



**BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY**  
**Environmental Studies Program**

**ENST 325**  
**Nature, Wealth, and Power**

**Spring 2009**

**Mondays 7:00-9:52 pm**

**W2 Course**

Instructor: Peter R. Wilshusen, Ph.D.  
Office: 112 Coleman  
Phone: 577-1951  
Email: [pwilshus@bucknell.edu](mailto:pwilshus@bucknell.edu)

Office hours: Mondays: 4:30 – 6:00 pm or by  
appointment

“Underdevelopment isn’t a stage of development, but its consequence.”  
—Eduardo Galeano (*Open Veins of Latin America*)

## **Course Description**

When considering the environment in the “developing” or “Third” world, a number of images may come to mind including lush rainforests, high cascading waterfalls, gorillas in the mist, elephants on the savanna, or vibrant coral reefs. Yet behind these idyllic images, we find highly contested terrains that figure centrally as natural resource commodities in global economies. Beyond housing uncharted numbers of plant and animal species, the planet’s tropical band also sustains rapacious interventions by large-scale timber, mining, and oil companies, small-scale game hunters, fishermen, and gold miners, poor colonists seeking land, and state-run firms engaged in “mega-development” projects such as highways and hydroelectric dams. What types of social processes underlie these forces of environmental and social change? How do they impact ecologically

and socially vulnerable regions? How are current processes of globalization and development situated historically?

This course is a seminar in **political ecology**. Political ecology is a sub-field of human geography and cultural anthropology that explores the political, economic, institutional, and historical dimensions of environmental and social change. Most work in this area focuses on the “developing” regions of the world. Readings for the course emphasize the historical ties between colonialism and international development, distribution of resources and wealth within the “modern world system,” the role of multi-lateral development institutions such as the World Bank, linkages between nature conservation and sustainable development, and the vagaries of fair trade markets. Material covered will draw on cases from Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

### Course Objectives

1. Acquire an understanding of a range of political, economic, institutional, and historical processes associated with environmental and social change in developing regions.
2. Develop skills in critical analysis through writing and oral argument.
3. Develop skills in social science research and writing aimed at understanding contemporary environmental and social change.

### Required Texts

1. Robbins, Paul. 2004. *Political Ecology*. Blackwell.
2. Hochschild, Adam. 1999. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. New York: Mariner Books (Houghton Mifflin).
3. Goldman, Michael. 2005. *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization*. Yale University Press.
4. West, Paige. 2006. *Conservation is Our Government Now: The Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea*. Duke University Press.
5. Jaffee, Daniel. 2007. *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival*. University of California Press.

Other readings for this course will be available on Blackboard (BB)

### Course Structure

The class will be run as a seminar. As a result, it is vital that each participant come to class sessions well prepared to discuss the week's readings and apply them to previous discussions and the broader ideas that frame the course. Please plan your time so that you can carefully read and reflect upon the assigned texts. I will discuss strategies for reading, note taking, and summarization of key points during class.

Since this is a W2 course, you will do a significant amount of writing during the semester. The main types of writing assignments will include: (1) six short critiques of the readings, (2) three short analytical essays, and (3) a longer research paper on a topic of your choice.

### Course Requirements and Grading

Assignment	%
Reading Critiques	25%
Essays	20%
Research Paper	30%
Participation/Exercises	25%
Total	100%

