



**SENATE COMMITTEE ON CURRICULAR AFFAIRS**  
**COURSE SUBMISSION AND CONSULTATION FORM**

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*Principal Faculty Member(s) Proposing Course*

Name	User ID	College	Department
JENNIFER BAKA	jeb525	Earth and Mineral Sciences (EM)	Not Available

**Academic Home:** Earth and Mineral Sciences (EM)

**Type of Proposal:**  Add  Change  Drop

**Course Designation**

(GEOG 330N) Political Ecology

**Course Information**

**Cross-Listed Courses:**

**Prerequisites:**

GEOG 230 OR GEOG 30

**Corequisites:**

**Concurrents:**

**Recommended Preparations:**

**Abbreviated Title:** Political Ecology  
**Discipline:** General Education  
**Course Listing:** Inter-Domain

**Special categories for Undergraduate (001-499) courses**

**Foundations**

- Writing/Speaking (GWS)
- Quantification (GQ)

**Knowledge Domains**

- Health & Wellness (GHW)
- Natural Sciences (GN)
- Arts (GA)
- Humanities (GH)
- Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS)

**Additional Designations**

- Bachelor of Arts
- International Cultures (IL)
- United States Cultures (US)
- Honors Course
- Common course number - x94, x95, x96, x97, x99
- Writing Across the Curriculum

**First-Year Engagement Program**

- First-Year Seminar

**Miscellaneous**

Common Course

#### GE Learning Objectives

GenEd Learning Objective: Effective Communication

GenEd Learning Objective: Creative Thinking

GenEd Learning Objective: Crit & Analytical Think

GenEd Learning Objective: Global Learning

GenEd Learning Objective: Integrative Thinking

GenEd Learning Objective: Key Literacies

GenEd Learning Objective: Soc Resp & Ethic Reason

#### Bulletin Listing

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Minimum Credits:	3
Maximum Credits:	3
Repeatable:	NO
Department with Curricular Responsibility:	Geography (UPEM_GEOG)
Effective Semester:	Upon Approval
Travel Component:	NO

#### Course Outline

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##### A brief outline or overview of the course content:

This course will introduce students to key theories and debates in political ecology. Students will also gain experience applying political ecology thinking to contemporary environmental debates. Students will gain familiarity with a wide range of theories and methods central to contemporary human-environment geography, such as Marxist political economy, Foucauldian governmentality, feminist intersectionality, ethnography, and land change science. Students will increase their knowledge of the world in general, and of approaches to the challenges of environmental policy in particular, by learning how these theories and methods have been put to use in the analysis of case studies from many different countries and continents. They will develop their ability to conduct independent research, work collaboratively, and present their thinking verbally and in writing through a variety of exercises and assignments.

##### A listing of the major topics to be covered with an approximate length of time allotted for their discussion:

Political ecology foundations (1 week)  
Cultural ecology (1 week)  
Hazards research (1 week)  
Marxist political economy (2 weeks)  
Environmental knowledge (2 weeks)  
Environmental identity (1 week)  
Feminist political ecology (1 week)  
Urban political ecology (1 week)  
Resource political economy (1 week)  
Environmental governance (2 weeks)  
Environmental politics (1 week)  
Student presentations (1 week)

##### Course Description:

This course introduces students to political ecology as one approach to advanced human-environment studies in geography. Political ecology is an interdisciplinary approach that combines environmental justice, cultural ecology, and other related approaches to undertake an integrated, holistic assessment of the relationships between social and ecological change. In particular, it analyzes the power dynamics at play in social and ecological marginalization and change; the social issues surrounding conservation of protected natural areas and species and conflicts over natural resources; the underlying causes of environmental conflicts; and issues of justice and distribution as they relate to the production and consumption of environmental goods and services.

Students will gain familiarity with a wide range of theories and methods central to contemporary human-environment geography, such as Marxist political economy, Foucauldian governmentality, feminist intersectionality, ethnography, and land change science. Students will increase their knowledge of the world in general, and of approaches to the challenges of environmental policy in particular, by learning how these theories and methods have been put to use in the analysis of case studies from many different countries and continents. They will develop their ability to conduct independent research, work collaboratively, and present their thinking verbally and in writing through a variety of exercises and assignments.

