Comparative Issues in Food, Water and Energy
SDIS 3070 (4 credits)

International Honors Program (IHP) Climate Change: The Politics of Land, Water and Energy Justice

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

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.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion 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

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English

Instructional Methods
SIT’s teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Course Schedule
*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers’ availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs

SECTIONS’ SUMMARY

| 1. Decolonial and Indigenous Approaches to Understanding Political-Environmental Issues |
| 2. Power, Hydrosocial Relations, and the Political Ecology of the California Delta |
| 3. Fossil Fuels, Democracy, and Post-Carbon Political-Economies |
| 4. Climate, Disaster, and the Environmental Justice in Puerto Rico |
| 5. Energy, Mining, and the Coloniality in the Unincorporated Territory |
| 6. Agroecology and Food Sovereignty in Post-Hurricane Puerto Rico |
| 7. Water, Privatization, and the Resistance in Neoliberal Chile |
| 8. Energy Transitions |
| 9. Agroecology, Food Sovereignty, and the Social Movements in Chile |
| 10. Mining, Territoriality and Identity in the Frontiers of Neo-extractivism |

Module 1: Bay Area, California, USA

Session 1: Decolonial and Indigenous Approaches to Understanding Political-Environmental Issues
**Required Reading:**

**Session 2: Power, Hydrosocial Relations, and the Political Ecology of the California Delta**

**Required Reading:**

**Session 3: Fossil Fuels, Democracy, and Post-Carbon Political-Economies**

**Required Reading:**

**Module 2: Puerto Rico**

**Session 4: Climate, Disaster, and Environmental Justice in Puerto Rico**

**Required Reading:**

**Session 5: Energy, Mining, and Colonality in the Unincorporated Territory**

**Required Reading:**


**Session 6: Agroecology and Food Sovereignty in Post-Hurricane Puerto Rico**

**Required Reading:**


**Module 3: Chile**

**Session 7: Water, Privatization, and Resistance in Neoliberal Chile**

**Required Reading:**


**Session 8: Energy Transitions**

**Required Readings:**

**Session 9: Agroecology, Food Sovereignty, and Social Movements in Chile**

**Required Reading:**

**Session 10: Mining, Territoriality and Identity in the Frontiers of Neo-extractivism**

**Required Reading:**
Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

Class Participation (10%)

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.

Group writing assignments (2x20% each)

This assignment consists of two group writing assignments, each worth 20%, that require students to describe, reflect on, and analyze the situations encountered in specific site visits, and imagine scenarios of intervention based on different social actors involved. More specific writing prompts will be provided.

Comparative Political Ecology Essay (30%)

This 5-6 page essay (doubled-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman, 1-in. margins) should address the political ecology of energy, food, water, or land (or a nexus of these) comparatively across two or more sites/regions. To link issues in land-food-water-energy to political and economic structures the essay should draw upon one or more 'narratives/theses' 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

As well as three or more other readings from class.

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 is that problem shaped by larger economic, political and social processes? How do these processes operate to produce similar patterns in different contexts? How are environmental goods and bads distributed across space, time, and along the various axes of social differentiation (social class, gender, race/ethnicity, age etc.) social class in a way that is systematically unequal? What social interests win and lose in these situations? What are the dominant narratives that are used to explain, legitimize or undermine that problem? What
are the counter-narratives?? What are the social and/or political identities that are being articulated or represented in the conflict or struggle? How do these narratives (dominant and counter), and identities play out to generate similar patterns? 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.

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 explains the relative ‘success’ or ‘failure’? What are the factors that facilitate or hinder collaboration, and/or lessen or deepen conflict? What different political structures have deepened or lessened socially-unequal access to environmental ‘goods and the burden of environmental ‘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? What are the dominant narratives and counter narratives around the environmental problem? What are the social and/or political identities that are being articulated or represented in the conflict or struggle? How do these narratives (dominant and counter), and identities play out to generate contrasting situations? 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.

Self-Evaluations: (20%)
A written self-evaluation will take place at the end of California, Puerto Rico, and Chile. 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 in each country.

Assessment

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Writing Assignments (x2)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Political Ecology Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluations</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Late Work
Due to the structure of our program, with a tightly planned country schedule, there is little time available to make up late work. Assignment deadlines are set with this already in mind. Do not expect to be provided extensions. Deadlines for assignments will be confirmed in class. Late work will be assessed a penalty of a grade step per day late (eg. an A- would drop to a B+ if one day late).

Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Program Expectations

Participation
IHP is an experiential learning program; you have to show up to have the experience. Students are expected to attend all classes, guest lectures, and field activities unless they have a medical excuse that has been communicated and approved of by IHP staff or faculty. IHP has academic requirements to attend class meetings and field activities. Failure to attend classes or field activities means that a student may not be eligible for credit from their university or could result in program dismissal.

Class Preparation
This program is built upon the strong belief that your experiences result in deep insights and powerful learning. Course assignments are created to facilitate learning opportunities and experiences. Dialogue in class about these insights and participation in these activities is critical. For this reason, your active engagement is very important. As a learning community, each one of us will influence the learning environment. Please take responsibility for your role in this environment and come to class prepared to engage with others in a positive and thought-provoking manner.

Academic Integrity
Academic dishonesty is the failure to maintain academic integrity. It includes, but is not limited to, obtaining or giving unauthorized aid on an examination, having unauthorized prior knowledge of the content of an examination, doing work for another student, having work done by another person for the student, and plagiarism. Academic dishonesty can result in severe academic penalty, including failure of the course and/or dismissal from the institution/program.

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person’s ideas or product as one’s own. Examples of plagiarism are: copying verbatim and without attribution all or parts of another’s written work, using phrases, charts, figures, illustrations, computer programs, websites without citing the source; paraphrasing ideas, conclusions or research without citing the course; using all or part of a literary plot, poem, film, musical score, computer program, websites or other artistic product without attributing the work to its creator.

Students can avoid unintentional plagiarism by carefully following accepted scholarly practices. Notes taken for papers and research projects should accurately record sources of material to cited, quoted, paraphrased, or summarized, and research or critical papers should acknowledge these sources in footnotes or by use of footnotes.

Violations of SIT Study Abroad academic integrity policy are handled as violations of the student code of conduct and will result in disciplinary action. Please discuss this with your faculty and staff if you have questions.
General Considerations

- **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.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and the Policies section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as Library resources and research support, Disability Services, Counseling Services, Title IX information, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion resources.