1. *Reading Critiques*: In order to fully engage with the readings and contribute to discussions, it is necessary to critically reflect on core themes, individual arguments, and supporting evidence. Six times during the semester you will submit an 800-1,000 word (1.5 - 2 pages) critique corresponding to the reading for a particular week. Take note: these are not simply summaries of or informal reflections about the readings. You should briefly summarize a major theme or themes that you wish to discuss and critically explore them, considering how they reflect the course's broader themes. You will have the opportunity to summarize your critique during class. Overall, I will look for your ability to critically analyze some aspect of the reading, compare and contrast your points with arguments from other readings, and synthesize your observations with wider course themes. I will discuss reading critiques in class but if you have any questions on how to approach these assignments, do not hesitate to ask me. Total: 25% of final grade.
2. *Essays*: During the course of the semester, each student will complete three analytical essays as follows: (a) an *issues essay* that focuses on the region and topic you have selected for your paper, (b) a *synthesis essay* that responds to a question that I will pose focused on the readings, and (c) a *conceptual essay* that examines some area of social theory relevant to your paper topic. I will provide you with more specific guidance for each essay. I will expect well-written and well-argued essays so be sure to consult with me individually with any questions. Total: 20% of final grade.
3. *Research Paper*: This assignment represents the core research and writing requirement for the course. Each student will be asked to choose an issue to research and analyze during the semester. As part of the W2 requirement, students will submit research reports and draft material for review prior to the final due date. It will be very important for you to choose an interesting topic and work on it continually during the semester. You will submit a draft version of the paper and revise it based on my comments as well as peer feedback. Detailed guidelines for the research paper can be found on Blackboard. Total: 30% of final grade.
4. *Participation/Exercises*: Comprised of attendance and engaged participation in all class activities. In class discussions are one key component of participation (see related point under "Notes and Notices" below) however your overall engagement in research, exercises, and other activities is important as well. I record a grade for participation on a weekly basis. It is based on a ten-point scale. At the end of the semester, I will convert your average participation grade to a percentage and multiply it by .1 to derive a weighted score for this component of the course. You will also have the opportunity to evaluate your own participation at the end of the semester. Please see me at any time if you have any questions or concerns about your participation in class or if you would like more information on how I am evaluating this

component of your grade. Exercises for the class will entail leading discussions on the readings and related group work. Total: 25% of final grade.

5. *Third World Film Series:* I strongly encourage you to attend films presented during the Third World Film series. Most if not all of the films scheduled relate directly to the material we will cover in this course and could inform your paper projects. The films will be shown at 4 pm and 7 pm on Thursdays in Coleman 151. I am happy to provide extra credit for any films that you view as long as you submit a short reaction paper.

## Notes and Notices

1. *Blackboard:* I use the web-based software Blackboard to manage my courses. I will use Blackboard to post course documents, Powerpoint presentations, and weblinks. Please consult Blackboard first for these types of materials and see me with any questions if they arise. I will also ask you to submit some of your graded work via Blackboard. You can access Blackboard at [www.bb.bucknell.edu](http://www.bb.bucknell.edu).
2. *Close reading:* The readings are a fundamental part of this course. I expect that you will do a close reading of all of the assigned texts. Some readings are more challenging intellectually than others. I will provide questions to focus and guide each week's reading. Unless otherwise indicated, these questions will be posted on Blackboard. For each chapter or article, I strongly encourage you to highlight, underline, make margin notes, and take detailed notes. At the end of each chapter or article, summarize the main themes, debates, key causal factors, and arguments that emerge. Make note also of any questions, large or small, that you have. In general you have a good grasp on a particular reading if you can offer a brief summary of its main arguments and themes in your own words. To do careful reading each week, you will need to budget your time. Do not hesitate to see me if you have any concerns or questions about doing the reading.
3. *Reading Questions:* The reading questions posted on Blackboard are intended to help you focus on key points and organize your thoughts, particularly as you develop your reading critiques. You do not need to write out answers to the questions unless you want to. Some students have found it useful to do so, especially in preparing reading critiques. You do not need to submit written answers to me. I do expect that you will have an excellent understanding of the readings and that you will be able to talk intelligently about them during class.
4. *Constructive in class discussion:* This class relies heavily on in class discussion. Participating in class discussions is not as easy as showing up and talking about the readings. It requires strong listening, critical thinking, and oral expression skills. Please make an effort to respect other students in the class by listening to what they have to say and building on their observations. It is expected that differences of opinion regarding the content and meaning of the readings and discussion topics will arise but try to express these in a collegial manner. Keep in mind that the overall goal of discussions is to construct a common understanding of the ideas under exploration rather than to win individual debates.

