



Introduction to Political Ecology

Case Studies from the Middle East

Lecturer: Dr Miri Lavi-Neeman

3 academic hours once a week, 3 credits, Undergraduate.

About the course:

As a theoretical tool-kit and set of empirical case-studies, the field of Political Ecology is extremely broad and varied. This course traces some origins and current formulations of political ecology as an approach to studying environmental change and the relations between society and the environment in general; it also evaluates the power of political ecology to explain and analyze historical and current conflicts and processes involving Israelis, Palestinians, and others in the Middle East. Using a combination of case studies and theoretical works, we will explore a range of environmental issues including: control over land, parks and protected areas, forestation, settlement, water, and environmental movements. We will follow case studies and research projects from the Middle East, and in particular within Israel and the Palestine, but also from other parts of the world.

The goal of this course would be first, to be able to use the framework --analytical tools and critical thinking skills --of political ecology to analyze the complex relationships between ecological and social change that underlie contemporary environmental problems around the globe; second, to evaluate and criticize other popular understandings of the environment, and thirdly, to gain a unique and useful but overlooked perspective on Middle East politics, and on regional and local ethnic and civic conflicts, and violence. We will sample key texts in political ecology literature dealing with environmental change; political economy of resources, social movements, and development; we will also evaluate academic and popular writings on the Middle East from a political ecology perspective.

Course requirements and grading:

Seminar participation (15%): Students are expected to attend all classes, complete the reading assignments before class, and come to class prepared to participate in discussions. Absences and lateness will result in your participation grade.

Critical reading commentaries (25%) A second component of the course grade are will be reading responses on selected texts— Each student is required to submit 7 reading responses 500 words long on reading materials (one –two articles from each part of the syllabus). Please send your responses via email the day before class session by 7 PM. In your reading responses, you may outline the key points of the readings, highlight what was

interesting/confusing/significant to you, raise questions, and relate your thoughts to other readings or contemporary events. Late submissions will not be accepted. These will be graded Pass/fail. Each student must get at least 7 passing responses to get the full score.

Class Presentations (20%): Each student is required to present in class their emerging final paper project and connect it to the course's theoretical topics. During these 15-minute presentations, you may use PowerPoint, performance, lecture, or any other presentation styles. The choice of topics will take place during the third week of the course.

Final Paper (40%): a max of 6 page double spaced text in length on a chosen topic that engages with course materials. **A hand out of guidelines and expectations will be distributed** Critical thinking will be expected for all assignments and will be an important element of grading assessment.

Readings and Probable Books:

Reading will be based on articles, newspapers and websites; in addition we will read significant selected chapters from the following books:

Robbins, Paul (2011, 2005) Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction. 1st and 2nd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell.

Davis and Burke (2011) Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa. Ohio University Press.

McKee, Emily. 2016. Dwelling in Conflict: Negev Landscapes and the Boundaries of Belonging. Stanford University Press.

Grove, R. 1995 Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Peet, R., P. Robbins, and M. Watts. (2011) . Global Political Ecology: Routledge.

Peluso, N. L., and M. Watts. 2001. Violent environments: Cornell University Press.

Orenstein, D., A. Tal, and C. Miller eds. (2013). Between ruin and Restoration an Environmental History of Israel. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Course themes and readings:

Class 1 : Introduction Political ecology as theory

What is Theory for, What is Political Ecology?
How Natural is Nature?
Course Logistics

Readings:

In class:

Raymond Williams. Nature. in Keywords.

Raffles, Hugh. 2000. "The Amazon: A Natural Landscape?" Seminar, February. <http://www.india-seminar.com/2000/486/486%20raffles.htm>

Michael Borrawoy.2000. How to Read Theory. Unpublished manuscript.

Class 2: Origins and history of the Field

The emergence of political ecology

Readings:

Robbins, 2011. Part 1, chapter 1. Political versus Apolitical pp. 11-24 chapter 2: A tree with deep roots: the Determinist context. pp 25-28.

Background readings:

Paulson, S., L. Gezon, and M. Watts, (2003), "Locating the Political in Political Ecology: An Introduction," in Human Organization 62(3): 205-217.

