ENVIRONMENTAL THEORY
UPPP 275
Course Code 55553
Winter 2023
Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30-10:50am
SBSG 3240
Course website: https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/50687

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-3:30pm, SE1 room 206B

Course Description

This PhD seminar in socio-environmental theory will provide an overview of different ways of thinking about the relationship between humans and the environment. The course will cover a range of theoretical perspectives about the ways social and environmental factors interact and shape each other, with theories drawn from diverse fields including political science, ecology, sociology, economics, geography, and anthropology. Through discussions, readings, and writing assignments, students will learn to critically analyze the complex relationships between society and the environment, and to evaluate the ways these frameworks inform socio-environmental research, policy, and management.

Each week will introduce a new theoretical framework. On Tuesdays, we will discuss foundational papers for that theory, and on Thursdays we will explore empirical papers that apply that theory and/or papers engaging critically with that theory. Over the course of the quarter, we will develop a meta-theoretical framework comparing and contrasting the different approaches covered in class.

Expected learning outcomes

1. Students will be able to describe the core features of diverse socio-environmental theories, and to critically evaluate their aims, strengths, and limitations
2. Students will be able to describe different ways theories are developed and used in studies of socio-environmental systems
3. Students will be able to critically engage with theoretical and empirical texts through reading, dialogue, and writing.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at the start of class on the due date.

1. Reading notes on Perusall

This course centers on active discussion of readings and key concepts in socio-environmental theory. It is expected that you complete all assigned readings before class, attend class sessions regularly, and come prepared for class discussion.

To begin engaging with the readings before class, we will use Perusall, an interactive, cooperative reading annotation software (available in a link through Canvas). Students should complete each session's readings, with annotations on Persuall, before the start of class. Perusall will automatically calculate a grade for each session's reading assignment based on the number, quality, and interactions with your contributions.

2. In-Class Participation

Students should come to class ready to engage with one another and with the course material. To enable a meaningful discussion, come to class with one "AHA" (an insight you had from the readings), one question, and one observation comparing that session's readings to a previous session.

Each student will also be responsible for "leading" part of one class session, which will entail developing discussion questions and/or activities in collaboration with Prof. Ulibarri.

Your grade for in class participation will be derived from the instructor's observation of your participation during class, your session lead, and a self-assessment of how you engaged in and out of class. The self-assessment is due by 5pm on the last day of class.

3. Reflection memos

Throughout the quarter, students will complete three short (2 page, double spaced) memos.

- Memo 1 (due week 2) will cover the types of socio-environmental questions (both practical and theoretical) you are interested in
- Memo 2 (due week 6) will compare the frameworks discussed in weeks 2 to 5
- Memo 3 (due week 10) will compare the frameworks discussed in weeks 6 to 9

4. Final paper and presentation

Students will complete a 10-page research paper on one of the following prompts:

- Comparing two frameworks: Choose a socio-environmental system/problem and describe it through two different theoretical frameworks. What stands out as primary causes, characteristics, and outcomes when viewed from each lens? How does the choice of framework affect the way you understand the system?
- Deep dive into a single framework: Conduct a systematic review of papers applying one socio-environmental framework empirically. What types of geographies, systems, and problems do they engage with? What methodological approaches do they use? What potentially important features of the system are these papers missing (i.e., what are they overlooking)?
- Comparative analysis: Choose a single feature of frameworks (e.g., context, components, connections) and compare the way this feature is addressed across the theories covered in class.

The paper will be developed in a series of interim assignments. Each student will be expected to provide feedback on the abstracts and outlines of two classmates.

- In week 7, students will submit a short (max 200 word) abstract of their planned paper topic. Each student will be expected to provide feedback on the abstracts of two classmates.
- In week 9, students will submit an outline of their paper. Each student will be expected to provide feedback on the outlines of two classmates.
- In week 10, students will present the key ideas, approach, and results from your papers in class.
- The final paper is due on Thursday of finals week.

Late work policy
If you need an extension on any assignment, please email Prof. Ulibarri at least 24 hours before the assignment is due. Without a pre-approved extension, grades will be deducted by 5% for each day the assignment is late.

Grading Breakdown (ABCD/F or P/NP)
- 10%: Perusall for reading notes
- 25%: In class participation
- 10% each: Three 2-page reflection memos
- 35%: 10-page final paper
  - 5%: abstract
  - 5%: outline
  - 5%: presentation
  - 20%: final paper

Course Outline & Readings

The reading list may be updated during the quarter to reflect student interests. Please use Canvas for the most up-to-date version. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at the start of class on the date listed.

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1	1/10	Intro to S-E theory; comparative frameworks	• Schluter, M et al. (2022) Why care about theories? • Binder, C et al. (2013) Comparison of frameworks for analyzing social-ecological systems. OPTIONAL: • Pulver, S et al. (2018) Frontiers in socio-environmental research: components, connections, scale, and context.	
	1/12	NO CLASS		
2	1/17	Socio-ecological systems 1	• Ostrom, E. (2009). A general framework for analyzing sustainability of social-ecological systems • McGinnis, MD, and E Ostrom. (2014). Social-ecological system framework: initial changes and continuing challenges.	Memo 1 due
	1/19	Socio-ecological systems 2	• Yandle, T et al. (2016) Philanthropic Support of National Parks • Flynn, CD, and CI Davidson. (2016). Adapting the social-ecological system framework for urban stormwater management OPTIONAL: • Partelow, S. (2018). A review of the social-ecological systems framework: applications, methods, modifications, and challenges	
3	1/24	Ecosystem services 1	• De Groot, RS et al. (2002). A typology for the classification, description and valuation of ecosystem functions, goods and services • Tan, PY et al. (2020). A conceptual framework to untangle the concept of urban ecosystem services OPTIONAL: • Chan, K et al. (2012). Where are Cultural and Social in Ecosystem Services?	