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

1. understand key theories in political ecology
2. evaluate contemporary debates in human-environment studies using political ecology thinking
3. apply political ecology theories and concepts to relevant topics
4. use integrated thinking across the natural and social sciences to analyze and produce possible solutions to complex human-environment challenges

**The name(s) of the faculty member(s) responsible for the development of the course:**

Name: JENNIFER BAKA (jeb525)

Title:

Phone:

Address:

Campus: UP

City:

Fax:

## Course Justification

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**Instructional, Educational, and Course Objectives:**

**This section should define what the student is expected to learn and what skills the student will develop.**

Instructional, Educational, and Course Objectives:

- To introduce students to key theories in political ecology
- To evaluate contemporary debates in human-environment studies using political ecology thinking
- To have students apply political ecology theories and concepts to self-selected topics
- To encourage students to use integrated thinking across the natural and social sciences to analyze and produce possible solutions to complex human-environment challenges

**Evaluation Methods:**

**Include a statement that explains how the achievement of the educational objective identified above will be assessed.**

**The procedures for determining students' grades should be specifically identified.**

Reading responses (x5) (50%; 10% each)

Independent research project and presentation (x1) (20%)

Final exam (x1) (20%)

In class discussions (10%)

**Relationship/Linkage of Course to Other Courses:**

**This statement should relate the course to existing or proposed new courses. It should provide a rationale for the level of instruction, for any prerequisites that may be specified, or for the course's role as a prerequisite for other courses.**

GEOG 330 is an upper-level course in geography's environment-society subfield. It focuses specifically on political ecology as one interdisciplinary approach to studying advanced human-environment relationship topics in geography. It builds on material presented in the department's introductory environment-society courses: GEOG 030 (intended for non-majors) and GEOG 230 (intended for majors). Thus, students will be required to take either GEOG 30 or GEOG 230 as a prerequisite prior to taking this course. The course will provide theoretical background that may be applied in higher-level environment-society geography courses (GEOG 430-439).

**Relationship of Course to Major, Option, Minor, or General Education:**

**This statement should explain how the course will contribute to the major, option, or minor and indicate how it may function as a service course for other departments.**

GEOG 330 can be used by students to meet a 300-level requirement for the geography B.A. and B.S. degrees. In the geography minor, it will be a selection for the human geography, physical geography, or additional course requirements. It will be a selection for the (proposed) Environment-Society Geography undergraduate certificate. It will be available for other programs wishing to include an upper-level environment-society geography selection. For students who are not geography majors, the course may fulfill an Interdomain GS/GN requirement.

This course will increase students' exposure to advanced theories in human-environment geography. Currently our curriculum has very few advanced theoretical human-environment courses, which are critical to students hoping to work in environmental policy or pursue graduate level education.

**A description of any special facilities:**

technology classroom

**Frequency of Offering and Enrollment:**

GEOG 330 is expected to be offered once per year with an approximate enrollment of 25 students

## Alignment with General Education Objectives

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**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION** – the ability to exchange information and ideas in oral, written, and visual form in ways that allow for informed and persuasive discourse that builds trust and respect among those engaged in that exchange, and helps create environments where creative ideas and problem-solving flourish.

**KEY LITERACIES** – the ability to identify, interpret, create, communicate and compute using materials in a variety of media and contexts. Literacy acquired in multiple areas, such as textual, quantitative, information/technology, health, intercultural, historical, aesthetic, linguistic (world languages), and scientific, enables individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, to lead healthy and productive lives, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.

**CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL THINKING** – the habit of mind characterized by comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating a conclusion. It is the intellectually disciplined process of conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

**INTEGRATIVE THINKING** – the ability to synthesize knowledge across multiple domains, modes of inquiry, historical periods, and perspectives, as well as the ability to identify linkages between existing knowledge and new information. Individuals who engage in integrative thinking are able to transfer knowledge within and beyond their current contexts.