Walker, Peter (2005). "Political ecology: where is the ecology?" in Progress in Human Geography, 29(1): 73-82.

Class 3: Historical political ecology part 1:

Colonialism, Nature, Development and the middle east

Readings:

Robbins, Paul (2011). Ch. 3: "The critical tools: the producer as an agent of history: peasant studies" pp.59-61 ; pp 62-63 (hegemony); and pp 65-71 ("critical Environmental history", "whose history? Postcolonial studies and power/knowledge").

Davis, Diana. 2011. "Imperialism, Orientalism, and the Environment in the Middle East: History, Policy, Power, and Practice." In Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa, ed. Diana Davis and Edmund Burke, 1-22. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Recommended:

Davis, Diana, Historical Political Ecology the Importance of Looking Back and Moving Forward, Geoforum

Burke, Edmund. 2005. "The Coming Environmental Crisis in the Middle East: A Historical Perspective, 1750-2000 CE." UC World History Workshop. Paper 2. 1-19.

Class 4: Historical political ecology part 2:

Nature, development and early Environmentalism in Israel /Palestine

Case Study: the Hula drainage project

Readings

Gorney, E. 2007. (Un) Natural Selection: The Drainage Of The Hula Wetlands, An Ecofeminist Reading. International Feminist Journal of Politics 9 (4):465-474

Hall, S., 1992. The West and the Rest: Discourse and power. The Indigenous Experience: Global Perspectives, pp.165-173.

Recommended additional background readings:

Escobar, Arturo (1995). *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: PUP (selections).

Tal, Alon. 2002. *Pollution in a promised land: An environmental history of Israel*. University of California Press. Chapter 1 - The Pathology of a Polluted River: An Introduction to Israel's Environmental Crisis.

Grove, R. 1995. Chapter 7. *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Rabinowitz, D. and Khawalde, S., 2000. Demilitarized, then dispossessed: The Kirad Bedouins of the Hula Valley in the context of Syrian-Israeli relations. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 32(4), pp.511-530.

Class 5: Land : Conservation Struggles and Indigeneity**Readings:**

Robbins, Paul (2011). Chapter 9: "Conservation and Control," in *Political Ecology*, pp. 176-181.

Orenstein, D. E., and S. P. Hamburg. 2009. To populate or preserve? Evolving political-demographic and environmental paradigms in Israeli land-use policy. *Land Use Policy* 26 (4):984-1000.

Yiftachel, Oren. 1998. *Nation-Building and the Division of Space: Frontiers and Domination in the Israeli 'Ethnocracy'*. <http://www.geog.bgu.ac.il/members/yiftachel/paper2.html>.

Recommended:

Neumann Roderick (2004). "Nature-State-Territory: Toward a Critical Theorization of Conservation Enclosures," in Watts Michael. *Liberation Ecologies*.

Yiftachel, O. 2009. Studying al-Naqba/Negev Bedouins: Toward a Colonial Paradigm? *Hagar: Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities* 8 (2):173-192

Yiftachel Oren 2013. The Unrecognized Bedouins space: The development of a strategic issue, in Pedazur, R. (ed). *The Bedouins in the Negev - strategic Challenge to Israel* (Hebrew). In *The Bedouins in the Negev - strategic Challenge to Israel*, ed. R. pedazur, 8-18. Netanyah: Daniel Abraham Center for Strategic Dialogue

Class 6: Forest and Trees: Guest Lecture, Prof Yagil Osem (the day of this lecture will change)

Forest and trees as a political realm: Israel and Palestine

Readings:

Braverman, Irus. "Planting the Promised Landscape: Zionism, Nature, and Resistance in Israel/Palestine." *Natural Resources Journal* 49.2 (2009): 2010-012.

Zerubavel, Y. 1996. The Forest as a National Icon: Literature, Politics, and the Archaeology of Memory. *Israel Studies* 99-60:(1) 1

Recommended:

Gordillo, G. 2002. Locations of Hegemony: The Making of Places in the Toba's Struggle for La Comuna, 1989-99. *American Anthropologist* 104 (1):262-277

Tal, Alon. 2002. Pollution in a promised land: An environmental history of Israel. Univ of California Press. Chapter 4 - The Forest's Many Shades of Green.

