Ajantha Subramanian TF: Dilan Yildirim

Tozzer 210 dyildir@fas.harvard.edu

subram@fas.harvard.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays 2-4p

### POLITICS OF NATURE

### Societies of the World 51

**TTh 1-2:30p**

**Tozzer 203**

*NOTE: THE USE OF LAPTOPS AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES (INCLUDING PHONES) IS NOT ALLOWED IN CLASS EXCEPT WITH SPECIAL PERMISSION OF THE INSTRUCTOR.*

Why do so many societies have no word for “nature”? How do conservation projects travel and why are they so often opposed in Asia, Africa, and Latin America? What does it mean to “think globally, act locally” and why do so many now argue that we need to instead “think locally, act globally”? What is environmental justice and what was its challenge to “nature-centered” conservation?

In this course, we will examine nature in its many manifestations -- as a source of life and livelihood, as a resource for exploitation, as a heritage to be protected, and as a post-industrial hybrid – in order to understand the wide variety of meanings and practices that comprise human-nature dynamics. Through a focus on property relations, imperialism, development, conservation, and science, we will consider the intimate connection between social inequality and ecological change, and the possibilities for a future of greater equality and sustainability.

The course material will range broadly from philosophical essays on human-nature relations to historical, anthropological, and geographical work on environmental and social change in various contexts, to films, journalistic essays and political manifestos by environmental social movements and organizations. Some of the political trends addressed include colonialism and environmental change, conservation, indigenous rights, environmental justice, and climate change.

**Requirements**

30% *Participation*: Students are required to attend the weekly lectures and discussion sections. They are expected to have read all the material and be prepared to discuss it. In addition, they must post weekly comments to an online discussion site on Wednesdays no later than 9p.

70% *Three 5-7pp essays*: In the essays, students are required to do close textual analysis of course readings and films in response to the following questions:

*Essay 1*: Several of our authors argue against seeing nature and humanity as distinct. Pick three authors who advance this argument and discuss why they do so and what alternative view of human-nature relations they are advocating.

*Essay 2*: Conservation is typically seen as an unalloyed good. Our readings have given us a more complicated understanding of the history, practice, and politics of conservation. Discuss the complexity of conservation with reference to three readings on three different societies.

*Essay 3*: Pick one contemporary environmental issue and build on course readings to offer your own critical assessment of how it has been framed as a subject of debate, how it has been addressed in policy and politics, and how you think it ought to be addressed.

**Required Texts**

William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England, Hill and Wang, 1983.

Christine Walley, Rough Waters: Nature and Development in an East African Marine Park, Princeton University Press, 2004.

Candis Callison, How Climate Change Comes to Matter: the Communal Life of Facts, Duke University Press, 2014.

**Films:**

*Trinkets and Beads*, dir. Christopher Walker, 1996

*Bhopali*, dir. Van Maximilian Carlson, 2011.

**Topics and Readings**

*Thursday, August 31*

Introduction

**Introductory readings**

*Tuesday, September 5*

William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in W. Cronon ed. Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature, W.W. Norton, 1995.

Richard White, “’Are you an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?’ Work and Nature” in W. Cronon ed. Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature, W.W. Norton, 1995.

Hugh Raffles, “The Amazon: A Natural Landscape?” *Seminar*, February 2000.

*Thursday, September 7*

Arturo Escobar, “Constructing Nature: elements for a poststructural political ecology,” in R. Peet and M. Watts eds. Liberation Ecologies: Environmental, Development, Social Movements, Routledge, 1996.

Michael Watts, “Nature as Artifice and Artifact,” in B. Braun and N. Castree eds, Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millenium, Routledge, 1998.

Linda Nash, “The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency,” *Environmental History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Jan. 2005), pp. 67-69.

**European Expansion and Ecological Change**

*Tuesday, September 12*

Start William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England.

*Thursday, September 14*

Finish William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England.

**Conservation: From Preservation to Participation**

*Tuesday, September 19*

“Our National Parks” by John Muir (preface and Chapter One).

