

**INTL 4610: Environmental Politics**  
University of Georgia – Fall 2018  
MLC 207, Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-12:15

**Prof. Gregory M. Thaler**

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Office Hours: Tuesday 15:30-17:30 and by appointment

Sign up for scheduled office hours at <https://calendly.com/gregorythaler>

**Course Description:**

Politics is the exercise of power. Ecology is the interaction of lifeforms with each other and the physical environment. This course examines how power structures human and more-than-human ecological relations, or ‘socio-ecological systems,’ with a particular focus on themes of governance, development, and conflict.

In a very narrow sense, environmental politics is the management of non-human surroundings by humans through the formulation and application of policy. This narrow definition lacks an appreciation for how humans exist within and through ecological relations, how power operates beyond the technical realm of policy, and how other species exercise agency in their relations with human beings. We will open broader perspectives on environmental politics by asking a series of critical questions. What is ‘Nature’? How do we come to know Nature, scientifically or otherwise? How are socio-ecological systems governed? What is the ecology of capitalist development? How are environmental politics constructed through categories of gender, race, and species? And what does it mean to be human in a time when the ‘Great Forces of Nature’ have seemingly been overwhelmed?\* We will consider responses from diverse scholarly traditions, including commons governance, political ecology, ecological modernization, ecological Marxism, eco-feminism, environmental justice, and multispecies politics.

**Course Structure, Requirements, and Evaluation:**

This is a rigorous elective course based on a combination of lectures, group discussion, and popular and academic writing. The course provides an introduction to key themes in environmental politics, but it is by no means comprehensive. Rather, the course is designed to orient you with regard to an interconnected set of perspectives and debates.

Tuesday sessions will usually be devoted to an interactive lecture. Thursday sessions will usually be devoted to discussions based on reading groups, which will be assigned in Week 2. Lectures and readings are designed to be complementary, and you should be prepared to address the content of both in discussions and graded assignments.

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\* Will Steffen, Paul Crutzen, and John McNeill (2007) “The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?” *Ambio* 36 (8): 614–21.

**Reading Groups:** You will participate in reading groups consisting of five or six students each. In Week 2, you will be assigned to your groups, and you will sign up to serve as discussion leader for your group two or three times during the semester. At the end of each lecture, I will pose several questions or prompts related to that week's material. By 19:00 of the day before a Discussion, you must upload to eLC a 1-2 paragraph response to one of the prompts and you must suggest one additional question or prompt for group discussion. Generally, reading group discussions will occupy roughly 35 minutes of our class discussion time, and will be followed by full class discussions. The role of discussion leaders is to review group members' responses and suggested questions prior to class, to begin and direct group discussion, and to be prepared to report to the full class the main topics or questions engaged with by the group.

You will be graded on a 'reading group portfolio' consisting of all of your reading responses from the semester, as well as on your participation in the reading group. Reading groups are not expected to meet outside of class time and your grade will be individual, i.e., you will only be graded on the quality of your individual portfolio and participation and not on the quality of your group.

**Participation:** Complete the required readings and other assignments prior to our class discussion sessions and contribute fully to reading group and full class discussions. Our classroom should be an environment for respectful, substantive discussions in which everyone feels comfortable participating. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable speaking during our discussions, please advise me so we can make appropriate adjustments. I recognize that people contribute to discussions in different manners, and I also value as participation conversations during office hours or over email. Your participation grade will consist equally of my evaluation of your participation in the course and an evaluation of your reading group participation. For the reading group evaluation, you will anonymously assess your own participation and the participation of your group members at the end of the semester.

**Op-Ed:** You will write an 800 to 1200-word opinion post that takes a stance on a relevant topic of your choosing. You may choose to write about the same topic that you investigate in your research paper (see below), but the tone and content must be directed to a general public. Alternatively, you may choose to write about a topic different from the subject of your paper. Your op-eds will be posted to Tremr, an interactive web platform. We will discuss together the modalities for publishing and interacting with these posts, and you will have the option of publishing your post anonymously. You can view posts from previous students in this course on the Environmental Politics @UGA Tremr page: <https://www.tremr.com/environmental-politics-uga>. For additional examples of environmental politics opinion posts, see work by Bill McKibben (<http://www.billmckibben.com/articles.html>), George Monbiot (<https://www.theguardian.com/profile/georgemonbiot>), or myself (<https://www.tremr.com/greg-thaler>). Your op-ed must be posted to the web platform on or before **01 October**.

