

## **DECOLONIZING THE GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL DEBATE: INDIGENOUS AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES ON ENVIRONMENTALISM**

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Academic Year 2019/2020 : Spring Semester  
Room: E202**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

As we discover, by the day, the magnitude and turbulent pace of climate change, the debate over its global scope and the need to take urgent preservation measures leaves little room for indigenous individuals and communities living in the high biodiversity regions to be preserved. At most, and although these regions are usually their ancestral territories, indigenous people are considered as allies in territorial management and wildlife preservation as long as they adhere to their so-called traditional lifestyles, playing the “ecological noble savages”. This course aims to re-present indigenous South and North American voices in the global ecological debate by discussing specific case studies of these groups’ negotiations with environmental entities – from restricting state policies to neoliberal carbon markets – in light of key cosmological, ecological, political, and social categories prevalent in these groups. Using insights drawn from anthropological research, we will deconstruct Western commonplaces pervading the ecological debate, such as collective ownership as well as co-existence with Nature in non-modern societies, and, more importantly, we will problematize the Nature/Culture dichotomy that stands at the core of our environmental imagination. Considering these groups’ economic situation and development aspirations, we will discuss the equation of cultural preservation with ecological conservation. We will question the possibility and implications of granting indigenous ecological knowledge scientific validity, and, taking into account the colonialist reverberations of a global ecological perspective, we will consider if it can be embraced without violating indigenous sovereignty and rights to territorial integrity and self-determination.

#### **Academic expectations**

Students should arrive to sessions after having read the relevant bibliography and should be able to engage in class discussions. Starting from session 3, students will present some of the weekly reading materials in pairs. The concluding paper (1800-2300 words), done in pairs, will ideally be an elaboration of the oral presentation, discussing the presented reading material in the wider context of the course’s general debate.

#### **Grading criteria + grading rubrics**

20% - participation in class

30% - mid-term paper

50% - concluding paper

**Late work policy**

Permission will be sought in exceptional cases.

**“Screen-free” learning environment**

Cell phones should be kept off desk, silent mode. Computers and tablets are allowed.

## Detailed outline

**Session 1, Monday 27.1.20: Introduction: Rights to Pollute and Obligations to Preserve**

Pálsson, Gísli. “Human—Environmental Relations: Orientalism, Paternalism and Communalism.” In *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Philippe Descola and Gísli Pálsson, 63–81. London: Routledge, 1996

*Optional Reading*

Mann, Charles C. “1491.” *The Atlantic Monthly* March 2002: 41–53.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/03/1491/302445/>

Monday 3.2.20: session canceled.

**Session 2, Monday 10.2.20: The Big Ontological Divide: Naturalism vs. Animism**

Descola, Philippe. “Human Natures.” *Social Anthropology* 17 (2009): 145-157.

Descola, Philippe. “Animism Restored”, in *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 129–138. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013\\ Descola, Philippe. “L’animisme restauré,” dans *Par-delà nature et culture*, 229-245. Paris: Gallimard, 2005.

**Session 3, Saturday 15.2.20 (12:00-14:00, room E202): Environmental Practices as Ecological Colonialism**

Nelson, Robert H. “Environmental Colonialism: ‘Saving’ Africa from Africans.” *The Independent Review* 8 (2003): 65–86.

Kantor, Isaac. “Ethnic Cleansing and America's Creation of National Parks.” *Public Land and Resources Law Review* 28 (2007): 42–64.

*Optional Reading*

Dowie, Mark. “Miwok”. In *Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples*, 1–14. Cambridge: MIT, 2009.

Presentation: “Ethnic Cleansing and America's Creation of National Parks.”

**Session 4, Monday 24.2.20: Asymmetrical Collaborations: Indigenous Peoples and Environmental Organizations**

Reed, Richard. "Two Rights Make a Wrong: Indigenous Peoples versus Environmental Agencies." In *Applying Cultural Anthropology: an Introductory Reader*, edited by Aaron Podolefsky, Peter Brown and Scott Lacy, 109-115. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Dowie, Mark. "BINGO." In *Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples*, 45–64. Cambridge: MIT, 2009.

Presentation: "Bingo."

