

Decolonial Feminist Political Ecology for Social-Ecological Transformation

Programme

MA Environmental Studies 2023-24, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Course tutor

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Course description

This mini-course explores some key ways in which power and politics influence environmental change from perspectives drawing from the field of decolonial feminist political ecology. The aim of this course is to build an understanding and competence for critically examining how current politics, power dynamics and systemic structures produce environmental change and disproportionate gendered impacts in a state of climate and ecological emergency.

The course will offer the theoretical framework for critical analysis and reflection on environmental change and current socio-ecological challenges through a decolonial intersectional lens and relevant practical policy and social movements' organising examples for a desired social-ecological transformation. Students will gain an understanding of decolonial feminist and intersectional principles and how they relate to the disproportionately felt consequences of the climate and ecological emergency, as well as a competence to identify alternative ways of being and governance that put all living beings and the planet first. By facilitating reflections around the concepts and practices surrounding decolonial feminist political ecology, and more specifically, intersectionality, the course will also guide a critical observation of one's own privilege and positionality and introduce the principles for intersectional research.

Learning outcomes

After the end of the course, students should be in a position to:

1. Critically explore how desired social-ecological transformations (SETs) take place.
2. Critically examine how politics, systemic structures and actors influence climate and environmental change and social-ecological challenges, as well as SETs.
3. Use intersectional decolonial feminist lens to explain how power operates to cause disproportionate impacts of climate and environmental change on different groups of people and communities.

4. Critically identify alternatives of being and governance that contribute to desired SETs and bring us closer to a system that puts all living beings and the planet first.

Structure of classes, and teaching methodology

The duration of each class is 3 hours and 40 minutes.

The classes will consist of presentation of concepts by the lecturer, individual and group exercises and reflections, and short videos and group discussions around the presented topics. Popular education methods will be used to dive deeper into the course material and provide a more hands-on understanding of explored concepts. See **Course outline** section below for detailed description of each class.

Student evaluation

Students will be evaluated on their performance by three evaluation tools:

Evaluation tool	Portion of final mark
1. Mini-assignments	30%
2. Active engagement in class	30%
3. Final assignment	40%

1. Mini-assignments.

There is a mini-assignment for each of the classes that you will be expected to have completed prior to class.

2. Active engagement in class. Classroom participation and active engagement in group exercises and discussions will be evaluated.

3. Final assignment.

Use any form of artistic expression you feel most comfortable with (poetry, music, painting, illustration, photography, etc.) to create/(or alternatively) find a piece that captures any of the concepts explored in class. The artwork could relate to any concepts/elements introduced and discussed in class relating to decolonial feminist political ecology that address politics, power dynamics, structures, actors and actions that impact environmental change and the social implications of it. In addition to your created/identified piece, write a brief reflection (max. 200

words) elaborating on your interpretation of the concepts presented in the piece to accompany the artwork. Check [When Is Now](#) for inspiration.

Deadline: Friday, December 1st, 2023, end of day.

Submission: Identified section on [Fig Jam](#). In your submission please add your name, surname, učo and email.

For this assignment you will be evaluated on:

- Followed instruction (1.5 point)
- The depth with which you have incorporated concept(s) explored in class (2.5 pts)
- How well do you communicate your understanding of the concept(s) (2 pts)
- Artistic elements you use and your creativity/originality/expression/skill/craftsmanship (2 pts)
- Deliberation/effort - is the piece and accompanied interpretation well thought out (2 pts)

Final course mark: Pass/Fail. Failing to reach a minimum of 60% of the final mark will result in failing the course.

Course outline

This section provides an outline of classes together with the readings students should do and class assignments they should complete for each class.

Class 1. Introduction: Feminist Political Ecology, Intersectionality and Power.

