Comparative Issues in Food, Water, and Energy
SDIS3070 (4 Credits / 60 class hours)

International Honors Program:
Climate Change: The Politics of Food, Water & Energy

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is representative of a typical term. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester. In addition, considerations of student safety may change some course content.

Course Description

This course takes a political ecology approach to examine the production/management of food, water, and energy systems within the context of climate change. Political ecology makes two basic propositions, as two sides of the same coin. The first is that the complex relationships that make up the natural environment involve social relationships of power. The second is that politics—across societies, forms, and scales—has an ecology. Furthermore, political ecology begins with the understanding that the ways in which we relate to the environment, and the forms that we manage, produce, and consume natural resources, are always socially and historically constituted. Through these perspectives, we are led to interrogate how and why certain ways of relating to the environment, including the management of resources, become dominant, while others become marginalized or excluded. Who benefits from the design of these systems, who bears the costs, and under what circumstances? How do relations of power in society mediate these dynamics?

The course is structured around three key lines of inquiry: First, what are the historical processes which can help us to understand existing modes of food, water, and energy production and/or management? Second, how are contemporary concerns about food, water, and energy in the context of climate change being problematized and addressed? Third, what conflicts have emerged, and are emerging, around access to food, water, and energy and how might they help to generate alternative visions of the future? Closely complementing the classes taught by local faculty, we will have guest lectures and site visits to illustrate concretely how these issues are played out “on the ground,” and provide an
experiential dimension to our critical and comparative analysis of food, water, and energy across four continents.

Course objectives:

The overall course objectives are:

- To experience, observe, and understand the multi-scalar impacts of regional and global forces on the landscapes, communities and economies of California, Vietnam, Morocco and Bolivia;
- To introduce students to the theoretical concepts and analytical tools necessary for a critical understanding of contemporary issues in food, water and energy systems;
- To challenge students to engage with people and places through discussion, dialogue and observation in reflexive and substantive ways that are informed by theories of political ecology;
- To become conscious of the many alternatives forms of natural resource production and management which may not be recognized within dominant narratives of development.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of a political ecological framework to describe the power dynamics implicated in contemporary issues in food, water, and energy;
- Explain natural resource management challenges through the lens of environmental conflict, the social production of marginalization and vulnerability, and inequitable access to environmental resources;
- Analyze who benefits from and who bears the cost of specific natural resource management systems pertaining to food, water, and energy;
- Assess the role of the state, markets, and civil society, including social movements, in the production and management of natural resources, and in environmental governance more broadly;
- Recognize the complex inter-play between local, national and global scales of development and environmental governance;

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Assessment:
Class Participation 15%
Site Visit Worksheets 30%
Comparative Political Ecology Essay 35%
Bolivia: Final Self-Evaluation 20%

Class Participation (15%)
Students are expected to participate actively in faculty sessions and to complete required readings beforehand. Faculty sessions will be connected to and actively complemented by site visits and guest lectures in each country, as well as content from other courses. Participation is more than just showing up or speaking out; it means that you actively contribute to the intellectual growth of the group by thoughtfully engaging with guest lectures, faculty, and fellow students and integrating information from field visits, other courses, observations and discussions from homestays, daily experiences and so forth.
Site Visit Worksheets: (30%)

This assignment consists of two site visit worksheets, each worth 15%, that require students to document and reflect on that they encounter through specific site visits. Site visit worksheets may help to inform your final comparative issues paper. A site visit report, completed on the provided worksheet, must first provide descriptions of what you encountered. The description section should identify specific places, issues, policies, institutions, resources, actors, or kinds of power. Second, the report provides a reflection on how the encounter serves as a “case” of central concepts or theories in political ecology. The reflection section should draw upon at least one reading (from this course) and one of Robbins’ five major theses/narratives. The reflection should clearly state and defend an argument, that is, it should draw upon evidence that, combined with concepts/ideas in political ecology, provides an explanation for why something is happening or provide an interpretation of specific situations or patterns unfolding at the intersection of climate change, food, water, and/or energy.

Completed worksheets should be no more than 3 double-spaced pages (Times New Roman, 12-pt, 1-inch margins). Worksheets are to be submitted as a Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) document to the professor according to the following deadlines:

a) Worksheet #1: by 12:00pm local time (Ho Chi Minh City) on TBA. Please note this is the day of departure from Vietnam - plan accordingly!

b) Worksheet #2: by 5:00pm local time (Rabat) on TBA.
Please note this is the day before the start of your 5-day break - plan accordingly!