**CREATIVE THINKING** – the capacity to synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways and the experience of performing, making, thinking, or acting in an imaginative way that may be characterized by innovation, divergent thinking, and intellectual risk taking.

**GLOBAL LEARNING** – the intellectually disciplined abilities to analyze similarities and differences among cultures; evaluate natural, physical, social, cultural, historical, and economic legacies and hierarchies; and engage as community members and leaders who will continue to deal with the intricacies of an ever-changing world. Individuals should acquire the ability to analyze power; identify and critique interdependent global, regional, and local cultures and systems; and evaluate the implications for people's lives.

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ETHICAL REASONING** – the ability to assess one's own values within the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, describe how different perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas, and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Individuals should acquire the self-knowledge and leadership skills needed to play a role in creating and maintaining healthy, civil, safe, and thriving communities.

**What component(s) of the course will help students achieve the General Education Learning Objectives covered in the course? Provide evidence that students in the course have adequate opportunities to achieve the identified learning objectives.**

**CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL THINKING:**

Students will improve their critical thinking skills by grappling with advanced theoretical concepts and applying them to contemporary environmental debates. Further, students will be taught to think through the implications of environmental decision making for societies and environments, questioning the social responsibility and ethics of particular decisions. GEOG 330 will require students to analyze complex problems from various perspectives, apply different theoretical frameworks to these problems, and articulate in written and presentation form the results of their analyses.

**INTEGRATIVE THINKING:**

As an environment-society geography course, GEOG 330 draws extensively from both the natural sciences and social sciences to examine complex human-environment relations. Students necessarily draw from both physical geography approaches and human geography approaches in studying human-environment relations. Further, students are required to make connections across places, across historical time periods, and across various socio-political-economic systems and scales.

**GLOBAL LEARNING:**

A key focus of political ecology is to introduce students to diverse, international perspectives with respect to human engagement with the environment. Students will gain an appreciation for different ways of 'knowing' the environment through class readings, lectures and the final project. They will be taught to analyze how environmental decisions and practices in one place impact the societies and environments of other places, exploring interconnections and relationships across space. Further, they will be expected to consider how the historical, cultural, political, and economic systems of a particular place shape the human-environment relations of that place.

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**How will students be assessed to determine their attainment of the Learning Objective(s) of General Education covered in this course? This assessment must be included as a portion of the student's overall performance in this course.**

All learning objectives will be assessed through five reading responses (each response is worth 10% of class grade) and in-class discussions (10% of class grade), which are designed specifically to assess students' ability to critically analyze and apply theories to complex problems; draw from multiple sources, approaches, and concepts; and recognize difference and connections across the globe.

Further, the final project and presentation (20% of class grade) will demonstrate students' ability to apply theories to a topic of their choosing in a critical and analytical manner, to integrate multiple perspectives and approaches, and to attend to the global context of their topic.

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## General Education Domain Criteria

General Education Designation: Inter-Domain

### GN Criteria

**Explain the methods of inquiry in the natural science fields and describe how the contributions of these fields complement inquiry in other areas**

**Construct evidence-based explanations of natural phenomena**

**Demonstrate informed understandings of scientific claims and their applications**

**Evaluate the quality of the data, methods, and inferences used to generate scientific knowledge**

**Identify societal or philosophical implications of discoveries in the natural sciences, as well as their potential to address contemporary problems**

**What components of the course will help students achieve the domain criteria selected above?**

GEOG 330 will teach students how political ecologists explore the physical/natural dimensions of human-environment systems. For example, students will be introduced to the natural science methods used by political ecologists in "land change science." Drawing on readings by geographers such as Billie Lee Turner, students will explore methods to analyzing observed land cover and land use

changes, using satellite imagery, landscape transect walks, and other approaches.

The course will teach students to see natural processes, including atmospheric, hydrologic, and landscape processes, in relation to human-environment systems. Students will explore how empirical investigation of these processes informs natural resource use and management, land conservation strategies, and environmental justice cases.