Roderick Neumann, “Dukes, earls, and ersatz Edens: Aristocratic nature preservationists in colonial Africa,” *Society and Space* 14: 79-98, 1996.

Karl Jacoby, "The State of Nature: Country Folk, Conservationists, and Criminals at Yellowstone National Park, 1872-1908," in Catherine Stock and Robert Johnston, eds., The Countryside in the Age of the Modern State: Political Histories of Rural America, Cornell University Press, 2001, pp. 91-112.

*Thursday, September 21*

Ramachandra Guha. 1989. “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique.” *Environmental Ethics* 11(1).

Mac Chapin, “A Challenge to Conservationists”

*Tuesday, September 26*

Christine Walley, Rough Waters: Nature and Development in an East African Marine Park, Introduction and Part I.

*Thursday, September 28*

Christine Walley, Rough Waters: Nature and Development in an East African Marine Park, Parts II, III, and Epilogue.

***\*First paper due****\**

**The Politics of Knowledge**

*Tuesday, October 3*

Arun Agrawal, “Dismantling the Divide Between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge,” *Development and Change*, [Volume 26, Issue 3,](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/dech.1995.26.issue-3/issuetoc)pages 413–439, July 1995.

Bruno Latour, “Circulating Reference” in Pandora’s Hope.

*Thursday, October 5*

**\*Class Cancelled\***

**What are the Commons?**

*Tuesday, October 10*

Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science*, vol. 162, 1968, pp. 1243-8.

Bonnie J. McCay, “Community and the Commons: Romantic and Other Views,” in Arun Agrawal and Clark C. Gibson, eds. Communities and the Environment: Ethnicity, Gender, and the State in Community-Based Conservation, Rutgers University Press, 2001.

James McCarthy, 2005 “Commons as counterhegemonic projects.” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 16 (1): 9-24.

*Thursday, October 12*

*Guest speaker*: Andrew Littlejohn, Postdoctoral fellow, Reischauer Center for Japanese Studies

**Resource Extraction and Indigenous Rights**

*Tuesday, October 17*

Peter Brosius, “Endangered forest, endangered people: environmental representations of indigenous knowledge.” *Human Ecology* 25 (1), 1997: 47-69.

Terence Turner. 1998. "An Indigenous People's Struggle for Socially Equitable and Ecologically Sustainable Production: the Kayapo Revolt against Resource Extractivism," *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 1(1): 98-121.

*Thursday, October 19*

Film: *Trinkets and Beads*

*Tuesday, October 24*

Anna Tsing, "Becoming a Tribal Elder and Other Green Development Fantasies." In Tania Li ed. Transforming the Indonesian Uplands: Marginality, Power, and Production.

Tania Li. 2000. "Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42(1): 149-179.

**Environmental Justice**

*Thursday, October 26*

## Robert Bullard, “Environmental Justice: An Interview with Robert Bullard,” in *Earth First Journal*, July 1999.

Giovanna Di Chiro, “Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice,” in W. Cronon ed. Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature, W.W. Norton, 1995.

***\*Second paper due****\**

*Tuesday, October 31*

Donna Houston, “Environmental Justice Storytelling: Angels and Isotopes at Yucca

Mountain, Nevada,” *Antipode* Vol. 45 No. 2, pp 417–435, 2012.

Phaedra Pezzullo, “Touring ‘Cancer Alley,” Louisiana: Performances of Community and Memory for Environmental Justice,” *Text and Performance Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3, July 2003, pp. 226-252.

*Thursday, November 2*

*Guest speaker*: Trina Jackson, Center for Story Based Strategy, Boston

**Friday, November 3, 10:30a-2:30p TOXIC TOUR with the ACE, ROXBURY**

*Tuesday, November 7*

Film: *Bhopali*

*Thursday, November 9*

Kim Fortun, “Remembering Bhopal, Re-figuring Liability,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, Vol 2. No 2, 2000.