**Final Paper:** You will write a research paper for this course on a relevant topic of your choosing. Your paper must incorporate references to the assigned course materials and should engage some of the themes that we discuss in the course. Your research on your topic must go beyond our course material, however. In addition to academic literature and non-peer reviewed 'gray' literature (e.g., NGO, think tank, or government reports) on your chosen topic, you may wish to

draw on primary source materials such as news stories, memoirs, artworks, audio/visual media, etc. Your research should be motivated by a question or puzzle, and your paper should make a cogent argument. Papers may not exceed 20 double-spaced pages (not including references), formatted in 12-point font with 1-inch margins.

Your paper will be written in four stages to provide multiple opportunities for feedback:

On or before **13 September**, you should email me a 1-paragraph description of your **proposed paper topic** so that I can provide feedback on the suitability of the topic and suggest potential references or directions to explore. I encourage you to schedule a time during office hours if you would like to discuss potential topics in person.

On or before **15 October**, you will upload to eLC an **annotated bibliography** of at least 10 sources related to your project from beyond this syllabus. Each source should be accompanied by a one or two sentence annotation of how the source relates to your research. You will skim the annotated bibliographies of your reading group members and suggest additional sources as appropriate.

On or before **12 November**, you will upload to eLC a five-page **executive summary or extended outline** of your paper. You will workshop your summary or outline with your reading group on **15 November**, and you will upload a brief summary of the feedback you receive to eLC by 17:00 on **16 November**.

Your **final paper** must be submitted via eLC by 12:00 noon on **11 December**. Late papers will be penalized 10 points for every 24-hour period by which they exceed the deadline. A paper submitted after 12:00 noon on 11 December cannot receive a grade higher than 90. A paper submitted after 12:00 noon on 12 December cannot receive a grade higher than 80.

**Grading:** Your grade in this course will be composed as follows:

Participation	20%
Op-ed blog post	20%
Reading group portfolio	20%
Final paper	40%

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	94-100	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-67
B-	80-83	D-	60-63
C+	77-79	F	59 and below

**General Considerations:**

**Laptops and Phones:** Use of laptops is prohibited during lectures. Exceptions to this policy require my approval. Slides will be posted to eLC following lectures, and note-taking by hand is superior for comprehension and retention to note-taking by laptop.<sup>†</sup> Laptops are permitted during discussion solely for referring to course materials. Cell phone use is always prohibited during class time. Cell phones must be silenced and out of sight during class. If I see your cell phone during class time, I will ask you to put it away.

**Eating:** Please refrain from eating during class.

**Email:** I will only respond to emails that are sent from your UGA account and include the course name (INTL 4610) in the subject line. For useful email guidelines, please consult: <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>.

**File Formats:** Please upload files to eLC in either .doc, .docx, or .pdf formats exclusively.

**Academic Honesty:** As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at: <http://www.uga.edu/honesty>. Instances of cheating or plagiarism will be reported in accordance with university policy, and lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Plagiarism entails the use of the words or ideas of another person or entity without attribution. Regardless of whether you are quoting directly or paraphrasing, attribution is required for information or arguments that are the product of someone else's intellectual labor. Please review the definition of plagiarism in the Academic Honesty Policy: [https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/Prohibited\\_Conduct/](https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/Prohibited_Conduct/). Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

**Students with Disabilities:** UGA is committed to providing full participation and access for students with disabilities. If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <http://drc.uga.edu>.

## SCHEDULE AND READINGS<sup>‡</sup>

### Week 1: Introduction to the Course

**14 Aug**            **Lecture:** Politics, ecology, and the human condition

**16 Aug**            **Discussion**

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<sup>†</sup> Dynarski, Susan. 2017. "Laptops Are Great. But Not During a Lecture or a Meeting." *The New York Times*, November 22. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html>.

<sup>‡</sup> Please note that the course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. I recommend completing each week's readings in the order listed.

- Steffen, Will, Paul Crutzen, and John McNeill. 2007. “The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?” *Ambio* 36 (8): 614–21.
- Biermann, Frank. 2014. *Earth System Governance: World Politics in the Anthropocene*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. **Chapter 1 “Introduction”**
- Earth First! Journal. “About Earth First!” <http://earthfirstjournal.org/about/>.
- Gudynas, Eduardo. 2011. “Buen Vivir: Today’s Tomorrow.” *Development* 54 (4): 441–47.

