Overview
This course is concerned with the ways in which natural resource policies governing use, access, and control of resources are imbued with and reproduce conflict. Through a variety of case studies and theoretical engagements (feminist, postcolonial, anti-racist, Marxist, post-humanist), this course examines how natural resource conflicts are shaped by multiple kinds of power. In this course we discuss how such contests are more than political economic struggles. Through attention to the entanglements of environment, difference and struggle, a core aim of this seminar is to interrogate what is given and taken-for-granted within dominant narratives, instruments and institutions shaping land and territorial demarcation, water access and distribution, livelihood (in)security, oil and mineral extraction, biodiversity conservation, and struggles over urban citizenship. While this course looks to make visible how states and elites shape space through natural resource control, simultaneously, it attends to how people and their communities work to defend and remake their lives and livelihoods in the face of displacement and dispossession.

Course Description and Learning Outcomes
Three overlapping themes will guide this seminar. First, we will familiarize ourselves to the ways scholars have imbued historical and geographical perspectives to understand natural resource conflicts. This course will pay particular attention to difference, read through political economic, feminist and post-colonial theorizations of environment-development. Second, we will examine the contemporary role of the state in the provocation and abatement of natural resource conflicts and become fluent with notions of property, natural resource access and land control. In this vein, we pay particular attention to the legal geographies (both formal and informal) that underpin the myriad ways natural resources, difference and conflict are interwoven. Third, we will investigate how multiple forms of difference and their intersections (caste, class, gender, race, sexuality, nationality etc.) are materially and symbolically imbued in natural resource policy (de jure and de facto) and practice. Together, our seminar discussions,
readings, and news analyses will address a number of conceptual and empirical debates and policy-related discussions in geography, development planning, and development studies. In this course students will:

- become familiar with prevailing conceptual frameworks for understanding natural resource conflict and social difference;
- become familiar with geographical debates regarding the way natural resource conflicts unfold in the context of international development agendas and nation building projects;
- learn multiple meanings of conflict and violence and the ways in which these terms are bound up with nation building and international development thought, practice and planning;
- become familiar with the contested nature of neoliberal development models; and
- strengthen and improve written and oral communication skills through writing assignments and ongoing oral presentations.

**Required Texts**


*Required books can be found at the UT Bookstore and/or through online orders at Amazon.ca. Please plan accordingly.*

**About the course and the Instructor**

This course welcomes Masters and early Ph.D students in geography and planning, and graduate students from related fields. For Ph.D students, this course offers good preparation for comprehensive exams in the arenas of environmental, critical, feminist, development and political geographies. For Masters students who are interested in environmental politics, international development planning and/or political, environmental and feminist geography, this course offers an introduction to scholarship and concepts that may be applied to contemporary environment-development planning, politics and policy.

**Who am I?**

I am cultural geographer and political ecologist with research interests in natural resource conflicts in Latin America. My ongoing research projects in Central America interrogate land struggles in the context of protected area conservation (Honduras) and tourism development (Panama). In addition to many years teaching geography in the United States, I have also consulted with the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program. I bring my international, scholarly and applied experiences to this course and look to foster a robust,
rigorous, and reflexive learning environment. Since July 2015, I am the Editor for the Editorial and Opinions section at Human Geography, Hg, A New Radical Journal.

Course Assignments

A. Informal reading Presentations (rolling due dates) 10% plus paper (5%)

Students are responsible for leading the seminar’s weekly readings discussion. Each week at least one student will lead the class in discussion around the readings (in pairs depending on numbers). Students are free to design presentations but they should be informative, identify linkages between readings, highlight overall themes and illustrate geographic themes. Students will sign-up to present starting the first week of classes. Presenters should plan to present for 60 mins (to include both presentation and Q and A). Students must follow up with a 500 word reflection of readings and presentation-discussion and is due the following week in class. Further instructions will be provided. Students who are not presenting must actively engage in class discussion.