Comparative Political Ecology Essay (35%)

This 5-6 page essay (doubled-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman, 1-in. margins) should address the political ecology of energy, food production, or water management (or a nexus of these) comparatively across two or more countries. To link issues in food-water-energy to political and economic structures the essay should draw upon one (or, if necessary, two) ‘narratives/theses’ as outlined in Robbins (2012: 21-24):

- Degradation and marginalization thesis
- Conservation and control thesis
- Environmental conflict and exclusion thesis
- Environmental subjects and identity thesis
- Political objects and actors thesis

The essay may take one of two forms, which should be clearly identified:

Option 1: Identify a pattern you have observed across sites in two or more countries: the pattern may be a similar ‘environmental problem’ or climate-change impact; a similar form of socio-environmental inequality; or a similar economic or political struggle. Then use your observations, research/course readings, and concepts in political ecology to help explain that pattern. Explanatory questions may include: What explains the emergence or degree of the environmental problem? How are environmental goods and bads distributed across space, time, and social class in a way that is systematically unequal? What social interests win and lose in these situations? What kinds of alternatives may have been possible, or are present but marginalized among some groups or within political struggles? Your explanation may take the form of one of the above-listed ‘narratives.’ Successful essays will generate insights through explicit and nuanced comparison across sites, and by skillfully presenting both evidence and counter-evidence for their arguments.

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Option 2: Identify a point of contrast between sites in two or more countries: the contrast may be a relative ‘success’ in one site and ecological ‘failure’ in another; a case of collaboration in one context and overt conflict in another; successful popular mobilization in one site, but political marginalization in another. Then use concepts in political ecology, research/course readings, and observations and from various sites and sources to explain the contrasting situations. Explanatory questions may include: What factors have generated different outcomes to similar problems (e.g. specific climate-related impacts; a particular mode of food production; water shortage)? What different political structures have deepened or lessened socially-unequal access to environmental ‘goods and ‘bads’? Why does unequal vulnerability to environmental stress or harm—on the basis of race, gender, economic class, or other group—look differently across sites? Like Option 1, your explanation may take the form of one of the above-listed ’narratives,’ but instead of centering the essay around a similar pattern across sites, the goal is to explain differences.

The essay is to be submitted as a WORD document to the professor by midnight local time (Casablanca) on a date TBA. *** Please note this is the day after mid-term research presentations, and the day before departure from Morocco - plan accordingly! ***

Self-Evaluation: (20%)
A written self-evaluation will take place within the final two weeks in Bolivia. You will be asked to assess your learning experience in the course, reflect on your intellectual growth, and how you plan to apply it to future endeavors. You will also be asked to provide a grade, and justify it with an argument. A more detailed description of this reflective exercise will be provided.

Grading Scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86%</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83%</td>
<td>Average</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
<td>Average</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76%</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Below 64%</td>
<td>Fail</td>
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Expectations and Policies
- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and questions in mind for discussion or clarification. Being prepared raises the level of class discussion for everyone. This includes being punctual and prepared for guest lectures and site visits. All students are expected to be present at every program session, with the only exceptions being illness (written note required from a non-IHP adult, e.g. homestay parent, or preferably, health care professional). Unexcused absences and habitual lateness will result in penalties reflected in your participation grade. Please inform the traveling faculty or fellow if tardiness is anticipated.
- Have assignments completed on schedule and done in accordance to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner. Points will be deducted for assignments turned in late.
- Ask questions in class. Be attentive, respectful and engaged with the guest lecturers and site visit hosts. These are often very busy professionals and community leaders who are doing us an honor by meeting with us and deserve your full attention and respect.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical). Any plagiarism or cheating will result in a score of zero for that assignment and could result in additional disciplinary measures as outlined in the Academics section of the IHP Student Handbook.
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates, lecturers, site visit hosts, homestay families). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Be pro-active and flexible and take ownership of your learning experience as individuals and as a group. The experiential model of learning requires that you look forward and back across the semester. The logistics of our time in each country means that coursework will not always develop in a strictly linear fashion.
- Electronic devices: The use of phones, tablets and laptops are not permitted during site visits and guest lectures. We will discuss the need for the use of technology during this course.

Please refer to the SIT Student Handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.