## Week 2: What is ‘Nature’?

**21 Aug**            **Lecture:** The human-nature dichotomy

- Upload short bio with photo to eLC by 23:59 on 22 Aug

**23 Aug**            **Discussion**

Assignment of reading groups and sign-up for leadership weeks

- Cronon, William. 1996. “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.” *Environmental History* 1 (1): 7–28.
- Merchant, Carolyn. 1995. “Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative.” In *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, edited by William Cronon, 132–70. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Soper, Kate. 1998. “Representing Nature.” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 9 (4): 61–65.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. 1996. “The City as a Hybrid: On Nature, Society and Cyborg Urbanization.” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 7 (2): 65–80.
- Ellis, Erle, and Navin Ramankutty. 2008. “Putting People in the Map: Anthropogenic Biomes of the World.” *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 6 (8): 439–47. [skim]

## Week 3: What is environmental science?

**28 Aug**            **Lecture:** The production of ecological knowledge

- Upload first reading response to eLC by 19:00 on 29 Aug

**30 Aug**            **Discussion**

- Jasanoff, Sheila. 2004. “Ordering Knowledge, Ordering Society.” In *States of Knowledge: The Co-Production of Science and Social Order*, edited by Sheila Jasanoff. London: Routledge.
- McIntosh, Robert P. 1985. *The Background of Ecology: Concept and Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press. **Chapter 1 “Antecedents of ecology”**
- Martin, Laura J. 2018. “Proving Grounds: Ecological Fieldwork in the Pacific and the Materialization of Ecosystems.” *Environmental History*. doi:10.1093/envhis/emy007.
- Demeritt, David. 2001. “The Construction of Global Warming and the Politics of Science.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91 (2): 307–37.

- Pierrotti, Raymond, and Daniel Wildcat. 2000. “Traditional Ecological Knowledge: The Third Alternative (Commentary).” *Ecological Applications* 10 (5): 1333–40.

#### **Week 4: First Approach – Commons Governance**

**04 Sep**      **Lecture:** Institutionalism and the socio-ecological system

**06 Sep**      **Discussion**

- Hardin, Garrett. 1968. “The Tragedy of the Commons.” *Science* 162 (3859): 1243–48.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press. **Chapter 1 “Reflections on the commons”**
- Dietz, Thomas, Elinor Ostrom, and Paul Stern. 2003. “The Struggle to Govern the Commons.” *Science* 302 (5652): 1907–12.
- Acheson, James. 1988. *The Lobster Gangs of Maine*. Hanover, NH: UNPE. **Introduction and Chapter 3 “Harbor Gangs”**
- Goldfarb, Ben. 2018. “A Fish Called Rockweed.” *Hakai Magazine*, May. <https://www.hakaimagazine.com/features/a-fish-called-rockweed/>.

#### **Week 5: Second Approach – Political Ecology**

**11 Sep**      **Lecture:** Ecological distribution conflicts

- **Email proposed paper topic to Prof. Thaler with subject “INTL 4610 Paper Proposal” by 13 Sep.**

**13 Sep**      **Discussion**

- Paulson, Susan, Lisa L. Gezon, and Michael Watts. 2003. “Locating the Political in Political Ecology: An Introduction.” *Human Organization* 62 (3): 205–17.
- Walker, Peter A. 2005. “Political Ecology: Where Is the Ecology?” *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (1): 73–82.
- Dove, Michael R. 1993. “A Revisionist View of Tropical Deforestation and Development.” *Environmental Conservation* 20 (1): 17–24.
- Watts, Michael. 2001. “Petro-Violence: Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology of a Mythic Commodity.” In *Violent Environments*, edited by Nancy Peluso and Michael Watts, 189–212. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

#### **Week 6: Third Approach – Ecological Modernization**

**18 Sep**      **Lecture:** Sustainability and hegemony

**20 Sep**      **Discussion**

- Hajer, Maarten. 1995. *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. **Chapter 1 “The New Environmental Conflict”**
- Perz, Stephen. 2007. “Reformulating Modernization-Based Environmental Social Theories: Challenges on the Road to an Interdisciplinary Environmental Science.” *Society & Natural Resources* 20 (5): 415–30.
- Asafu-Adjaye, John, Linus Blomqvist, Stewart Brand, Barry Brook, Ruth Defries, Erle Ellis, David Keith, et al. 2015. “An Ecomodernist Manifesto,” 31 pp. <http://www.ecomodernism.org/manifesto-english/>.
- Collard, Rosemary-Claire, Jessica Dempsey, and Juanita Sundberg. 2015. “The Moderns’ Amnesia in Two Registers.” *Environmental Humanities* 7: 227–32.
- Hamilton, Clive. 2015. “The Theodicy of the ‘Good Anthropocene.’” *Environmental Humanities* 7: 233–38.
- Fletcher, Robert. 2016. “Decoupling: A Dangerous Fantasy.” *ENTITLE Blog*, May 10. <https://entitleblog.org/2016/05/10/decoupling-a-dangerous-fantasy/>.

