

Syllabus

GEO5479 (Advanced Political Ecology) | ANG5267 (Environmental Anthropology)

Reading & Writing in Critical Nature-Society Studies

Fall 2026

Wednesdays 10:00 AM-12:40 PM

Classroom: GL 166

Professor Young **Rae** Choi

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Office: SIPA I 308

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00 PM-3:00 PM
(or by appointment)

About the Seminar

This course explores various thematic, theoretical, and methodological venues in critical nature-society studies. In the wake of the Anthropocene, marked by the predominance of humans making irreversible impacts on Earth, the relations between humans and non-humans (both living and non-living) have become more entangled than ever, to understand which requires multi- and cross-disciplinary analytical lenses. This seminar helps students develop such lenses by reading intensively across political ecology, environmental anthropology, environmental history, and science and technology studies (STS). Readings will be tailored to the interests and levels of the students taking this seminar. Students will learn to map out their field of interest, select key readings and read them critically, and develop and position their own arguments in the field.

Seminar structure and requirements

This course is a reading, discussion, and writing-intensive graduate seminar. Students are expected to read each week's material thoroughly and come to class prepared for in-depth discussion. Students are also expected to develop a term paper about a particular topic of their own interest in consultation with the professor.

Attendance (26%) and participation (4%): Attendance and active participation in class are required. If you must miss a class for an unavoidable reason, you should email me in advance and later submit a form of evidence (e.g., a doctor's note). Only in such a case you can make up for the class missed. Each attendance counts as 2% of the total grade. Participation grades will be given on a relative base.

Weekly reading reflections (30%): Write a 1–2-page reflection (about 600 words) on the week's readings and post it on Canvas. The reading reflections are NOT a summary of the readings and should consist of two parts: a) a close and critical engagement with the readings and b) up to three questions for discussion in class. I expect you to read your classmates' reading reflections before class.

Discussion moderation (15%): Each week, two students will lead in-class discussion. This means that each student will serve as a moderator three times in total. Moderators are expected to meet beforehand, carefully read the assigned readings, and prepare a set of discussion questions. To facilitate the discussion, moderators are also encouraged to prepare:

- How did you like/not like the readings?
- Background information about authors, how/why the book is written, etc.
- Main arguments of the readings
- Conceptual frameworks of the readings
- Methodologies of the readings
- Chapter summaries
- Writing styles (narrative, logic-driven, etc.)
- What can we learn from the book?
- What can we critique?

Work-in-progress presentation (5%) and term paper (20%): The final paper is designed to help you achieve your own goal for the semester. The formats and subjects of the paper will vary depending on the levels and stages of the program each student is on. For example, the final paper can be a literature review, a conceptual framework, a research proposal, or a manuscript of a dissertation chapter. You are encouraged to consult the professor in advance and start the paper early. You will have a chance to present your work-in-progress and receive reviews from your peers and the professor before you submit the final term paper.

Policies

Late assignments

Late work will be accepted up to 20 days with the penalty of -5%/day. All assignments must be submitted by the end date of the course.

Communication and group work

Please be polite and responsible when you communicate with me and among your discussion team members. Note that little or no contribution to group work will lead to no grade.

Plagiarism and academic misconduct

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that range from probation to expulsion.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact me or consult FIU academic misconduct webpage at <http://academic.fiu.edu/academicbudget/misconductweb/1acmisconductproc.htm> [Links to an external site.](#).

University resources

Students with Disabilities

Any student who needs an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me to discuss his/her specific needs. Please also contact the Disability Resource Center at 305-348-3532 in GC 190 (<http://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/student-success/disability-resource-center/> [Links to an external site.](#)) to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Counseling and Psychological Services

If you suffer from stress, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, interpersonal concerns or alcohol use that damages your academic performance, you are not alone. Students who have these issues are encouraged to contact the Counseling and Psychological Services at 305-348-2277 in SHC 270 (<http://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/wellness/counseling-and-psychological-services/services/index.php> [Links to an external site.](#)).

Center for Excellence in Writing

The FIU Center for Excellence in Writing offers various services that will help improve your writing skills. I highly recommend using these resources for you to be successful in this course. Visit their website (<http://writingcenter.fiu.edu/> [Links to an external site.](#)) to make an appointment.

Readings

**Most books are either located in the Course Reserve or available as an e-book at the Green Library. Access may be limited to a small number of people, in which case I encourage you to share the readings with others.*

***Articles are not listed here. They will be made available in advance on the Canvas course website.*

Robbins, P. (2019). *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction* (3rd ed.). Wiley.

