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The Cultural Ecology of Forests: Green Development, Conservation, and Climate Change

文化生態研究專題：森林的綠色發展，保育和氣候變遷

Course Description

What exactly is a forest and from whose perspective is a forest defined? How are forests used, by whom, and with what effects? To answer these questions, we will examine case studies from Southeast Asia to understand forests in multiple registers and from the perspective of many different users, including the forest itself. We will study the institutional frameworks of Green Development, Conservation, and Climate Change, and use empirical examples from Southeast Asia to contextualize them in practice. Examples will include case studies about the history of forest management and the ways that development, conservation, and climate change interact with forest resources and communities that live in and around forests. The objective of the course is to introduce the historical trajectory of forest use and management from the colonial era to the present in the Southeast Asian context. Also, to teach students how to think critically about different resource-use practices, social systems, and technologies. Through the examination of stories, documents, and policies, we will discuss the many possible ways to use forest resources and the effects of those different strategies. Through this examination, we will come to understand the beliefs, values, and structures that underlie different practices and how these shift, over time and across groups. To explore this dynamic and transformative interaction, we excavate the concepts above, attending to their structures, interchanges, and contradictions. Through primary source materials, ethnographic and historical studies, and theories that attend to the world-making power of culture, this course will provide more questions than answers. The objective is to trace how people not only use resources and develop policies toward that end, but also to make visible the boundaries and divisions that these various projects ignite. Our collective challenge will be to look through these boundaries to find transformative pathways.

Learning Objectives

Understand the dynamics between policy and practice
Understand classic and emerging trends in sustainable development practice
Understand forest ecologies and contemporary ethnographic theories related to them

Goals

Students will be prepared to engage with living ecological processes that include institutional actors, activities of daily human lives, and activities of living environments
Students will have a broad knowledge of policy processes with regard to forest conservation and development
Students will have an emerging understand of climate change as science and social process

[All course readings will be supplied electronically. Excerpts from texts and academic articles will be used and students are encouraged to own them]

Course Schedule

Environmental Economics and The Web of Life

Read:

Representations

Kirksey, Eben. (2015). *Emergent Ecologies*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Read: Introduction and Chapter 1

Castree, Noel. 2013. *Making sense of nature*. Routledge.

Read: Chapter 2: Representing Nature

Lorimer, Jamie. 2025. Worlding and weirding with beaver: A more-than-human political ecology of ecosystem engineering. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 50(2).
<https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12698>

Video:

Prey Lang Watershed video- Alan Michaud

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKb5AX-xMSM>

Forests as Communicating Ecosystems

Read:

Figueiredo, A. F., Boy, J., & Guggenberger, G. (2021). Common Mycorrhizae Network: A Review of the Theories and Mechanisms Behind Underground Interactions. *Frontiers in Fungal Biology*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.3389/ffunb.2021.735299>

Ellison, D., M. N. Futter, and K. Bishop. 2012. 'On the forest cover-water yield debate: From demand- to supply-side thinking'. *Global Change Biology* 18 (3):806–820.

Nixon, Rob. 2021. "The Less Selfish Gene Forest Altruism, Neoliberalism, and the Tree of Life." *Environmental Humanities* 13 (2): 348–71. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-9320189>.

Video:

The Mother Tree Project

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuupJGko9_0

Ecological Economics (online class)

Read:

Daly, H. E. (2007). *Ecological Economics and Sustainable Development:*

Selected Essays of Herman Daly. In *Advances in Ecological Economics*. Edward Elgar Publishing. Read Part 1

Koch, M. (2020). Structure, action and change: a Bourdieusian perspective on

the preconditions for a degrowth transition. *Sustainability: Science, Practice, and Policy*, 16(1), 4–14.

Bärnthaler, R. (2024). Problematising degrowth strategising: On the role of compromise, material interests, and coercion. *Ecological Economics*, 223. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2024.108255>

Green Development Theory

Read:

Dunlap, Alexander. (2024). *This system is killing us : land grabbing, the green economy & ecological conflict*. Pluto Press. Introduction

Fairhead, J., Leach, M., & Scoones, I. (2012). Green Grabbing: a new appropriation of nature? *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), 237–261.

Tsing, A. L. 2001. *Inside the Economy of Appearances*. In *Globalization*, 155–88. Durham: Duke University Press.

Paprocki, K. (2022). Anticipatory ruination. *Journal of Peasant Studies*.