Class discussions can only succeed if all participants actively engage with the material and make thoughtful contributions. I will gauge the quality of your participation based on your ability to make meaningful observations that draw on the readings and reflect wider points from the course. Typically, I will begin discussions of readings by asking students to discuss a point of interest and pose a discussion question. Bring your reading critiques with you to class to support discussions. I reserve the right to call on you during class to encourage you to participate more actively.

5. *Practicing Sustainability:* In addition to learning about sustainability, I strongly encourage you to practice sustainability. There are a number of simple ways that you can reduce your ecological footprint in the context of this class. Examples include printing work on both sides of the page, reusing paper with one

clean side, and carrying a travel mug for drinks. Feel free to share other suggestions with members of the class.

6. *Extra Credit:* I am happy to give you extra credit for attending special lectures, films, and other events on campus that are related to the material we cover. I will announce many of these in class. I encourage you to take advantage of as many campus events as possible. To receive extra credit you will need to hand me a half page summary of what the event entailed and how it contributed to your understanding of course themes.
7. *Academic Responsibility:* I take cases of academic dishonesty and misconduct very seriously. According to Bucknell's official policy, academic irresponsibility includes "cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, misuse of computing facilities, and general misconduct which precludes one's work or that of another from being judged fairly." Typically, one of the most common areas of confusion for students regards plagiarism. Plagiarism is "the act of using another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source" (MLA Handbook, 1988). This includes copying information and text from the Internet and presenting it as your own work.

To consult the University's policy on academic responsibility, try the following web address: <http://www.bucknell.edu/x1324.xml> (if the link has changed, do a search from the Bucknell homepage using the key words "academic responsibility"). Ultimately it is your responsibility to read, understand, and follow Bucknell's Policy on Academic Responsibility. If I find evidence of academic dishonesty or misconduct, the case will be referred to the Board of Review on Academic Responsibility. If you have any doubts or questions on any of these points, be sure to ask.

8. *On late submissions:* In general I do not accept late submissions unless you have a very good reason and consult with me well in advance. You will need to keep up with lecture and reading material in order to complete most of the assignments on time so please plan accordingly. Depending on the circumstances, I will determine whether to grant an extension and/or impose a grade reduction. In the event of a family emergency or serious illness, I will work with you on an individual basis to develop a schedule for completing course work.
9. *Excused absences:* If special extenuating circumstances force you to miss one or more classes, you will need to provide me with a letter from the Dean's office. You will not be penalized for excused absences. It is your responsibility to contact me and/or other members of the class to find out what you missed and catch up as needed. Please note: absences due to sports team travel or other extra-curricular competitions do not count as excused absences but I will allow you to make up any missed assignments.
10. *On seeking help:* Please see me if you are having trouble with the content of the course or the assignments. It is important to me that you do as well as you can in this course. My office hours are listed above. In general, if my office door is open feel free to stop by. If my door is closed or I am working with another person, you can assume that I am not available.

**Course Schedule: Nature, Wealth, and Power**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
<b>Week 1</b>		
Jan. 19 (M)	Course introduction Research Projects  What is Political Ecology?	Robbins, Chs. 1,2, and 4 Reading Questions (BB)
<b>Week 2</b>		
Jan. 26 (M)	Conceptual Frames I  The modern world-system Environmental history  How does political ecology make sense of environmental and social change?	Robbins, Chs. 3 Worster, "Doing Environmental History"; Crosby "Ecological Imperialism" (BB) Reading Questions (BB)  <b>DUE:</b> Reading Critique #1
<b>Week 3</b>		
Feb. 2 (M)	Colonialism I:  (1) The Scramble for Africa (film) (2) Imperial Desires: The Creation of the Congo Free State (reading)	Hochschild, Intro., Prologue, Chs. 1-6 (pp. 1-100) Reading questions (BB)  <b>DUE:</b> Discussion questions (post on BB); Research paper: topics and initial bibliography
<b>Week 4</b>		
Feb. 9 (M)	Colonialism II:  Resource Extraction and Violence in the Congo Free State	Hochschild Chs. 7-11, 19 (pp. 101-184, 292-308) Reading questions (BB)  <b>DUE:</b> Reading Critique #2
<b>Week 5</b>		
Feb. 16 (M)	Conceptual Frames II:  (1) Defining Power: Multiple Perspectives (2) Narrative and Explanation	Robbins, Ch. 6 Wilshusen, "Political Contours of Conservation." (BB) Cronon, "A Place for Stories" (BB) Reading questions (BB)  <b>DUE:</b> Reading Critique #3; Research paper: revised topic
<b>Week 6</b>		
Feb. 23 (M)	Imperial Nature I:  (1) Life and Debt (film) (2) History of the World Bank (book)	Goldman, Chs. 1-2 Reading questions (BB)  <b>DUE:</b> Discussion questions (post on BB); Issues Essay (#1)