Tal Alon. 2013. All the Trees of the Forest: Israel's Woodlands from the Antiquity to the Present. New Haven: Yale University Press Selected pages.

Class 7:

Writing workshop for final papers.

Submit : a topic for final paper

Class 9: Green Security, Violence, and Modes of Resistance and Negotiation

Readings:

Robbins and Watts. 2011. *Global Political Ecology*. Introduction to Part 4 . pp. 225-227.

Homer-Dixon, T. 1994. "Environmental scarcities and violent conflict: evidence from the cases." *International Security* 19(1): 1-9.

One of the below:

McKee, E. 2013. Performing Rootedness in the Negev/Naqab: Possibilities and Perils of Competitive Planting. *Antipode*:1

Gordon Uri. 2013." Olive Green: Environment Militarism and the Israel Defense Force". In Orenstein, D., A. Tal, and C. Miller eds. *Between ruin and Restoration an Environmental History of Israel*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. Pp.242-262

Recommended:

Watts and Peets 1996. Introduction: resistance

Robbins, Paul (2005). "Environmental Identity and Social Movement," in *Political Ecology*, pp. 187-203.

Deudeny, D. 1990. Environment and security: muddled thinking. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 47(3): 21-28.

Urdal, H. 2005. People vs. Malthus: Population pressure, environmental degradation, and armed conflict revisited. *Journal of Peace Research* 42 (4):417-434

Class 10: Challenges to Political Ecology: New Environmental Determinisms.

Diamond, J. (1997), *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (read his lecture on the web – 10,000 years of human history in 45 minutes...). Also see the discussion on Guns, Germs, and Steel in *Antipode* (35/4, 2003).

Hausmann, R., (2001), "Prisoners of Bad Geography," in *Foreign Policy*, 122: 44-54.

Recommended:

Gallup, J.L., J.D. Sachs, and A.D. Mellinger (1999), "Geography and Economic Development," in *International Regional Science Review* 22(2): 179-232.

Class 11: New frontiers, Israel, the environment and for and against political ecology

Readings:

Robbins, Paul (2011). "Where to Now?" chapter 13: beyond political ecology , pp. 247-253. And "urban political ecology " chapter 2 pp72-74.

Brookfield, Harold (1999). "A review of political ecology: issues, epistemology, and analytical narratives," in *Zeitschrift fur Wirtschaftsgeographie*. 131-147.

Orenstein and Silverman. "The future of Israeli environmental movement: is a Major Paradigm Shift Underway?" in Tal, and C. Miller eds. *Between ruin and Restoration an Environmental History of Israel*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. Pp.357-380

Recommended Reread:

Paulson, S., L. Gezon, and M. Watts, (2003), "Locating the Political in Political Ecology: An Introduction," in *Human Organization* 62(3): 205-217.

Watts, Michael and Richard Peet (2004). "Liberating Political Ecology," in *Liberation Ecologies*, Chapter One. Routledge, pp. 3-47.

Walker, Peter (2005). "Political ecology: where is the ecology?" in *Progress in Human Geography*, 29(1): 73-82.

Class 12 : Students presentations (TBA)

Make up class: Water Scarcity , Scarcity as Social Construction

Readings:

Barnes, Jessica, and Samer Alatout. 2012. "Water worlds: Introduction to the special issue of *Social Studies of Science*." *Social Studies of Science* 42.4 483-488.

One of the following:

Alatout, Samer. 2009. "Bringing abundance into environmental politics: Constructing a Zionist network of water abundance, immigration, and colonization." *Social Studies of Science* 39.3 363-394.

Zeitoun, M. and Warner, J., 2006. Hydro-hegemony—a framework for analysis of trans-boundary water conflicts. *Water policy*, 8(5), pp.435-460.

Recommended:

Robbins, 2011. Chapter 6: "Challenges in social construction", Selected pages. TBA.

Mehta, L., 2010. 17 The social construction of scarcity: the case of water in western India1. *Global political ecology*, p.371.

Elmusa, S.S., 1996. The Land-water nexus in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 25(3), pp.69-78.