Wolford, W. W., White, B., Scoones, I., Hall, R., Edelman, M., & Borras, S. M. (2024). Global land deals: what has been done, what has changed, and what's next? *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2024.2325685>

Mining for Sustainability

Read

Hao, Karen. 2025. *Empire of AI: Dreams and nightmares in Sam Altman's OpenAI*. Penguin Group. Prologue: A Run for the Throne; Chapter 12: Plundered Earth
New Luddites: Read some news

<https://edition.cnn.com/2025/10/08/business/ai-luddite-movement-screens>
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/we-should-all-be-luddites/>

Lassila, Maija M. 2025. Reindeer herders in the green sacrifice zone: The cumulative impacts of past extractivist dispossessions and recent mining expansion in Sodankylä, Finland. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 32(1). <https://doi.org/10.2458/jpe.5696>

Libassi, M. (2024). Gold conflict and contested conduct: Large- and small-scale mining subjectivities in Indonesia. *Geoforum*, 148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.10.005>

Carbon Offsets and UN-REDD: Not yet dead

Review website

<https://www.un-redd.org/about/programme>

Read:

Lang, C. (2016). *Konflikte um Rohstoffe in Asien REDDheads: The people behind REDD and the climate scam in Southeast Asia*. Stiftung Asienhaus.

- Asiyanbi, A. P., & Massarella, K. (2020). Transformation is what you expect, models are what you get: REDD + and models in conservation and development. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 27, 378–495.
- Aryal, K., Maraseni, T., Rana, E., Subedi, B. P., Laudari, H. K., Ghimire, P. L., Khanal, S. C., Zhang, H., & Timilsina, R. (2024). Carbon emission reduction initiatives: Lessons from the REDD+ process of the Asia and Pacific region. *Land Use Policy*, 146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2024.107321>
- McElwee, P. (2016). *Forests are Gold: Trees, People, and Environmental Rule*. University of Washington Press. Chapter 5

Resource Governance: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Cambodia

Theory: States and Resources

- Scott, J. C. 1998. *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. First. New Haven: Yale University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1
- Montefrio, M. J. F., and W. H. Dressler. 2016. ‘The Green Economy and Constructions of the “Idle” and “Unproductive” Uplands in the Philippines’. *World Development* 79:114–126.
- Ribot, J. C., and N. L. Peluso. 2009. ‘A Theory of Access*’. *Rural Sociology*. 68 (2):153–181.

Maps, Boundaries, and Appropriate Use

- Thongchai, W. (1994). *Siam mapped: a history of the geo-body of a nation*. University of Hawai'i Press. Intro, Chapters 1, 2, and 7.
- Cooke, F. M. 2003. ‘Maps and Counter-Maps: Globalized Imaginings and Local Realities of Sarawak’s Plantation Agriculture’. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34 (May 2001):265–284.
- Work, C., and A. Beban. 2016. ‘Mapping the Srok: The Mimeses of Land Title in Cambodia’. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 31 (1):37–80.

Video:

In-class viewing: [The History of the World](#)
Inuit and [Pacific Island](#) maps

State Forests and Plantations

- McElwee, P. (2016). *Forests are Gold: Trees, People, and Environmental Rule*. University of Washington Press. Introduction, Chapter 1
- Tania Murray Li, & Pujo Semedi. (2021). *Plantation Life: Corporate Occupation in Indonesia’s Oil Palm Zone*. Duke University Press. Introduction and Chapter 5
- Lye, Tuck-Po. 2011. “The Wild and the Tame in Protected-Areas Management in Peninsular Malaysia”. In, *Beyond the Sacred Forest: Complicating Conservation in Southeast Asia*. Dove, M., P. E. Sajise, and A. A. Doolittle eds., Chapel Hill: Duke University Press.

Forests and People in Southeast Asia

Theory: Thinking with Forests and People

Read:

Kohn, E. 2013. How forests think: Toward an anthropology beyond the human.
(Intro and Chapter 5)

Howell, S. (2016). The Relationality of Species in Chewong Animistic Ontology. In, *Critical Anthropological Engagements in Human Alterity and Difference*, Bjørn Enge Bertelsen and Synnøve Bendixsen eds. Palgrave Macmillan: 43–63.

Bird-David, N. (1990). The Giving Environment: Another Perspective on the Economic System of Gatherer-Hunters. *Current Anthropology*, 31(2), 189–196.

Chao, S. (2022). In the Shadow of the Palms. Duke University Press.
Prologue, Introduction, Chapter 5: Sago Encounters

Forest economies

Read:

Peluso, N. L. 1992. Rich forests, poor people: Resource control and resistance in Java. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 4: Organized forest violence; Reorganized forest access, 1942-66.

Padwe, Jonathan. 2020. Disturbed Forests, Fragmented Memories: Jarai and Other Lives in the Cambodian Highlands. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
Introduction, Chapter 1

VanDexter, K., & Visseren-Hamakers, I. (2020). Forests in the time of peace. *Journal of Land Use Science*, 15(2–3), 327–342.

