***Environmental Political Theory***

UCLA

Department of Political Science

PS 119: Special Studies in Political Theory

Spring 2020

Instructor: Dr. Kye Barker kyebarker@ucla.edu

Classroom: Zoom Office: Zoom

Class time: MW, 5-6:15pm (also saved to cloud) Office Hours: F, noon-2pm

**Course Description**

What is the political significance of nature? In this class we shall engage this question through a critical analysis of readings in classic and contemporary environmental political thought with special emphasis on the political relationship between humans and nature. We turn to this question at a moment of unprecedented climate crisis. Coinciding with this crisis, scholars have proposed to call this time the Anthropocene, which would designate a new geological epoch in which human beings have fundamentally altered the conditions of natural life on earth. In this class we seek to understand what this means, and what the history of political thought can teach us in this moment. By no means will the course readings be comprehensive of environmental political theory – or even environmental political theory by American writers, who provide most of the selected texts. Rather, the readings have been selected with the intent to open our thinking to the deeply entangled relationship between human politics and the natural world.

The course is organized into three parts. In the first part we read classic texts of environmental political thought from the nineteenth century, and texts which have responded to their legacy. Here we ask what the concept of ‘wilderness’ may teach us today, or whether it has lost its value. In the next part, we turn to texts of political ecology which seek to re-envision human beings as ordinary co-participants in the natural world. Again, we will also consider critiques of this approach to understanding the relationship between humans and nature. We conclude with a sampling of texts which offer ways of understanding this new moment of climate crisis, and the shape of politics in this historical moment. The question which emerges here, which is in the background of the entire course, is whether we might find a democratic and just response to the challenges of the climate crisis.

**Required Texts**

*Most of the texts for this class will be made available as PDFs on the course website. The other two following texts are required for this course and are available through the UCLA bookstore. While you are free to seek out cheaper options for purchase, make sure that they are the exact same editions as those assigned below. If in doubt, use the ISBN.*

* John Dryzek and Jonathan Pickering, *The Politics of the Anthropocene*, (Oxford University Press: 2019), ISBN: 9780198809623.
* Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene*, (Duke University Press: 2016), ISBN: 978-0-8223-6224-1.

**Course Overview and Reading Assignments**

**Introduction**

**Week 1. Nature After Nature**

* Monday: Jedediah Purdy, “The New Nature” and responses from Guldi, Grove, Paarlberg, Malm, Keith, Tsing, Mattei, Shiva, Waldau, Stanton, and Purdy in *Boston Review*
* Wednesday: John Locke, Book II, Chapters I-V, in *Two Treatises*
* Recommended: Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics of the Anthropocene* to be read throughout quarter

**Part 1. The Wilderness Boys**

**Week 2. Into the Wild**

* Monday: Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature” and “Politics” from *Essays & Lectures*, (Library of America)
* Wednesday: Henry David Thoreau, “Walking”; and “Economy,” and “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” in *Walden* all in *Walden and Other Writings* (The Modern Library)

**Week 3. To Enjoy or To Use?**

* Monday: John Muir, “The American Forests” in *Our National Parks* and “Hetch Hetchy Valley” from *Yosemite*
* Wednesday: Gifford Pinchot, “Principles of Conservation” from *The Fight for Conservation* and congressional record of debate on Hetch Hetchy; and Theodore Roosevelt, “Conservation,” in *The New Nationalism*

**Week 4. Wilderness Reconsidered**

* Monday: Jedediah Purdy, “Environmentalism’s Racist History” in *The New Yorker*
* Wednesday: William Cronon, “Introduction: In Search of Nature” and “The Trouble with Wilderness” in *Uncommon Ground*

*\*\*\*Paper 1 due on Friday at 5pm on Turnitin\*\*\**

**Part 2. Political Ecologies**

**Week 5. From Wilderness Towards Ecology**

* Monday: Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, Forward and Part III: The Upshot in A *Sand County Almanac* (Oxford University Press)
* Wednesday: Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring,* chapters 1-4, 8, 11, 12, 15, & 17
* Recommended: Lida Maxwell, “Queer/Love/Bird Extinction: Rachel Carson's Silent Spring as a Work of Love” in *Political Theory*

**Week 6. Deep Ecology vs. Social Ecology**

* Monday: Arne Næss, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movement”; Murray Bookchin, “Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology”
* Wednesday: Bookchin “The Concept of Social Ecology” and “The Ambiguities of Freedom” from *The Ecology of Freedom*

**Week 7. Critical Ecologies**

* Monday: Val Plumwood, “Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy and the Critique of Rationalism” in *Hypatia*
* Wednesday: Ramachandra Guha, “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique” in *Environmental Ethics*; and Rob Nixon, “Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor” in *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies*

*\*\*\*Paper 2 due on Friday at 5pm on Turnitin\*\*\**

**Part. 3. Climate Crisis and the Anthropocene**

**Week 8. A Political Anthropocene**

* Monday and Wednesday: John Dryzek and Jonathan Pickering, *The Politics of the Anthropocene*

**Week 9. The Meaning of the Anthropocene**

* Monday: \*\*\*Memorial Day, no class\*\*\*
* Wednesday: Jason Moore, “The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis” in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*; and Françoise Vergès, “Racial Capitalocene,” in *Futures of Black Radicalism*

**Week 10. Contesting the ‘Anthropocene’**

* Monday and Wednesday: Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble:* *Making Kin in the Chthulucene*

*\*\*\* Paper 3 due on Friday at 5pm on Turnitin\*\*\**

**Course Expectation and Goals**

Simply put, the primary goal of this course will be to attempt to understand the assigned readings, and better understand our political relation to nature. Reading these texts will be difficult, but immensely rewarding. *It will be absolutely essential that you complete all the reading before the designated meeting of class.* You should have the readings easily accessible during each lecture.Although the classes will primarily be organized around lectures, it is important that you still actively participate in class through taking notes, responding to the questions that I pose, and asking questions yourself. Although this class will be held remotely, you should still treat the lectures as interactive. Additionally, and this is crucial, it will be paramount that you treat other participants in discussions with respect. We are dealing with controversial themes and texts, the meanings of which are essentially contestable. You will be encouraged to take a reasoned position on these texts beyond merely having an opinion.