**Course Schedule**

**LAUNCH, SAN FRANCISCO**

**Session 1, Dr. Zeke Baker: Political Ecology: The Case of Water in California**

We begin this course with an introduction to the work, theory, and methods employed in political ecology. In this class, we unpack these propositions and explore how they can give us a framework for looking at the world, can raise new questions, and can provide tools for critical thinking, research, and writing. We then bring them to bear on the intersection of climate change and water in California, with a special emphasis on the dynamics of capitalism, the role of the state, and the ‘production’ of social inequality. Examples are primarily centered around, or related to, California’s Central Valley Project. We thus situate ‘climate crisis’ and ‘water crisis’ with reference to political-economic contradictions, a lesson that can raise further questions applicable to other regions, cases, and climate-related issues.

*Note: Class includes site visit to the US Army Corps of Engineers Bay Model

The class is structured around an audio tour of the Bay Model. We will use the tour to learn more about the complex hydrological, social, and infrastructural systems that characterize California water; to think critically about the environmental and social systems involved; and to become familiar with core concepts and questions that characterize political ecology.

**Required Readings:**

**Comparative Issues in Food, Water, and Energy**

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**Recommended Readings and Supplemental Material:**

1.4 Map of the California State Water Project (SWP) and Federal Central Valley Project (CVP). Available at: https://www.water.ca.gov/-/media/DWR-Website/Web-Pages/Water-Basics/California-Water-System/Files/Maps/California-State-Water-Project-Facilities-with-CVP.pdf

**VIETNAM**

**Session 2, Mrs. Nguy Thi Khanh: Renewable and Alternatives Energy Development in Vietnam**

This class reviews key national policies involved in the current development of renewable and alternative energies in Vietnam. Policy strategies are examined for their potential to mitigate climate change and promote green growth and low-carbon development in Vietnam.

**Required Readings:**

2.1 - Green ID: A blueprint for Vietnam’s clean energy future
2.2 - Green ID Report: *Analysis of future generation capacity scenarios for Vietnam*

**Recommended Readings:**

2.4 - Vietnam Renewable Energy Development Strategy to 2030, vision to 2050


Land tenure in Vietnam has gone through critical legal changes in favor of providing more
authority for small-holders, particularly farmers, to practice their rights toward ownership, management and usage of their land. However, in the country’s political context, vulnerability in land tenure still remains high due to challenges in the existing land-use regulations. Focusing on an introduction to the Vietnam’s land laws, this presentation is expected to provide students with basic knowledge about rights of small-holders towards land-use from perspectives of statutory and customary settings, including critical changes to land-tenure for farmers over time (of recent law-making history). This lecture will emphasize key issues of land-governance in Vietnam, especially stories related to land grabbing or private concession, and how civil society organizations have been engaging into recent land-law making in order to secure land-tenure for small-holders.

Required Readings:
3.3 - The political economy of land governance in Vietnam (drafted, 2015)

Session 4, Guest Lecture by Dr. Nguyễn Hửu Thiện: A Vanishing Delta: Facing Climate Change and Upstream Hydropower
This lecture examines the problem that the Mekong Delta will have to face within the changing climate and development of upstream hydropower: losing of sediment and nutrient supply to coastal and estuary environments; water flow and erosion; saline intrusion; and impact on fisheries.

Required Readings:

Recommended background reading:
https://www.earthrights.org/campaigns/mekong-river-basin-dams-problem-hydropower
https://www.internationalrivers.org/campaigns/mekong-mainstream-dams

MOROCCO

Session 5, Dr. Lisa Bossenbroek: Gendered impacts of the capitalization of water in Morocco
Morocco has embarked on an agricultural modernization plan that is importantly premised on changes in how water is used and by whom, with water increasingly being re-allocated from lower value to higher value crops. This often goes accompanied with new capital-intensive modes of ‘mining’ water and the introduction of new irrigation technologies, provoking a concentration of water in the hands of a few. New modes of water-intensive farming create new wealth and employment opportunities, but also dispossess many of their primary sources of living. This lecture discusses: 1) how such water re-allocations are premised on and happen
through existing gendered social institutions; and 2) how they differentially impact different categories of women and men (laborers, landowners, entrepreneurs, etc.).

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

Session 6, Dr. Lisa Bossenbroek: *Broken dreams? The gendered youth experiences of agrarian change in the Saïss, Morocco*

This lecture focuses on the gendered youth experiences of rural development in Morocco. Rural young men and women are key players in this process, and they are situated in a complex web of power relations hampering the fulfillment of their aspirations and dreams. We will discuss and describe current agrarian dynamics, specifically: 1) illustrating how the experiences, aspirations and dreams of rural young people in the Saïss are intimately linked to agrarian transformation; 2) demonstrating how futures and identities are deeply gendered; and 3) providing nuance to structural analyses of agrarian change with ethnographic accounts of how changes are perceived by the people experiencing them.