### Week 7: Fourth Approach – Ecological Marxism

**25 Sep**      **Lecture:** The capitalist world ecology

**27 Sep**      **Discussion**

- Foster, John Bellamy. 1992. “The Absolute Law of Environmental Degradation Under Capitalism.” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 3 (3): 77–82.
- Hornborg, Alf. 1998. “Towards an Ecological Theory of Unequal Exchange: Articulating World System Theory and Ecological Economics.” *Ecological Economics* 25 (1): 127–36.
- Moore, Jason W. 2017. “The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis.” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 44 (3): 594–630.
- Clark, Brett, and John Bellamy Foster. 2009. “Ecological Imperialism and the Global Metabolic Rift: Unequal Exchange and the Guano/Nitrates Trade.” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 50 (3–4): 311–34.

### Week 8: Environmentalism and Conservation

- **Post op-ed to web platform by 23:59 on 01 Oct. Upload a link to your post to eLC. First, read and react to posts by your group members. Second, read and react to other posts that interest you.**

**02 Oct**      **Lecture:** Saving nature

**Film: *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front, USA, 2011***

<https://youtu.be/UmZkNNJqr1I>

**Watch prior to discussion on 04 Oct**

**04 Oct Discussion**

- Grove, Richard. 2002. “Climatic Fears: Colonialism and the History of Environmentalism.” *Harvard International Review* Winter: 50–55.
- Chapin, Mac. 2004. “A Challenge to Conservationists.” *World Watch*, November-December: 17–34.
- Runk, Julie Velásquez. 2009. “Social and River Networks for the Trees: Wounaan’s Riverine Rhizomic Cosmos and Arboreal Conservation.” *American Anthropologist* 111 (4): 456–67.

**Week 9: Feminist Political Ecology****09 Oct Lecture:** Gendered environments**11 Oct Discussion**

- Mies, Maria. 1993. “The Need for a New Vision: The Subsistence Perspective.” In *Ecofeminism*, edited by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, 297–324. New York: Zed Books.
- Hawkins, Roberta, Diana Ojeda, Kiran Asher, Brigitte Baptiste, Leila Harris, Sharlene Mollett, Andrea Nightingale, Dianne Rocheleau, Joni Seager, and Farhana Sultana. 2011. “A Discussion: Gender and Environment: Critical Tradition and New Challenges.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29 (2): 237–53.
- Hecht, Susanna B. 2007. “Factories, Forests, Fields and Family: Gender and Neoliberalism in Extractive Reserves.” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 7 (3): 316–47.
- Julia, with Ben White. 2012. “Gendered Experiences of Dispossession: Oil Palm Expansion in a Dayak Hibun Community in West Kalimantan.” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39 (3–4): 995–1016.
- Brough, Aaron R., and James E.B. Wilkie. 2017. “Men Resist Green Behavior as Unmanly.” *Scientific American*, December 26.  
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/men-resist-green-behavior-as-unmanly/>.

**Week 10: Environmental Justice**

- Upload annotated bibliography to eLC by 23:59 on 15 Oct. Skim your group members’ bibliographies and suggest additional sources as appropriate.

**16 Oct Lecture:** Racialized environments**18 Oct Discussion**

- Mohai, Paul, David Pellow, and J. Timmons Roberts. 2009. “Environmental Justice.” *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 34 (1): 405–30.
- Mansfield, Becky. 2012. “Race and the New Epigenetic Biopolitics of Environmental Health.” *BioSocieties* 7 (4): 352–72.



- Eplett, Layla. 2013. “Organic Synthesis: Towards an Inclusion of African Americans in Organic Farming.” *Scientific American*, November 5. <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/food-matters/organic-synthesis-towards-an-inclusion-of-african-americans-in-organic-farming/>.
- Penniman, Leah. 2015. “Radical Farmers Use Fresh Food to Fight Racial Injustice and the New Jim Crow.” *Yes! Magazine*, September 5. <http://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/radical-farmers-use-fresh-food-fight-racial-injustice-black-lives-matter>.
- Explore the website of the Athens Land Trust: <https://www.athenslandtrust.org/>.
- Explore the website of the Environmental Justice Atlas: <https://ejatlas.org/about>.