B. Commentary 15%

Activism scholarship is a growing arm in the discipline of geography. There are many ways to engage as a scholar-activist. One way is through the participation in written public debates around your area of expertise. Commentaries are a creative and efficient way to “test out” an argument and make a polemical statement based on research. For this course, students are responsible for writing a commentary of 1000 words.

The objective of this assignment is as follows:

- Commentaries pieces require that we follow global current events and link our research expertise to the “real world”;
- This assignment requires that students begin to select a research paper topic early in the course as commentary topics are aimed to get you started on defining and framing research papers;
- Activist scholarship requires clarity in writing and communication; Skilled commentary writers aim for clarity and accessible language as a way to reach the broader field of human geography. All submissions are expected to be well-written.
- Papers must be single-spaced, 12 Font and may not exceed 1000 words. (Further instructions forthcoming)

Due Dates: Commentary Deadlines: November 1st, 2018
C. Class Participation 10%

Participation grades are earned by active engagement in class discussions. Discussion will comprise a great deal of class time. It is expected that students will contribute by posing questions, raising issues for commentary, using the text to inform your commentary and analysis, listen closely to others, and respectively engage with their views. We will work together to become more fluent with the debates and insights embedded in the readings. It is a goal of this course to learn from one another. **Please remember, participation starts with perfect attendance.**

**A useful strategy for earning participation points is to bring course related news articles to class.** I will reserve the first 10 minutes of class time for anyone who would like to inform the class of a particular newsworthy event that relates to the themes of the course. You can present as many times as you like: Go for it!!!

**A good strategy** for class discussion is to focus on the purpose and stated intent of the author. Did the author successfully address what they stated that they would? Are the supporting examples convincing, why and why not? Why is the argument important?

You can also critique the literature. But keep in mind it’s not enough to say the writing is poor and “I don’t understand the author’s argument”. You have to explain what you did understand and what makes the author’s argument less compelling to you. A good way to evaluate the readings is to discuss the way the readings help you understand or explain a topic/event/concept that you are interested in pursuing in your own work/research/general interest etc. Critique is important and I am open to student critique of the readings, however, I urge students to work hard to understand the author’s positioning first, before you embrace and/or dismiss the readings. We cannot effectively critique or work with the literature if we don’t understand the argument.

In addition, to develop critical reading skills often requires readings articles more than once. I suggest reading an article and taking notes at the same time. Then re-read either the entire article again, or the introduction and conclusion. Ask, what is the author’s main argument, what is the author’s lens (framework) and strategy to illustrate the argument, and what are the main lines of evidence? For books, try to do a close reading the first time (with note-taking) but read the introduction and conclusions twice.

**D. Supplementary Reading Reflections:** All students must submit a **500 word reflection** (the week after) for each of the books by Pasternak and Anthias. Students presenting on those weeks are responsible for a longer discussion (1000) words. (10%)

**E. Final Paper 50%**

My philosophy for this assignment is that students write on a topic that is of interest to them. However, all papers whatever the format, should directly address a course theme(s). This means that all papers should demonstrate fluency in the entanglements of natural resources, difference and conflict. Many of the readings in this course demonstrate this entanglement in various ways and provide good templates for your work in this direction.
All students will write literature review (12 pages) highlighting course materials blended with outside materials reflecting a particular field/theme in human geography. Such as feminist political ecology/indigenous studies/decolonial studies/land etc. (themes covered in the course), and situate the field theoretically/historically.

Or

A commentary paper (12 pages) that also reviews the literature but argues for geographers to re-think aspects of the field illuminated by both course materials and outside materials laid out in the paper. Papers should be pithy and polemical and authors need to demonstrate the paper’s timeliness vis a vis recent directions in the field or current events.

*Commentaries may expand upon previous “commentary” assignment.*

All papers and formats must be approved by Professor Mollett.

Final Paper=50%

**DEADLINE:** December 24th, 2018 (by email)

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**Reading Schedule**

**Week 1:** September 13  
*Introductions and Seminar Organization*

Conceptualizing natural resource struggles, difference and “conflict”

**Week 2:** September 20  
*D(d)evelopment, natural resources, difference and “conflict”*

Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence*  
p.1-67


Week 3: September 27th

**Situating a politics of difference in environmental geography**


Week 4: October 4

**Petro-Violence and subterranean struggles**

Nixon, 68-127.