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Session 7, Dr. Sheikh Naeem: *Current status of water resources in Morocco and challenges*

This lecture will look at the water needs and resources in Morocco. Some of the issues looked at will be rural/urban divide, water basin management policies, and privatization. The central role of agriculture in Moroccan society and its water needs will be an important segment.

Required readings:


7.3 - Schync, J. and Hoekstra, A. (2014). The Water Footprint in Morocco. UNESCO Institute for Water Education: Value of Water, Research Report Series No. 67. [Focus on Chapters 2 and 3, and skim through Chapter 4.]

**Recommended readings:**


**Session 8, Dr. Mohamed Behnassi. Morocco Green Plan: Genesis, Relevance and Challenges**

The main objective of this class is to present the genesis of Morocco Green Plan (MGP), its pillars, drivers of change and different challenges that might obstruct the full achievement of its objectives, and long-term trends. The focus will be on agriculture due to its central role in Morocco and the great uncertainties regarding its possible evolution in a rapidly changing and complex environment. We will consider the modernization of agriculture and its integration with the national economy, with ecosystems, with policies, with the diversity of the territories, and with the local/global environments.

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


BOLIVIA

(Sessions 9-12 are part of the Workshop on Self-decolonization and Climate Change)

REQUIRED READINGS for Sessions 9-12 and the Workshop on Climate Change and Self-Decolonization:

  http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/knowledgenetwork/dialogue-inputs/


Session 9: Tania Ricaldi: The Politics of Climate Change in Bolivia.
This sesión will analyze critically the politics of Climate Change of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, including the laws and their implementation (or lack of).

Required Readings:
9.1 - Law of the Rights of Mother Earth, 2012. (Please read all ten articles)
http://www.worldfuturefund.org/Projects/Indicators/motherearthbolivia.html

9.2 - Manifesto of the Isla del Sol: “Save Our Mother Earth to Save Life”, 2015. (Please read pages 1-11) (only available online)
http://www.planificacion.gob.bo/uploads/webingles/index.html#p=1

9.3 - Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) from the Plurinational State of Bolivia (Oct 12, 2015) (Please read all 17 pages)

9.4 - Executive Summary of the Second National Communication of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2009. (please read the first ten pages 42-52)
http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/natc/bolnc2exsume.pdf

Session 10, Dr. Vivian Camacho: Food Sovereignty in Bolivia

Part I – Ancestral Knowledge in Health as an Integral Component for the Care of the Pachamama (Mother Earth)

Part 2 – Food Sovereignty and Agroecology

These presentations analyze the Andean perspective or Cosmo vision on the issues of Food Sovereignty, and the importance of the Ancestral Knowledge as a key element for the Care of the Pachamama (Mother Earth). It describes the relation and some of the rituals of communication between human beings and nature.

Session 11, by Oscar Olivera: Cosechando Agua de Lluvia, Sembrando Conocimiento, Construyendo Comunidad (Harvesting rain water, seeding knowledge, building community)
This presentation is designed to explain what is going on currently with the water issue in Bolivia in times of change and transition. This includes both the correspondence and contradictions between water management laws and socio-hydrological realities, emphasizing the dissemination of information and action about the impacts and implications of climate change for water. Oscar Olivera will focus his presentation on his efforts with schools of marginalized and vulnerable communities to collectively create water harvesting systems and urban gardens.

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings and Viewings:**
11.5 - Five Water Warriors Defending Rights from North Dakota to Chile (https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/5-Water-Warriors-Defending-Rights-from-North-Dakota-to-Chile-20170315-0018.html)

**Session 12, by Renán Orellana:** *Diagnostico General de Energia en Bolivia [Overview of Bolivia Energy Sector] (part I); and by Miguel Fernández: Energias Alternativas [Alternative Energy in Bolivia] (part II)*

In these presentations we learn about energy in general in Bolivia in the Latin-American context and in part 2 the analysis is focused in Alternative Energies and its uses, both in governmental and private sectors.

**Required Readings:**
https://energypedia.info/wiki/Bolivia_Energy_Situation
https://energytransition.org/2017/03/bolivia-a-model-for-energy-storage-in-latin-america/

**Session 13, Tania Ricaldi:** *Concluding Reflections on Food, Water, and Energy in the Context of Climate Change in Bolivia*

This class will review the central aspects of food, water and energy in climate change policies in Bolivia, with analysis and concluding reflections on the implications of climate change for these sectors.