Sanga, G., & Ortalli, G. (2003). Nature Knowledge. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books. (Part 3 – thought; Part 4- Use)

In-class viewing

[What explains the rise of humans?](#) Noah Yuval Harare

Re-source-fulness

Read:

Dove, M. R. (2015). Linnaeus' study of Swedish swidden cultivation: Pioneering ethnographic work on the "economy of nature." *Ambio*, 44(3), 239–248.

Maurer, M. (2024). Vegetal Agency in Street Tree Stewardship Practices: People-Plant Involutions Within Urban Green Infrastructure in New York City. *Journal of Ethnobiology*, 44(1), 56–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02780771231221644> DePuy, Walker, Jacob Weger, Katie

DePuy, Walker, Jacob Weger, Katie Foster, et al. 2021. "Environmental Governance: Broadening Ontological Spaces for a More Livable World." *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 5 (2): 947–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/25148486211018565>.

Eissler, S., Ader, D., Huot, S., Brown, S., Bates, R., & Gill, T. (2021). Wild gardening as a sustainable intensification strategy in northwest Cambodian smallholder systems. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 10(3), 1–20.

The Anthropocene and the more than human world to come

Read:

- Tsing, A. L., Mathews, A. S., & Bubandt, N. (2019). Patchy anthropocene: Landscape structure, multispecies history, and the retooling of anthropology: An introduction to supplement 20. *Current Anthropology*, 60(S20), S186–S197. <https://doi.org/10.1086/703391>
- Fitz-Henry, E. (2022). Multi-species justice: a view from the rights of nature movement. *Environmental Politics*, 31(2), 338–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2021.1957615>
- Scott, James. 2017. *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Early States*. New Haven: Yale University Press. *Agroecology of the Early State (116-124), and Praising Collapse (209-218)*.
- Parker, Ingrid M. 2017. “Remembering our Amnesia, Seeing in our Blindness”. In, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. Ed, Tsing, Anna, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt. University of Minnesota Press, pp. M155-M167.
- Sagan, Dorion. 2017. “Beautiful Monsters: Terra in the Cyanocene”. In, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. Ed, Tsing, Anna, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt. University of Minnesota Press, pp. M169-M174.

Additional Readings

- Barbesgaard, Mads. 2018. “Blue Growth: Savior or Ocean Grabbing?” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 45 (1): 130–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2017.1377186>.
- Berliner, David, Michael Lambek, Richard Shweder, Richard Irvine, and Albert Piette. 2016. “Anthropology and the Study of Contradictions.” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6 (1): 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau6.1.002>.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth, Jill Didur, and A. Carrigan. 2015. *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Descola, Philippe. 2009. “Human Natures.” *Social Anthropology* 17 (2): 145–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.2009.00063.x>.
- Dove, Michael, Percy E. Sajise, and Amity A. Doolittle. 2011. *Beyond the Sacred Forest: Complicating Conservation in Southeast Asia*. Edited by Michael Dove, Percy E. Sajise, and Amity A. Doolittle. Chapel Hill: Duke University Press.
- Ellison, David, Martyn N. Fitter, and Kevin Bishop. 2012. “On the Forest Cover-Water Yield Debate: From Demand- to Supply-Side Thinking.” *Global Change Biology* 18 (3): 806–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2486.2011.02589.x>.
- Fairhead, James, Melissa Leach, and Ian Scoones. 2012. “Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature?” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 39 (2): 237–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2012.671770>.
- Fischer, Frank. 2019. “Knowledge Politics and Post-Truth in Climate Denial: On the Social Construction of Alternative Facts.” *Critical Policy Studies* 13 (2): 133–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2019.1602067>.
- Gorzela, Monika A., Amanda K. Asay, Brian J. Pickles, and Suzanne W. Simard. 2015. “Inter-Plant Communication through Mycorrhizal Networks Mediates Complex Adaptive Behaviour in Plant Communities.” *AoB Plants* 7: plv050. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aobpla/plv050>.