**Assignments and Evaluation**

Evaluation for the course will be based on writing weekly responses and essays. I use the standard UCLA grading scale for all assignments and for the course as a whole (see below).

*Weekly Reflections – 25% of Final Grade*

One of the goals of this course is to better understand our political relation to nature. This is not only a goal in the abstract, but a goal for each of us on an individual level. To meet that course goal, you will write 400-500-word weekly reflections upon the readings and lectures. These responses must cite and briefly interpret at least one text from the week, but I also encourage you to connect the texts to your own experiences or current events. However, these must be polished and edited. These reflections must be posted to the discussion forum on CCLE by 5pm PST on Friday of each week under the correct week. If and only if you do all these things, you will get full credit on these reflections. I will give more guidance during the first week of lectures.

*Three Papers – 75% of Final Grade*

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| --- | --- |
| A+ | 97-100 |
| A | 93-96.99 |
| A- | 90-92.99 |
| B+ | 87-89.99 |
| B | 83-86.99 |
| B- | 80-82.99 |
| C+ | 77-79.99 |
| C | 73-76.99 |
| C- | 70-72.99 |
| D+ | 67-69.99 |
| D | 63-66.99 |
| D- | 60-62.99 |

The main assessment for this course will be in the form of three short argumentative essays of 3-4 pages due at the ends of the fourth, seventh and exam weeks. Respectively, the papers will be worth 20%, 25%, and 30% of your final grade, so that improvement will be weighed in your favor. For each essay, you will be tested on your ability to demonstrate the knowledge you have acquired about the ideas and theories of the course in the shape of a reasoned argument that draws upon the evidence of the texts themselves. More information will be provided when the assignment prompts are distributed.

The graded first and second essays will be returned before the following essays are due. Although there is a reader for the course, since I will be unable to grade all the essays myself, I will be more than happy to meet with you to discuss how to improve your papers. However, I ask that you wait at least a few hours after receiving your papers before seeking additional feedback.

*Extra Credit Option – Up to 5% of Final Grade*

Write a 3 page analysis on the political theory of nature operative in one of the following books, or another which I must formally approved: Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*; Frank Herbert, *Dune*; Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Word for World is Forest*; William Morris, *News from Nowhere;* or Richard Powers, *The Overstory*. The analysis must advance a clear argument, substantiate that argument with evidence from the text, and be exactingly edited. These reports are due by Friday at 5pm of Week 9. No extensions or make-up will be offered, and there will be no other extra credit opportunities.

**Additional Information and Campus Resources**

**Availability:** The best way to contact me is by email. I will return your emails as soon as possible, but if I have not responded within 24 hours, please contact me again. I usually only respond to emails during normal work hours, so it will take longer for me to respond to you if you write me during the evening or weekend. If you have a question that you expect will take a few paragraphs or more to answer, the best time to ask it will be during my office hours, held on Zoom. I am always available to talk during office hours on a first come, first served basis. Students may also make appointments to meet one-on-one via email, although I cannot guarantee that I will always be available. If you are struggling with the readings, assignments, or with the lectures, please talk to me!

**Accommodations for Students:** If you wish to request an accommodation due to a disability, please contact the Center for Accessible Education (formerly called the Office for Students with Disabilities) as soon as possible at A255 Murphy Hall, (310) 825-1501 / TDD: (310) 206-6083. Website: <http://www.cae.ucla.edu/>

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is taken seriously at UCLA and by me. The Dean of Students Office is charged with responding when students are accused of committing a violation of policy, which includes cheating, plagiarism, multiple submissions, and facilitating academic dishonesty. These violations can result in failing the assignment or even the course. If you are unsure if something goes against University policy, contact me.<http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/Syllabus.pdf>

**The Undergraduate Writing Center** offers UCLA undergraduates one-on-one sessions on their writing. The Center is staffed by writing consultants who are trained to help at any stage in the writing process and with writing assignments from across the curriculum. PLFs tailor appointments to the concerns of each writer. To schedule an appointment, visit <http://www.wp.ucla.edu>. UCLA’s Student Writing Center is located in A61 Humanities. Telephone: 310-206-1320. Email: [wcenter@ucla.edu](mailto:wcenter@ucla.edu).

**Emergencies:** In an emergency situation, please call UCPD by dialing 911 from an on-campus phone or (310) 825-1491. Anonymous Reporting Line: (310) 794-5824.

**Title IX**: prohibits gender discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the CARE Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, 1st Floor Wooden Center West, CAREadvocate@careprogram.ucla.edu, (310) 206-2465. You can also report sexual violence or sexual harassment directly to the University’s Title IX Coordinator, 2241 Murphy Hall, titleix@conet.ucla.edu, (310) 206-3417. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD at (310) 825-1491. Please note that under University policy, all TAs and instructors are mandated Title IX reporters. If any of the teaching team is informed of or witnesses sexual violence or harassment, we are required to report this to UCLA’s Title IX coordinator. The coordinator is committed to maintaining anonymity of victims and so are we.