh, “The Great Derangement”	a) Weekly reflection and questions b) Discussion Board
<b>3</b>  <b>2/22-2/26</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	On week 3 we will begin to discuss what it means to produce knowledge, and what knowledges count as valid.	<u>Read:</u> a) Harding, "Do Micronesian Navigators Practice Science?" b) Blackmore, “As Insect Invaders...” <u>Watch:</u>	a) Weekly reflection and questions b) Discussion Board

			c) Kunuk and Mauro, "Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change"	
<b>4</b> <b>3/1-3/5</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	On week 4 we will continue to delve into the question of knowledge creation in the works of indigenous intellectuals in New Zealand and the US.	<u>Read:</u> a) Tuhiwai Smith, <i>Decolonizing Methodologies</i> b) Kimmerer, <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> <u>Browse:</u> c) Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga website	a) Weekly reflection and questions b) Discussion Board
<b>5</b> <b>3/8-3/12</b>	<b>Nonhumans</b>	On week 5, we will begin to explore alternative ways of relating to nonhumans that are not premised in the separation between humans and nature	<u>Watch:</u> a) Brandenburg and Orzel, "When Two Worlds Collide" <u>Read:</u> b) de la Cadena, <i>Earth Beings</i>	a) Weekly reflection and questions b) Discussion Board
<b>6</b> <b>3/15-3/19</b>	<b>Nonhumans</b>	On week 6, we will continue the work of the previous week to reflect on how some groups of humans acquire a relational sensibility to toward the natural world.	<u>Read:</u> a) Zille, "The River Was My Teacher" b) Glissant, <i>Poetics of Relation</i>	a) Weekly reflection and questions b) Discussion Board
<b>7</b> <b>3/22-3/26</b>	<b>Spring Break + Midterm paper week</b>	<b>No content assigned or synchronous sessions this week</b>	Please use this time to rest and work on your papers	<b>a) Midterm paper due on March 26 at 5pm, please upload it to Blackboard</b>



				b) No reflections or discussion board this week
8 3/29-4/2	Postdevelopment	On week 8 we will begin an overview of critiques and alternative visions of development by looking at works that have sought to expose development's very premises	Read: a) Escobar and Esteve, "Post-development @ 25" b) Shiva, <i>Monocultures of the Mind</i>	a) Weekly reflection and questions b) Discussion Board
9 4/5-4/9	Postdevelopment (Instructor at conference, stay tuned for alternative class schedule)	On week 9, we will continue the work of the previous week while focusing on alternative visions of development created by small farmers in the Global South.	Read: a) Holt-Jiménez, <i>Campesino a Campesino</i> b) Livingston, Self-Devouring Growth	a) Weekly reflection and questions b) Discussion Board
10 4/12-4/16	Land	On week 10, we will focus on alternative relationships with land than modern industrial agriculture	Read: a) Kumarakulasingham and Ngcoya, "Plant Provocations" b) Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy" Watch: c) Stiegman and Pictou, "We Story the Land"	a) Weekly reflection and questions b) Discussion Board
11 4/19-4/23	Land	On week 11, we will continue to reflect on the theme of land.	Read: a) Desmarais, <i>La Via Campesina</i>	a) Weekly reflection and questions b) Discussion Board

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) Fukuoka, <i>The One Straw Revolution</i></li> <li>c) Buswell, "Shifting to a Culture of Decolonization in Conservation Communities"</li> </ul>	
<p><b>12</b> <b>4/26-4/30</b></p>	<b>Intersectionality</b>	On week 12, we will discuss how the concept of intersectionality might help us create fruitful connections in the fields of Political Ecology and Environmental Studies as well.	<u>Watch:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Guzmán, <i>The Pearl Button</i></li> </ul> <u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) Méndez, "The River Told Me: Rethinking Intersectionality from the World of Berta Cáceres"</li> <li>c) Cáceres, Interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Weekly reflection and questions</li> <li>b) Discussion Board</li> </ul>
<p><b>13</b> <b>5/3-5/7</b></p>	<b>Looking Forward</b>	On week 13, we will start wrapping up the semester by thinking about the future. How do we look forward from here?	<u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Krenak, <i>Ideas to Postpone the End of the World</i></li> <li>b) Opperman, "We Need Histories of Black Ecology Now"</li> <li>c) Black/Land Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Weekly reflection and questions</li> <li>b) Discussion Board</li> </ul>
<p><b>14</b> <b>5/10-5/14</b></p>	<b>Looking Forward</b>	On week 14, we will wrap up the course by continuing on the topic of looking forward. We will also have an informal conversation about the final, and the things we are taking from this semester.	<u>Watch:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ray, "Coming of Age at the End of the World"</li> </ul>	<p style="color: red;">No reflections or discussion board this week. Use this time to think about and work on your finals.</p>

<b>15</b>	<b>No class</b>			<b>Final due on Tuesday, May 18, at 5pm.</b>
<b>5/17-5/18</b>				