### Week 11: Environmental Governance

**23 Oct**      **Lecture:** Of states and nature

**25 Oct**      **Discussion**

- Robertson, Morgan. 2015. “Environmental Governance: Political Ecology and the State.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*, edited by Tom Perreault, Gavin Bridge, and James McCarthy, 457–66. New York: Routledge.
- Asher, Kiran, and Diana Ojeda. 2009. “Producing Nature and Making the State: Ordenamiento Territorial in the Pacific Lowlands of Colombia.” *Geoforum* 40 (3): 292–302.
- Corson, Catherine. 2011. “Territorialization, Enclosure and Neoliberalism: Non-State Influence in Struggles over Madagascar’s Forests.” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (4): 703–26.
- Gerety, Rowan Moore. 2017. “Abandoned by Their Sponsors, Madagascar’s Orphaned Parks Struggle On.” *Mongabay*, December 8. <https://news.mongabay.com/2017/12/abandoned-by-their-sponsors-madagascars-orphaned-parks-struggle-on/>.

### Week 12: Land Sparring and Land Sharing

**30 Oct**      **Lecture:** Agriculture and modernity

**01 Nov**      **Discussion**

- Lee, David, Paul Ferraro, and Christopher Barrett. 2001. “Introduction: Changing Perspectives on Agricultural Intensification, Economic Development and the Environment.” In *Tradeoffs or Synergies? Agricultural Intensification, Economic Development and the Environment*, edited by David Lee and Christopher Barrett, 1–16. Wallingford: CABI Publishing.
- Green, Rhys, Stephen Cornell, Jörn Scharlemann, and Andrew Balmford. 2005. “Farming and the Fate of Wild Nature.” *Science* 307 (5709): 550–55.

- Perfecto, Ivette, and John Vandermeer. 2010. “The Agroecological Matrix as Alternative to the Land-Sparing/Agriculture Intensification Model.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107 (13): 5786–91.
- Thaler, Gregory M. 2017. “The Land Sparing Complex: Environmental Governance, Agricultural Intensification, and State Building in the Brazilian Amazon.” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 107 (6): 1424–43.

### Week 13: Multispecies Politics

**06 Nov**      **Lecture:** Beyond humans

**08 Nov**      **Discussion**

- de Waal, Frans. 2016. “What I Learned from Tickling Apes.” *The New York Times*, April 8. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/10/opinion/sunday/what-i-learned-from-tickling-apes.html>.
- Kirksey, S. Eben, and Stefan Helmreich. 2010. “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography.” *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (4): 545–76.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press. **Chapter 1 “Can the Mosquito Speak?”**
- Tsing, Anna. 2012. “Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species.” *Environmental Humanities* 1 (1): 141–54.
- Read the “Moby vs Tyson” exchange between Neil deGrasse Tyson and Moby (2017): <https://www.facebook.com/notes/neil-degrasse-tyson/moby-vs-tyson/10155607590546613/>.
- Kim, Claire Jean. 2017. “Murder and Mattering in Harambe’s House.” *Politics and Animals* [S.I.]: 37–51.

### Week 14: Guest Speaker and Workshop

- Upload five-page research paper executive summary or extended outline to eLC by 23:59 on 12 Nov. Read and prepare feedback on your group members’ outlines.

**13 Nov**      **Guest Speaker**

**15 Nov**      **Workshop Outlines with Reading Groups**

- Upload a brief summary of the feedback you received to eLC by 17:00 on 16 Nov.

### THANKSGIVING BREAK

### Week 15: Environmental Politics in the Anthropocene

**27 Nov**      **Lecture:** Beyond nature

**29 Nov**      **Discussion**

- Steffen, Will, Wendy Broadgate, Lisa Deutsch, Owen Gaffney, and Cornelia Ludwig. 2015. “The Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration.” *The Anthropocene Review* 2 (1): 81–98. **[skim]**
- Lorimer, Jamie. 2012. “Multinatural Geographies for the Anthropocene.” *Progress in Human Geography* 36 (5): 593–612.
- Haraway, Donna Jeanne. 2015. “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin.” *Environmental Humanities* 6: 159–65.
- Collard, Rosemary, Jessica Dempsey, and Juanita Sundberg. 2015. “A Manifesto for Abundant Futures.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 105 (2): 322–30.

**Final Paper due by 12:00 noon on 11 Dec**