2.3.20: session canceled.

9.3.20: session canceled.

### **Session 5, Monday 16.3.20: Deconstructing "the Ecologically Noble Savage", I**

Conklin, Beth A. and Laura R. Graham. "The Shifting Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-Politics." *American Anthropologist* 97 (1995): 695–710.

Reichel-Dolmatoff, Gerardo. "Cosmology as Ecological Analysis: A View from the Rain Forest." *Man* 11 (1976), 307-318.

#### *Optional activity*

Documentary film (watch before class): "The Kayapo – Out of the Forest". Director: Michael Beckham, 1989. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuhxeFM-GhM&t=3006s>

Presentation: "The Shifting Middle Ground."

### **Session 6, Monday 30.3.20: Deconstructing "the Ecologically Noble Savage", II**

Holt, Flora Lu. "The Catch-22 of Conservation: Indigenous Peoples, Biologists, and Cultural Change." *Human Ecology* 33 (2005): 199-215.

Nadasdy, Paul. "Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism." *Ethnohistory* 52 (2005): 291–331.

#### *Optional Reading*

Brightman, Robert. "Conservation and Resource Depletion: The Case of the Boreal Forest Algonquians." In *The Question of the Commons: The Culture and Ecology of Communal Resources*, edited by Bonnie J. McCay and James M. Acheson, 121–141. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987.

### **Canceled Session, Optional Readings: Authenticity and Strategy**

Graham, Laura. "How Should an Indian Speak? Amazonian Indians and the Symbolic Politics of Language in the Global Public Sphere." In *Indigenous Movements, Self Representation, and the State in Latin America*. Edited by Kay B. Warren and Jean E. Jackson, 181–228. Austin: University of Austin Press, 2005.

Van Ginkel, Rob. "The Makah Whale Hunt and Leviathan's Death: Reinventing Tradition and Disputing Authenticity in the Age of Modernity," *Etnofoor* 17 (2004): 58–89.

Nadasdy, Paul. "'Property' and Aboriginal Land Claims in the Canadian Subarctic: Some Theoretical Considerations." *American Anthropologist* 104 (2002): 247–261.

**Session 7, Saturday 4.4.20: Cross-ontological Translations: Western and indigenous scientific knowledges**

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. "Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation." *Tipiti* 2 (2004): 3-22.

Arregui, Aníbal. "This Mess Is a "World"! Environmental Diplomats in the Mud of Anthropology." In *Indigenous Perceptions of the End of the World: Creating a Cosmopolitics of Change*, edited by Rosalyn Bold, 183-202.

**Session 8, Monday 6.4.20: Debating the Validity of Indigenous Knowledge**

Nadasdy, Paul. "The Politics of Tek: Power and the 'Integration' of Knowledge." *Arctic Anthropology* 36 (1999): 1-18.

**Session 9, Saturday 11.4.20: Cosmopolitical Agencies**

De la Cadena, Marisol. "Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond 'Politics.'" *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2010): 334-370.

**Session 10, Monday 20.4.20: The Marketization of Environmentalism: the REDD Challenges, I**

Pirard, Romain. "REDD+ : Le climat au secours des forêts tropicales (ou l'inverse)." In *Peut-on sauver les forêts tropicales ?*, 83-114. Paris: Presses des SciencesPo, 2013.

Van Dam, Chris. "Indigenous Territories and REDD in Latin America: Opportunity or Threat?" *Forests* 2 (2011): 394-414.

**Session 11, Monday 27.4.20: The Marketization of Environmentalism: the REDD Challenges, II**

Brightman, Marc. "Carbon and Biodiversity Conservation as Resource Extraction: Enacting REDD+ Across Cultures of Ownership in Amazonia." In *Indigenous Life Projects and Extractivism: Ethnographies from South America*, edited by Cecilie Vindal Ødegaard and Juan Javier Rivera Andía, 195-216. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Murtagh, Chantelle. "Shifting Strategies: The Myth of Wanamei and the Amazon Indigenous REDD+ Programme in Madre de Dios, Peru." In *Indigenous Perceptions of the End of the World: Creating a Cosmopolitics of Change*, edited by Rosalyn Bold, 115-139.