Wednesday, Nov 8th, 2023 at 10:00–11:40 h | Classroom: P52
and at 16:00–17:40 h | Classroom: AVC

In Class 1 we will start with an introduction to course logistics as well as key, basic course concepts such as social-ecological transformations, power, politics, environmental change, and feminist political ecology. This class will also introduce students to the feminist critique of the current economic paradigm that results with the interlinked crises, and the fields of study such as intersectionality and ecofeminism(s), that are key in understanding the disproportionate and gendered social implications of the climate and ecological breakdown through the lenses of feminist political ecology. We will explore the significance of understanding this in the context of social-ecological transformations.

We will explore intersectionality as a theoretical framework, an analytical approach, and an organizing strategy, and we will study its praxis drawing on a contemporary empirical (case study) example of a project for a desired social-ecological transformation.

We will also explore one's own (research) positionality within current systems of power and domination and get familiarised with the key tenets of intersectional research.

Mini-assignment 1.

Read carefully The Ecologist article on [The racial capitalist climate patriarchy](#) by Julie Gorecki. Identify the main concepts that the author deconstructs and reflect on the systemic structures that facilitate disproportionate gendered impacts of the climate and ecological crises. Which groups and communities are systemically first and worst impacted? **What strikes you the most? Why?**

Submission: Add a bullet points version of your reflections on a ‘post-it’ note in the identified section in [Fig Jam](#) **an hour before the start of the class latest** and bring your reflections to class to contribute to group discussion. In your submission please add your name, surname and učo.

Class 2. (De)Coloniality, The Social Imaginary and Transformations.

Thursday, November 9th, 2023 at 16:00–19:40 h | Classroom: U33

During Class 2 we will look deeper into the critique of coloniality and its implications on the multiple crises we are facing today. We will explore decoloniality as a school of thought and a critique of resource and labor extraction and the perceived universality and superiority of Western knowledge and culture. We will deconstruct colonial thinking and binaries, as well as the social imaginary of economic growth and development that allow for climate and environmental injustices, and identify decolonial feminist and degrowth thought and politics that counter the status quo.

Before the class, you should complete the following mini-assignment – you should add a bullet points version of your reflections on a ‘post-it’ note in the identified section in Fig Jam an hour before the start of the class latest and bring your reflections to class to contribute to group discussion.

Mini-assignment 2. First, read these two short papers:

- Hickel, J. (2021). The anti-colonial politics of degrowth. *Political Geography*, 88.
- Abazeri, M. (2022). Decolonial feminisms and degrowth. *Futures*, 136, 102902.

Then, identify the patterns of colonization that economic growth relies on, and answer the following question: What are the principles, politics, and praxis for a social-ecological transformation that each of the authors propose to address the current destructive social and economic relations?

Submission: Add a bullet points version of your reflections on a ‘post-it’ note in the identified section in [Fig Jam](#) **an hour before the start of the class latest** and bring your reflections to class to contribute to group discussion. In your submission please add your name, surname and učo.

Class 3. Actors, Politics and Governance for Social-Ecological Transformation for Alternative Futures.

Friday, November 10th, 2023 at 10:00–13:40 h | Classroom: U35

During Class 3 we will explore the actors, politics and governance for social-ecological transformations towards radically different societies. We will study the continuum of actors that uphold or resist the racial capitalist patriarchal system, and explore historical and contemporary alternatives. We will look into different models of democratic governance and different forms of democratic politics to achieve desired social-ecological transformations. We will explore the difference between ‘mobilizing’ and ‘organizing’, and based on what we’ve learned, take the time to collectively envision radically equitable futures.

Before the class, you should complete the following mini-assignment – you should add a bullet points version of your reflections on a ‘post-it’ note in the identified section in Fig Jam an hour before the start of the class latest and bring your reflections to class to contribute to group discussion.

Mini-assignment 3. First, read these two papers:

- Perkins, P. E. E. (2019). Climate justice, commons, and degrowth. *Ecological economics*, 160, 183–190.
- Bauhardt, C. (2014). Solutions to the crisis? The Green New Deal, Degrowth, and the Solidarity Economy: Alternatives to the capitalist growth economy from an ecofeminist economics perspective. *Ecological economics*, 102, 60–68.