Veena Das, “Suffering, Legitimacy, and Healing: the Bhopal Case,” in Critical Events : an anthropological perspective on contemporary India, Oxford University Press.

Arvind Rajagopal, "And the poor get gassed: Multinational-aided development and the State - the case of Bhopal," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*.

*Tuesday, November 14*

Ami Zota and Bhavna Shamasunder, “The environmental injustice of beauty: framing chemical exposures from beauty products as a health disparities concern,” *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, August 2017.

*Guest speaker*: Ami Zota, Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, George Washington University

**Climate Change**

*Thursday, November 16*

Candis Callison, How Climate Change Comes to Matter: the Communal Life of Facts, Duke University Press, 2014.

*Tuesday, November 21*

Candis Callison, How Climate Change Comes to Matter: the Communal Life of Facts, Duke University Press, 2014.

***Thanksgiving Break***

*Tuesday, November 28*

Devi Lockwood, “One bike and 1,001 stories on climate change,” *The Guardian*, September 21, 2015.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2015/sep/21/one-bike-and-1001-stories-on-climate-change>

Devi Lockwood, “Listening as Activism,” Harvard Magazine, January 7, 2016.

[http://harvardmagazine.com/2016/01/listening-as-activism](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__harvardmagazine.com_2016_01_listening-2Das-2Dactivism&d=CwMFaQ&c=WO-RGvefibhHBZq3fL85hQ&r=mQDg6p6xOGn4YK_Lt05gv-l2TSjW97ojHDxgNV77wfo&m=l-tIYByQF4uNIdhRdfymkVLIWdH5UJKESrH9cVy3fkM&s=IJssqvTebEbSP8CGoaSh2rnYUOmztM4h3ZZP420PvDg&e=)

Selection of posts from Devi Lockwood’s blog: onebikeoneyear.wordpress.com

[https://onebikeoneyear.wordpress.com/2014/11/23/ferguson-october/](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__onebikeoneyear.wordpress.com_2014_11_23_ferguson-2Doctober_&d=CwMFaQ&c=WO-RGvefibhHBZq3fL85hQ&r=mQDg6p6xOGn4YK_Lt05gv-l2TSjW97ojHDxgNV77wfo&m=l-tIYByQF4uNIdhRdfymkVLIWdH5UJKESrH9cVy3fkM&s=2RTgDoVHI-rjoR5o0HNMi66M6yOzMDHAkSqlNPwRpF8&e=)

[https://onebikeoneyear.wordpress.com/2015/02/10/margaret-atwood-on-climate-change/](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__onebikeoneyear.wordpress.com_2015_02_10_margaret-2Datwood-2Don-2Dclimate-2Dchange_&d=CwMFaQ&c=WO-RGvefibhHBZq3fL85hQ&r=mQDg6p6xOGn4YK_Lt05gv-l2TSjW97ojHDxgNV77wfo&m=l-tIYByQF4uNIdhRdfymkVLIWdH5UJKESrH9cVy3fkM&s=86NjRYo1c-a8W-mSq_zI7T-cbau4cueORwCjH69uDiQ&e=)

[https://onebikeoneyear.wordpress.com/2015/01/07/christmas-island/](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__onebikeoneyear.wordpress.com_2015_01_07_christmas-2Disland_&d=CwMFaQ&c=WO-RGvefibhHBZq3fL85hQ&r=mQDg6p6xOGn4YK_Lt05gv-l2TSjW97ojHDxgNV77wfo&m=l-tIYByQF4uNIdhRdfymkVLIWdH5UJKESrH9cVy3fkM&s=MAdt6qwMlorSvGQTYAE5rvzk2vs8xCnV_9pbRfM1y4A&e=)

<https://onebikeoneyear.wordpress.com/2015/01/06/no-translation/>

<https://onebikeoneyear.wordpress.com/2015/09/03/big-coal/>

*Guest speaker*: Devi Lockwood, Harvard College Class of 2014

*Thursday, November 30*

**Last Class**

***\*Third paper due****\**