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
	1/26	Ecosystem services 2	• Maynard, S et al. (2010) The Development of an Ecosystem Services Framework for South East Queensland • Arkema, KK et al. (2015). Embedding ecosystem services in coastal planning leads to better outcomes for people and nature OPTIONAL: • Bull, JW et al. (2016) A SWOT analysis of the ecosystem services framework	
4	1/31	Resilience 1	• Folke, C. (2006). Resilience: The emergence of a perspective for social–ecological systems analyses • Cumming, G. S., & Peterson, G. D. (2017). Unifying research on social–ecological resilience and collapse	
	2/2	Resilience 2	• Hayes, S et al. (2019) Leveraging socio-ecological resilience theory to build climate resilience in transport infrastructure • Komugabe-Dixson, AF et al. (2019). Environmental change, urbanisation, and socio-ecological resilience in the Pacific OPTIONAL: • Fisichelli, NA et al. (2016) Is 'Resilience' Maladaptive? Towards an Accurate Lexicon for Climate Change Adaptation	
5	2/7	Political ecology 1	• Escobar, A. (2006) Difference and Conflict in the Struggle Over Natural Resources: A political ecology framework. • Watts, MJ. (2015) Now and then: The origins of political ecology and the rebirth of adaptation as a form of thought	
	2/9	Political ecology 2	• Truelove, Y. (2011). (Re-) Conceptualizing water inequality in Delhi, India through a feminist political ecology framework • Sovacool, BK. (2021). Who are the victims of low-carbon transitions? Towards a political ecology of climate change mitigation OPTIONAL: • Gallardo, GL et al. (2017) We adapt … but is it good or bad? Locating the political ecology and social-ecological systems debate in reindeer herding in the Swedish Sub-Arctic	

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
6	2/14	Environmental justice 1	• Schlosberg, D. (2004) Reconceiving Environmental Justice: Global Movements and Political Theories • Agyeman, J et al. (2016) Trends and directions in environmental justice: from inequity to everyday life, community, and just sustainabilities	Memo 2 due
	2/16	Environmental justice 2	• Konisky, DM et al. (2021) Environmental injustice in Clean Water Act enforcement: racial and income disparities in inspection time • Siders, AR. (2022). The administrator's dilemma: Closing the gap between climate adaptation justice in theory and practice	
7	2/21	Management & transition 1	• Pahl-Wostl, C et al. (2010) Analyzing complex water governance regimes: the Management and Transition Framework • Halbe, J et al. (2013) Towards adaptive and integrated management paradigms to meet the challenges of water governance	
	2/23	Management & transition 2	• Bisaro, A et al. (2010) Multilevel water, biodiversity and climate adaptation governance: evaluating adaptive management in Lesotho • Marker, C et al. (2018) Integrated governance for the food–energy–water nexus – The scope of action for institutional change	Paper abstract due
8	2/28	Leverage points 1	• Meadows, D. (1999). Leverage points: Places to Intervene in a System • Abson, DJ et al. (2017) Leverage points for sustainability transformation	
	3/2	Leverage points 2	• Bryant, J, and G Thomson. (2021) Learning as a key leverage point for sustainability transformations: a case study of a local government in Perth, Western Australia. • Lam, DPM et al. (2021) A leverage points perspective on social networks to understand sustainability transformations: evidence from Southern Transylvania.	

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
9	3/7	Mixing theories 1	Read any two: • Ingalls, ML and RC Stedman. (2016). The power problematic: exploring the uncertain terrains of political ecology and the resilience framework • Knuppe, K. (2016). The governance of ecosystem services in river basins: An approach for structured data representation and analysis • Kull, CA et al. (2015). The political ecology of ecosystem services • Leach, M et al. (2018) Equity and sustainability in the Anthropocene: a social–ecological systems perspective on their intertwined futures	Paper outlines due
	3/9	Review		
10	3/14	Student presentations		Memo 3 due
	3/16	Student presentations & course wrap-up	• Sietz, D et al. (2019). Archetype analysis in sustainability research: methodological portfolio and analytical frontiers • Revisit Schluter, M et al. (2022) Why care about theories?	Participation self-assessment due 5pm
11	3/23	NO CLASS		Final papers due at noon

Course Policies

DROPS must be submitted by 5PM of week 2 using WebReg system.

ADDS must be submitted by 5PM of week 3 using WebReg system.

CHANGE must be submitted by 5PM of week 2 using WebReg system. From week 3 through 6, you must use the Student Access system to submit a request for a grade option change. No exceptions will be considered after week 6.

Students with Disabilities

If you anticipate needing any type of an academic accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please discuss this with me during the first week of class AND please register with the Disability Services Center (http://www.disability.uci.edu/). In order to receive academic accommodation, I will need formal notification from the Disability Services Center during the first two weeks of the quarter of the type of academic accommodations to which your disability entitles you.