



Introduction to Political Ecology

Case Studies from the Middle East

Lecturer: Miri Lavi-Neeman

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

About the course:

Political Ecology has emerged in the past decade as a powerful interdisciplinary critique of ecological change. In short, Political Ecology is a way for mapping political, economic, and social factors onto questions of environmental degradation and transformation. It is a powerful way to politicize, apolitical discussions of ecology and the environment; to undermine common sense understandings of “the environment” as separate from “the social.”, and to bring humans and non-humans into discussions about conservation.

As a theoretical tool-kit and set of empirical case-studies, the field of Political Ecology is extremely broad and varied. This course will provide an introduction to core tenets of political ecology. It will introduce students to key debates in the field—such as the relationship between environment and violence, the critique of environmental determinisms and of Malthusian notions of scarcity and limits, the links between conservation and dispossession, and more. 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: land, forestation, settlement, energy, and environmental movements. We will follow case studies and research in particular within Israel and the Palestine, but also from other parts of the world.

Course objectives:

At the end of the course students will be able to-

- Use some analytical tools of political ecology to analyze the complex relationships between ecological and social change that underlie contemporary environmental problems around the globe;
- Evaluate and criticize other popular understandings of the environment,
- Bring environmental perspective on Middle East politics, and on regional and local ethnic and civic conflicts, and violence.

Course requirements and grading:

This course is shaped as a seminar and will be primarily organized around class discussion. Occasionally, it will combine lectures, guest lectures, films, and small group work to explore specific cases. I expect your full, active participation in class. This means: attending all class meetings, showing up on time, respectfully engaging with the course instructor and your peers, being responsible for all of the assigned reading and materials. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to do the reading and get class notes from one of your peers.

Seminar participation (20%): 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. (5% showing up on time 10% coming prepared to discuss, 5% making regular contribution to discussions)

Critical reading commentaries (30%) A second component of the course grade will be reading responses on selected texts— Each student is required to submit 6 reading responses 500 words (~one page) 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 8 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. Post class submissions will not be accepted. Late submissions will be fined in the final calculation. These will be graded Pass/fail. Each student must get at least 7 passing responses to get the full score.

Class Presentations (15%): Each student is required to present in class their emerging final paper project and connect it to the course's topics. During these 10-minute presentations, you may use PowerPoint, performance, lecture, or any other creative presentation styles. The choice of topics will take place during the third part of the course.

Final Paper (35%): 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 .**

Readings Syllabus and Books:

Readings and course activities may change to suite our student's diversity and interest and developing discussions. For this reason, readings are not available for a given week until the previous week. The readings in this syllabus should be regarded as provisional. For any given week, the readings will be available on the drive and sent via email. While readings may, from time to time change, the course policies and procedures listed in this syllabus will not. It is your responsibility to know them.

In some classes, we will spend significant time discussing particular readings. In others, we will treat them as background. In all cases, if there is something you don't understand in the material, it is your responsibility to make sure that you gain an understanding of it by asking questions and raising issues. You are expected to arrive at class ready to discuss all

of the required course readings. For most classes, I have included “Suggested” readings that are also available on the drive. These are not required for undergrads, but, should you be interested in a topic and wish to pursue it more (for a final paper, for example) these are good places to start.

Reading will be based mostly on articles, but also newspapers and/or 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.

Course themes and readings:

Part I: Introduction

Class 1: What is Political Ecology part 1 (1.5 hours only)

What is Theory for, What is Political Ecology?
Course Logistics

Readings: (In class:)

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

Class 2: What Is Political Ecology part 2 (1.5 hours only)

How natural is nature
The Nature/ Culture Divide and Origins of the Field

Readings:

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

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

Recommended 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.

Robbins, 2011. Part 1, chapter 2: A tree with deep roots: emphasis on the Determinist context. pp 25-28.

Class 3: What is Political Ecology 3:

Old and New Environmental Determinisms.

Readings

Diamond, J. (1997), *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company (We will read his lecture on the web – 10,000 years of human history in 45 minutes). And at least one critic from the symposium 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 4: Historical political ecology part 1: Environmental Imaginaries

Colonialism, Nature, Development and the Middle East

Readings:

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

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").

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.

Part II: Case Studies

Class 5: Historical political ecology part 2: Swamps

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 6: Political ecology of settlement and agriculture in the highland Negev: the Production of Boundaries.

Development and the return of agriculture, Preparation for the Negev trip.

Readings:

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

Recommended :

McKee, Emily. 2016. *Dwelling in Conflict: Negev Landscapes and the Boundaries of Belonging*. Stanford University Press. Chapter 2.

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

David Harvey. 2005. "Accumulation by Dispossession." In *The New Imperialism*. Oxford.

Tania Murray Li. 2014. "What is Land? Assembling a Resource for Global Investment." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 39(4).

Wendy Wolford. 2007. "Land Reform in the Time of Neoliberalism: A Many-Splendored Thing." *Antipode*. 39(3).

Class 7: Land , Conservation and Indigeneity –the Bedouin communities of the Negev Preparation for Negev trip, with guest Lecturer Dr. Emir Galili

Readings:

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

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>.

Flip through the website of the Negev Coexistence forum for Civil Rights
<https://www.dukium.org/>

Recommended:

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.

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 8: The Political Life of Forest and Trees

With Guest Lecture, Prof. Yagil Osem, Volcani Institute (the day of this lecture may 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:

Galai, Y. (2017). Narratives of Redemption: The International Meaning of Afforestation in the Israeli Negev. *International Political Sociology*, 11(3), 273-291.

Liron Shani (2017): *Of Trees and People: The Changing Entanglement in the Israeli Desert*, *Ethnos*, DOI: 10.1080/00141844.2017.1304972

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 9: The Political Ecology of Gas, and Oil

Leviahatan Project: Energy, Environmental Security, and Modes of Resistance and Negotiation

With guest Lecture Prof. Adi Wolfson

Submit: a topic for final paper

Readings:

Selection of newspaper pieces on the leviathan project TBA

Boyer, D., & Szeman, I. (2014). *Breaking the Impasse: The Rise of Energy Humanities*. University Affairs, 40, 12.

Recommended:

Mitchell, T. (2009). Carbon democracy. *Economy and Society*, 38(3), 399-432.

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

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

Watts and Peets 1996. Introduction: resistance

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

Part III: wrapping up

Class 10: New frontiers, for and against political ecology

Writing workshop for final papers.

Readings: (two of three)

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 11: Student Presentations

Class 12: Students presentations

Class 13: Final exam