Then, identify the proposed pathways to address the interlined crises, and answer the following questions: What are the strengths and limitations of each of the proposed alternative approaches in the two articles? What are the suggested models of governance? What are the possible actors, agents of change in the formulated proposals?

Submission: Add a bullet points version of your reflections on a ‘post-it’ note in the identified section in [Fig Jam](#) **an hour before the start of the class latest** and bring your reflections to class to contribute to group discussion. In your submission please add your name, surname, and učo.

Bibliography

On Environmental Justice

- (Book) Schlosberg, D. (2007). Defining environmental justice: theories, movements, and nature. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- (Book) Pellow, D.N., (2017). What is critical environmental justice? John Wiley & Sons.

On Political Ecology

- Paulson, S., Gezon, L., Watts, M. (2005). Politics, ecologies, genealogies. In: Paulson, S., Gezon, L. (eds.) *Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups*. New Jersey: Rutgers
- (Article) Robbins, P. (2004). Green Materialism. In: *Political Ecology*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing. pp. 44-52 and pp. 36-38.

On Feminist Political Ecology

- (Article) Sundberg, J. (2016). Feminist political ecology. *International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology*, 1-12.
- (Article) Elmhirst, R. (2018). Feminist political ecologies—situated perspectives, emerging engagements. *Ecologías políticas feministas: perspectivas situadas y abordajes emergentes. Ecología Política*, (54).
- (Book) Mies M. (1986). *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale : women in the international division of labour*. Zed Books.

On Intersectionality

- (Article) Hancock, A. M. (2007). Intersectionality as a normative and empirical paradigm. *Politics & Gender*, 3(2), 248-254.
- (Book) Collins, P. H. (2019). Intersectionality as critical social theory. Duke University Press.

On Intersectionality and the Climate Emergency

- (Video) Climate and Intersectionality - a realigned discussion about climate and environmental justice
- (Video) Feminist Approaches to the Climate Crisis

On Intersectional Research

- (Chapter) Di Chiro, G. (2020). Mobilizing 'intersectionality' in environmental justice research and action in a time of crisis. *Environmental Justice*, 316-333.
- (Article) Misra J., Curington C. V. & Green V. M. (2021). Methods of intersectional research. *Sociological Spectrum*, 41(1), 9-28, DOI: [10.1080/02732173.2020.1791772](https://doi.org/10.1080/02732173.2020.1791772)
- (Article) Hancock, A. M. (2007). When multiplication doesn't equal quick addition: Examining intersectionality as a research paradigm. *Perspectives on politics*, 5(1), 63-79.
- (Article) Winker, G., & Degele, N. (2011). Intersectionality as multi-level analysis: Dealing with social inequality. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 18(1), 51-66.

On Decoloniality

- (Video series) The Global Center of Spatial Methods for Urban Sustainability (GCSMUS). [Decolonial Thinking with Prof. Dr. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni](#).
- (Article) Sultana, F. (2022). The unbearable heaviness of climate coloniality. *Political Geography*, 102638.
- (Blog intervention) Kimari, W. (2023). [Intervention – Decolonial Crossroads. Antipode](#).

On Actors and Strategies for Alternative Futures

- (Article) D'Alisa, G., Demaria, F., & Cattaneo, C. (2013). Civil and uncivil actors for a degrowth society. *Journal of Civil Society*, 9(2), 212-224.
- (Article) Akbulut, B., Demaria, F., Gerber, J. F., & Martínez-Alier, J. (2019). Who promotes sustainability? Five theses on the relationships between the degrowth and the environmental justice movements. *Ecological Economics*, 165, 106418.
- (Book) Treu, N., Schmelzer, M., & Burkhart, C. (2020). *Degrowth in movement (s): Exploring pathways for transformation*. John Hunt Publishing.

Key concepts for this course

- Environmental change
- Environmental Justice
- Gendered environments
- Feminist Political Ecology
- Decolonial Feminist Political Ecology
- Intersectionality
- Intersectional Research
- Decoloniality
- Agents of Change
- Social Movements
- Environmental Governance