<b>Week 7</b>		
Mar. 2 (M)	Imperial Nature II:  Neoliberalizing Nature	Goldman, Chs. 4 & 6 Reading questions (BB)  <b>DUE:</b> Reading Critique #4
<b>Week 8</b>		
Mar. 9 (M)	<b><i>Spring Break (No Classes)</i></b>	
<b>Week 9</b>		
Mar. 16 (M)	Conservation, Control, and Conflict  Research papers: review draft outlines	Robbins, Chs. 8-9 Wilshusen, "Reinventing a Square Wheel" (BB) West, Chs. 1-2  <b>DUE:</b> Discussion questions (post on BB)
Mar. 19 (Th)	<b>DUE:</b> Synthesis essay (#2), no later than 4 pm (submit via BB)	
<b>Week 10</b>		
Mar. 23 (M)	Conservation Meets Development  The Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea	West, Chs. 4-7 Reading questions (BB)  <b>DUE:</b> Reading Critique #5
Advising Week: Mar. 23-27		
<b>Week 11</b>		
Mar. 30 (M)	Conceptual Frames III : Commodity Chains and Social Movements	Lipschutz, "Capitalism, Globalization, and the Environment" (pp.: 87-108; 121-131) Robbins, Ch. 10  <b>DUE:</b> Discussion questions (post on BB) Conceptual essay (#3)
<b>Week 12</b>		
Apr. 6 (M)	Fair Trade I:	Jaffee, Intro., Chs. 1, 2 & 5 (skim Ch. 3 for context) Reading questions (BB)  <b>DUE:</b> Discussion questions (post on BB)
<b>Week 13</b>		
Apr. 13 (M)	Fair Trade II:	Jaffee, Chs. 7-9 & Conclusion Reading questions (BB)  <b>DUE:</b> Reading Critique #6

Apr. 16 (Th)	<b>DUE:</b> Draft of research paper, no later than 4 pm (submit via BB)	
<b>Week 14</b>		
Apr. 20 (M)	Research Papers: Peer review workshop	Bring draft of research paper to discuss during class.
<b>Week 15</b>		
Apr. 27 (M)	Research papers: Peer review workshop Wrap up/Class evaluations.	Bring draft of research paper and any revisions to discuss during class.
<b>Final Paper</b>		
May 4 (M)	<b>DUE:</b> Final version of research paper, no later than 4 pm. (Submit via BB)	

**Readings on Blackboard (BB)**

Cronon, W. 1992. "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative." *Journal of American History* 78:4: 1347-1376.

Crosby, A. 1988. "Ecological Imperialism: The Overseas Migration of Western Europeans as a Biological Phenomenon." Pp. 103-117 in Worster, ed. *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives in Modern Environmental History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lipschutz, R., ed. 2004. "Capitalism, Globalization, and the Environment." Pp. 87-131 in *Global Environmental Politics: Power, Perspectives, and Practice*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Wilshusen, P. 2003. "The Political Contours of Conservation: A Conceptual View of Power in Practice." In Brechin et al., eds. *Contested Nature: Toward International Biodiversity with Social Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Wilshusen, P., S. Brechin, C. Fortwangler, and P. West. 2002. "Reinventing a Square Wheel: Critique of a Resurgent 'Protectionist Paradigm' in International Biodiversity Conservation." *Society and Natural Resources* 15: 17-40.

Worster, Donald, ed.. 1993. "History as Natural History." Pp. 30-44 in *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.