Week 5: October 11

**Feminist political ecologies**

Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 128-149


**Week 6: October 18th**

Pasternak, Shiri. Grounded Authority: The Algonquins of great barrier lake against the state. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

**Week 7: October 25th**

*Urban Political Ecologies*


Truelove, Yaffa. 2011. (Re)-Conceptualizing Water Inequality in Delhi, India through a feminist political ecology framework. *Geoforum*, 42 (2):143-152.


**Optional**


**Week 8: November 1st**

*“Unimagined Communities”: Rights and Resources*

Nixon, R. *Slow Violence*, 149-198


**Week 9: November 8th**

**Postcolonial and Decolonial understandings of natural resource claims, dispossession and resistance I**


Naylor et al 2017. Interventions: Bringing the decolonial to political geography. Political Geography


**Week 10: November 15th**

**Postcolonial and Decolonial understandings of natural resource claims, dispossession and resistance II**


**Optional**


**Week 11: November 22nd**


**Week 12: November 29th**

*Post-humanist and intersectional interventions in environmental human geography: What does it mean to be Human?*


**Optional**

Course Norms

- We will use Blackboard and email for communications. Course readings can be accessed via the University Libraries Electronic Resources and will be posted on the Blackboard welcome page. Please see a librarian if you are having difficulty locating articles.
- Please arrive on time to class
- All course assignments must be submitted to me in class on the day that they are due as a hard copy. Final papers may be submitted electronically no later than 12 noon, January 3rd, 2018. (email please)
- There is an expectation is that you will keep up with your work. If you need more time for the final research paper please contact me before the last day of class. I generally will grant everyone an extension if someone makes a request. However, there are no late submissions for term assignments (besides the final). If you are late its 10% a day deduction (weekend counts as one day). No exceptions without a verifiable medical reason or serious emergency.
- The use of cell phones is not permitted during class time. Please kindly put them away. Laptops/tablets are welcome for note taking and I encourage you to bring them.
- Feedback on written assignments--I will do my best to return assignments within two weeks. However, I will not necessarily conduct line by line editing of your assignments. I will closely edit parts of the paper to identify the strengths and weaknesses in your writing. I will make comments on your ideas. You will be graded on both. It is much easier to assess your ideas when writing is clear. I strongly suggest that if you are at all concerned about your writing that you make an appointment with the Writing Centre in the School for Graduate Studies. Seeking help with writing is NOT a weakness. Most students learn how to write WELL in Graduate school. Take advantage of the wonderful resources in SGS to sharpen your writing skills. Book appointments in advance. The Centre is popular.
- Welcome. I am very delighted to be learning with you this term 😊

Special Accommodations

Please contact me if you require any special accommodations in order to be successful in this course. I am happy to work with you. Also please see below:

Accessibility Needs: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility as soon as possible.
**Academic integrity.**
A message from the Chair:

“Plagiarism is an academic offense at the University of Toronto. Plagiarism is quoting (or paraphrasing) the work of an author (including the work of fellow students) without proper use of citation (and quotations marks when using an author’s words). Students also should not be submitting any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought, without first discussing with the instructor. Please consult the “Rules and Regulations” section of the Arts and Science Calendar ([http://www.artsandscience.utoronto.ca/ofr/calendar/Rules_&_Regulations.html](http://www.artsandscience.utoronto.ca/ofr/calendar/Rules_&_Regulations.html)) for further information and check the ‘How not to plagiarize’ website at: [http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize.](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize.).”

Please feel free to send me related events to post and announce to the class.

**Supplementary Materials (non-alphabetical)**


**Optional**


Rotz, S, 2017. “They took our beads, it was a fair trade, get over it”. Settler Colonial Logics, racial hierarchies and material dominance in Canadian Agriculture. *Geoforum* 82: 158-169.

Optional


Nixon, R. *Slow Violence* (Ecologies of the Aftermath)...199-232


Optional