- *Students are encouraged to purchase a copy as we will read most chapters. 2nd edition (2012) works.*

Barua, M. (2023). *Lively cities: Reconfiguring urban ecology*. University of Minnesota Press.

Chao, S. (2022). *In the shadow of the palms: More-than-human becomings in West Papua*. Duke University Press.

Cons, J. (2025). *Delta Futures*. University of California Press.

Kosek, J. (2006). *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico*. Duke University Press. (available at FIU Green Library Reserves: 2nd Fl.)

Neumann, R. P. (1998). *Imposing wilderness: struggles over livelihood and nature preservation in Africa*. University of California Press. (available at FIU Green Library Reserves: 2nd Fl.)

Stengers, I. (2018). *Another science is possible: A manifesto for slow science*. John Wiley & Sons. (Not yet available at FIU library)

Other recommended books

Peet, R., Robbins, P., & Watts, M. (2010). *Global political ecology*. Routledge. (ebook available at FIU Library)

Perreault, T., Bridge, G., & McCarthy, J. (2015). *The Routledge handbook of political ecology*. Routledge. (available at FIU Green Library)

Kopnina, H. & Eleanor, S-O. (2017). *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Anthropology*. Routledge London. (ebook available at FIU Library)

Anand, N. (2017). *Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Citizenship in Mumbai*. Duke University Press. (ebook available at FIU Library)

Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, London: Duke University Press. (ebook available at FIU Library)

Kohn, E. (2013). *How forests think. Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (ebook available at FIU Library)

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press. (available at FIU Green Library)

Mitchell, T. (2002). *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. University of California Press. (ebook available at FIU Library)

Ogden, L. A. (2011). *Swamplife: People, Gators, and Mangroves Entangled in the Everglades*. University of Minnesota Press. (available at FIU Green Library Reserves: 2nd Fl.)

Tsing, A. L. (2015). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton University Press. (ebook available at FIU Library)

Van Dooren, T. (2014). *Flight ways: Life and loss at the edge of extinction*. Columbia University Press. (ebook available at FIU Library)

Course Schedule

* Readings are subject to change.

** Weekly reading reflections are due Tuesdays at 11:59 PM.

Module	Date	Theme	Readings*	Assignments** (due before class)
1	Aug 26	Introduction: Where to begin research	• Course syllabus • Literature search and management activity: Google Scholar, Zotero, and Mendeley	• Bring a laptop • Moderator sign-up
2	Sep 2	Degradation & Marginalization	• Robbins, P. (2012), Part I: What is political ecology? (~p. 100) • Robbins, P. (2012), Ch. 8 • Rasul (2007)	• Reading reflections • Discussion moderation
3	Sep 9	Conservation & Control	• Robbins, P. (2012), Ch. 9 • Chapters from <i>Imposing wilderness</i> (Neumann, 1998)	• Reading reflections • Discussion moderation • Term paper topic (in class)
4	Sep 16	Environmental conflict	• Robbins, P. (2019), Ch. 10 • Chapters from <i>Understories</i> (Kosek, 2006)	• Reading reflections • Discussion moderation • Works-in-progress sign-up (in class)
5	Sep 23	Environmental subjects and identities	• Robbins, P. (2019), Ch. 11 • Chapters from <i>Delta Futures</i> (Cons, 2025)	• Reading reflections • Discussion moderation
6	Sep 30	Political objects and actors	• Robbins, P. (2019), Ch. 12 • Chapters from <i>In the shadow of the palms</i> (Chao, 2022)	• Reading reflections • Discussion moderation • Term paper outline (submit in class)

7	Oct 7	More-than-Human Turn	Chapters from <i>Lively Cities</i> (Barua, 2023)	• Reading reflections • Discussion moderation
8	Oct 14	Science & Technology Studies	Chapters from <i>Another Science is Possible</i> (Stengers, 2018)	• Reading reflections • Discussion moderation
9	Oct 21	TBD	TBD	• Reading reflections • Discussion moderation
10	Oct 28	TBD	TBD	• Reading reflections • Discussion moderation
11	Nov 4	TBD	TBD	• Reading reflections • Discussion moderation
Veterans Day	Nov 11	No Class		
12	Nov 18	Works-in-progress review #1	• Term-paper drafts	• Paper presentation
Thanks giving	Nov 25	No Class		
13	Dec 2	Works-in-progress review #2	• Term-paper drafts	• Paper presentation
14	Dec 9	Works-in-progress review #3	• Term-paper drafts • Term Paper submission	• Paper presentation • Term paper due: Dec 9