- Handley, George B. 2015. "Climate Change, Cosmology, and Poetry: The Case of Derek Walcott's Omeros." In *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*, edited by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, and Anthony Carrigan, 333–51. New York and London: Routledge.
- Howell, S. (2016). Critical Anthropological Engagements in Human Alterity and Difference, 43–63. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40475-2>.
- Ingalls, Micah L., and Michael B. Dwyer. 2016. "Missing the Forest for the Trees? Navigating the Trade-Offs between Mitigation and Adaptation under REDD." *Climatic Change* 136: 353–66. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-016-1612-6>.
- Kallis, Giorgos, Susan Paulson, Giacomo D'Alisa, and Federico Demaria. 2020. *The Case for Degrowth*. Cambridge and Medford: Polity Press.
- <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv5cg82g.7>. Kinne, O. 2003. "Climate Research: An Article Unleashed Worldwide Storms." *Climate Research* 24: 197–98. <https://doi.org/10.3354/cr024197>.
- Kirksey, Eben. 2015. *Emergent Ecologies*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Kohn, Eduardo. 2013. *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Latour, Bruno. 2014. "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene." *New Literary History* 45 (1): 1–18.
- Lindisfarne, Nancy, and Steve Rayner. 2016. "Climate Change." *Anthropology Today* 32 (5): 27.
- Lockyer, Joshua, and James R. Veteto. 2013. *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- MacKinnon, D., and K. D. Derickson. 2013. "From Resilience to Resourcefulness: A Critique of Resilience Policy and Activism." *Progress in Human Geography* 37 (2): 253–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132512454775>.
- McElwee, P. (2016). *Forests are Gold: Trees, People, and Environmental Rule*. University of Washington Press.
- Milne, Sarah. 2015. "Cambodia's Unofficial Regime of Extraction: Illicit Logging in the Shadow of Transnational Governance and Investment." *Critical Asian Studies* 47 (2): 200–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2015.1041275>.
- Montefrio, Marvin Joseph F, and Wolfram H. Dressler. 2016. "The Green Economy and Constructions of the 'Idle' and 'Unproductive' Uplands in the Philippines." *World Development* 79: 114–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.11.009>.
- Norgaard, Kari Marie. 2019. "Making Sense of the Spectrum of Climate Denial." *Critical Policy Studies* 13 (4): 437–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2019.1671208>.
- Padwe, Jonathan. 2020. *Disturbed Forests, Fragmented Memories: Jarai and Other Lives in the Cambodian Highlands*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Peluso, Nancy Lee. 1992. *Rich Forests, Poor People: Resource Control and Resistance in Java*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pye, Oliver, Irendra Radjawali, and Julia. 2017. "Land Grabs and the River: Eco-Social Transformations along the Kapuas, Indonesia." *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue Canadienne d'études Du Développement* 0 (0): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2017.1298518>.
- Rayner, Steve. 2016. "What Might Evans-Pritchard Have Made of Two Degrees?" *Anthropology Today* 32 (4): 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12263>.
- Ribot, Jesse C., and Nancy Lee Peluso. 2009. "A Theory of Access*." *Rural Sociology* 68 (2):

- 153–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1549-0831.2003.tb00133.x>.
- Sanga, Glauco, and Gherardo Ortalli. 2003. *Nature Knowledge*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Scheidel, Arnim. 2016. “Carbon Accounts of Shifting Cultivation: Reductionist Practices, Contentious Politics.” In *Climate Change Interventions as a Source of Conflict, Competing Claims and New Mobilities: Increasing the Resilience of Communities and Cities in the South*, 1–22. Utrecht: LANDac.
- Scott, James. 2017. *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Early States*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. First. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Soon, W., and S. L. Baliunas. 2003. “Proxy Climatic and Environmental Changes of the Past 1000 Years.” *Climate Research* 23, 89-110 23 (2001): 89–110. <https://doi.org/10.3354/cr023089>.
- Stamets, S. 2005. *Mycelium Running. Mycelium Running: How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.
- Tsing, A. L. (2015). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton University Press
- Tsing, Anna. 2012. “Unruly Edges : Mushrooms as Companion Species.” *Environmental Humanities* 1: 141–54.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2001. “Inside the Economy of Appearances.” In *Globalization*, 155–88. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Tsing, Anna, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt. 2017. *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. University of Minnesota Press.
- VanDexter, K., & Visseren-Hamakers, I. (2020). Forests in the time of peace. *Journal of Land Use Science*, 15(2–3), 327–342.
- Wood, Denis. 2010. *Rethinking the Power of Maps*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Work, C., V. Rong, D. Song, and A. Scheidel. 2019. “Maladaptation and Development as Usual? Investigating Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Projects in Cambodia.” *Climate Policy* 19 (sup1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2018.1527677>.
- Work, Courtney. 2017. “Forest Islands and Castaway Communities: REDD+ and Forest Restoration in Prey Lang Forest.” *Forests* 8 (2): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/f8020047>.
- Work, Courtney, and Alice Beban. 2016. “Mapping the Srok: The Mimeses of Land Titling in Cambodia.” *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 31 (1): 37–80. <https://doi.org/10.1355/sj31-1b>.
- Work, Courtney, and Ratha Thuon. 2017. “Inside and Outside the Maps: Mutual Accommodation and Forest Destruction in Cambodia.” *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue Canadienne d'études Du Développement* 38 (3): 360–77.