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## GS Criteria

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- Explain the various methods of inquiry used in the social and behavioral sciences and describe how the contributions of these fields complement inquiry in other areas
- Identify and explain major foundational theories and bodies of work in a particular area of social and behavioral sciences
- Describe the ways in which many different factors may interact to influence behaviors and/or institutions in historical or contemporary settings
- Explain how social and behavioral science researchers use concepts, theoretical models and data to better understand and address world problems
- Recognize social, cultural, political and/or ethical implications of work in the social and behavioral sciences

### What components of the course will help students achieve the domain criteria selected above?

GEOG 330 identifies and explains major foundational theories in human geography as they relate to human-environment relations. In particular, students are introduced to Marxian political economy, Foucauldian governmentality, feminist approaches to identity, and human geographers' theories of scale. Students are taught how these theories are applied through on-the-ground case studies. They are encouraged to analyze the different insights produced through application of different theories.

Further, GEOG 330 teaches students to attend to the breadth of social science concerns in relation to human-environment systems. For example, how do political, economic, and cultural systems shape human-environment interactions, and how do these vary from place to place? What are the impacts of particular human-environment decisions upon different groups of people in different places? What are the implications of these impacts for social justice?

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## Integrative Studies

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### Explain how the intellectual frameworks And methodologies of the two Knowledge Domains will be explicitly addressed in the course and practiced by the students.

As a human-environment course, GEOG 330 draws extensively from both the natural sciences and social sciences to examine complex human-environment relations. Critical to these analyses are both physical processes such as the formation of natural hazards, changing atmospheric patterns, and landscape dynamics as well as social processes such as systems and institutions of governance, political systems that shape natural resource extraction and use, global capitalist economic systems that drive environmental use, and the formation of human identities in relation to the environment.

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### Demonstrate that each Of the two domains will receive approximately equal attention, providing evidence from course topics, assignments, or other course components, and that students will integrate material from both domains.

All material in the course weaves together natural science and social science approaches to human-environment systems. No single topic attends to only one of these domains. However, some topics emphasize a natural science or social science approach more heavily, as outlined here:

- Political ecology foundations (1 week) 50% GN / 50% GS
  - Cultural ecology (1 week) 50% GN / 50% GS
  - Hazards research (1 week) 75% GN / 25% GS
  - Marxist political economy (2 weeks) 25% GN / 75% GS
  - Environmental knowledge (2 weeks) 50% GN / 50% GS
  - Environmental identity (1 week) 25% GN / 75% GS
  - Feminist political ecology (1 week) 40% GN / 60% GS
  - Urban political ecology (1 week) 40% GN / 60% GS
  - Resource political economy (1 week) 60% GN / 40% GS
  - Environmental governance (2 week) 50% GN / 50% GS
  - Environmental politics (1 week) 50% GN / 50% GS
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### Briefly explain the staffing plan. Given that each Inter-Domain course is approved for two Knowledge Domains, it will be taught by an instructor (or instructional team) with appropriate expertise in both domains.

GEOG 330 will be taught by Dr. Jennifer Baka, or another human-environment geography faculty member, who has experience using both natural science and social science approaches to studying human-environment systems. Further, GEOG 330 was developed through consultation with multiple geographers at Penn State, both physical geographers including climatologists, landscape ecologists, and watershed experts, as well as human geographers including political, urban, and economic geographers. The Penn State Geography department is interdisciplinary in nature, and this context contributes to the continual insight from both natural science and social science experts in the formation and instruction of this course.

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### Describe the assessments that will be used to determine students' ability to apply integrative thinking.

The five reading responses (each worth 10% of class grade) and in-class discussion (10% of class grade) topics are designed to give students the opportunity to integrate theoretical and methodological perspectives from the natural and social sciences in addressing complex human-environment challenges. For example, discussions about feminist political ecology (FPE) may require students to contrast the approaches of FPE scholars Diane Rocheleau and Sharlene Mollet. Rocheleau has used methods rooted in landscape ecology (natural science) to attend more deeply to the physical nature of environmental change and the gendered nature of its impacts, while Sharlene Mollett has employed ethnographic (social science) approaches to examine racial and gendered environmental access and use.

Further, the final project and presentation (20% of class grade) will require students to analyze both natural and social

characteristics of their chosen topic and incorporate both natural and social scientists' writings on that topic.

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## General Education Designation Requirements

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### Bachelor Of Arts Requirements:

- BA: Natural Sciences
- BA: Other Cultures
- BA: Foreign/World Lang (12th Unit)
- BA: Humanities
- BA: Social and BA: Behavioral Sciences
- BA: Arts
- BA: Quantification
- BA: Foreign/World Lang (All)

As a general education course integrating social and natural sciences with global perspectives, GEOG 330 is appropriate for inclusion as a BA Fields course.

### Campuses That Have Offered ( ) Over The Past 4 Years

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semester	AB	AL	BK	BR	BW	CR	DS	ER	FE	GA	GV	HB	HN	HY	LV	MA	NK	PC	SH	SL	UP	WB	WC	WS	XC	XP	XS	YK
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# GEOG 330 Syllabus

**Course Abbreviation and Number:** GEOG 330

**Credits:** 3

**Prerequisites/Co-requisites/Concurrent Requirements/Recommended Preparation:** GEOG 030 or GEOG 230

**Course Attributes/Designations:** GenEd GN/GS, BA

## General Education Learning Objectives:

**CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL THINKING** – the habit of mind characterized by comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating a conclusion.

**INTEGRATIVE THINKING** – the ability to synthesize knowledge across multiple domains, modes of inquiry, historical periods, and perspectives, as well as the ability to identify linkages between existing knowledge and new information.

**GLOBAL LEARNING** – the intellectually disciplined abilities to analyze similarities and differences among cultures; evaluate natural, physical, social, cultural, historical, and economic legacies and hierarchies; and engage as community members and leaders who will continue to deal with the intricacies of an ever-changing world.

## Course Description:

The course introduces students to political ecology as one approach to advanced human-environment studies in geography. Political ecology is an interdisciplinary approach that combines environmental justice, cultural ecology, and other related approaches to undertake an integrated, holistic assessment of the relationships between social and ecological change. In particular, it analyzes the power dynamics at play in social and ecological marginalization and change; the social issues surrounding conservation of protected natural areas and species and conflicts over natural resources; the underlying causes of environmental conflicts; and issues of justice and distribution as they relate to the production and consumption of environmental goods and services.

Students will gain familiarity with a wide range of theories and methods central to contemporary human-environment geography, such as Marxist political economy, Foucauldian governmentality, feminist intersectionality, ethnography, and land change science. Students will increase their knowledge of the world in general, and of approaches to the challenges of environmental policy in particular, by learning how these theories and methods have been put to use in the analysis of case studies from many different countries and continents. They will develop their ability to conduct independent research, work collaboratively, and present their thinking verbally and in writing through a variety of exercises and assignments.

### **Course Learning Objectives:**

- To introduce students to key theories in political ecology
- To evaluate contemporary debates in human-environment studies using political ecology thinking
- To have students apply political ecology theories and concepts to self-selected topics
- To encourage students to use integrated thinking across the natural and social sciences to analyze and produce possible solutions to complex human-environment challenges

### **Evaluation Methods:**

Reading responses (x5) (50%; 10% each)

Independent research project and presentation (x1) (20%)

Final exam (x1) (20%)

In class discussions (10%)

### **Course Outline:**

Week 1: Political ecology foundations  
Week 2: Cultural ecology  
Week 3: Hazards research  
Weeks 4-5: Marxist political economy  
Weeks 6-7: Environmental knowledge  
Week 8: Environmental identity  
Week 9: Feminist political ecology  
Week 10: Urban political ecology  
Week 11: Resource political economy  
Weeks 12-13: Environmental governance  
Week 14: Environmental politics  
Week 15: Student presentations