



S F S THE SCHOOL
FOR FIELD STUDIES

Political Ecology of Peru

SFS 3840

Syllabus
4 credits

The School for Field Studies (SFS)
Center for Amazon Studies (CAS)
Tarapoto, Peru

This syllabus may develop or change over time based on local conditions, learning opportunities, and faculty expertise. Course content may vary from semester to semester.

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COURSE CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Please note that this is a copy of a recent syllabus. A final syllabus will be provided to students on the first day of academic programming.

SFS programs are different from other travel or study abroad programs. Each iteration of a program is unique and often cannot be implemented exactly as planned for a variety of reasons. There are factors which, although monitored closely, are beyond our control. For example:

- Changes in access to or expiration or change in terms of permits to the highly regulated and sensitive environments in which we work;
- Changes in social/political conditions or tenuous weather situations/natural disasters may require changes to sites or plans, often with little notice;
- Some aspects of programs depend on the current faculty team as well as the goodwill and generosity of individuals, communities, and institutions which lend support.

Please be advised that these or other variables may require changes before or during the program. Part of the SFS experience is adapting to changing conditions and overcoming the obstacles that they may present. In other words, this is a field program, and the field can change.

Course Overview



The course in political ecology (PE) will revise concepts and research approaches, allowing students to explain and understand environmental problems within a historical, sociocultural, and political context. Political ecology is not a discipline per se but an interdisciplinary field that enhances our understanding of complex environmental situations. PE in recent years has become a relevant strategy to include politics in an apolitical context. Consequently, social and natural environment/conservation issues are brought together in a political context. Moreover, it is a field of critical research.

PE research broadens the perspective of an environmental crisis/situation or conservation related initiatives and narratives. This course will revisit concepts and debates about Amazon conservation and power inequality, environmental justice, knowledge valorization and conservation narratives.

Additionally, this course will provide an overview of the most common methods in anthropology used by political ecologists. **The course** will complement its content and learning objectives from other courses dictated during the semester, such as Tropical Ecology, Conservation Science, and Culture and Language.

The overarching question we address in the Political Ecology curriculum is:

How do historical and contemporary conservation paradigms, politics and power dynamics influence the effectiveness and equity outcomes of conservation in the Peruvian Amazon?

To address this broad question, we will examine three specific components:

1. Introduction to Political Ecology

This section includes an interactive historical review of Political Ecology as an interdisciplinary field while learning about the Peruvian amazon's political and ecological history. We will review concepts such as political and apolitical ecology and briefly examine Marxism and elements of post-structuralism. We will review main topics and terms associated with political ecology (such as the "tragedy" of the commons and common property). Last, we will practice with common PE participatory data collection methods.

In class case studies and field visits aim to enhance understanding of the dynamic and changing landscape of Political Ecology in general and specifically in the Peruvian Amazon.

2. The development and contested nature of conservation narratives

Historically, conservation efforts by governments and (I)NGOS (in the Amazon and elsewhere) were dominated by protectionist paradigms. This approach has gradually shifted towards more inclusive, community-based conservation models that strive to balance ecological sustainability with social justice and local empowerment. However, at the same time global and private interests in the Amazon (often framed as 'the lungs of the world') and neoliberal climate and conservation solutions (such as the carbon sequestration market) have mixed conservation and justice outcomes at local level.

In this section we will review different conservation paradigms, discourses and narratives that have emerged and transformed over time and across various levels of governance (from local to international scales). We will examine who's knowledge is valued and how knowledge and power are constructed to understand how environmental issues are framed.

3. Contemporary political ecology issues

This section focuses on the intricate intersections of environmental and climate justice, indigenous rights, ecofeminism, and socio-ecological conflicts in the Amazon. Students will explore the concepts of intersectionality and environmental- and climate justice, to understand how marginalized communities, particularly indigenous peoples and women, bear the brunt of environmental degradation and climate change. Through the lens of indigenous rights and ecofeminism, students will examine the struggles and successes of Amazonian indigenous communities, and especially indigenous women, in protecting their lands and livelihoods against deforestation, resource extraction, and external encroachments. We will briefly look at the global (indigenous) movements advocating for equitable climate solutions.

Additionally, throughout the course and especially in field trip assignment. We will explore and practice with political ecology methodologies and tools.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion, the students will be able to:

1. Apply political ecology's concepts and research approaches
2. Explain and understand conservation processes and outcomes as a product of historical, environmental, social, and cultural power dynamics at multiple scales (from local to global)
3. Understand how environmental and climate justice relate to Indigenous rights, and ecofeminism in the Amazon
4. Write, speak and communicate to different audiences clearly and confidently about the politics of conservation

Assessment

Assessment Item	Value (%)
Participation and ethics	10
Argumentative Paper	20
Student Presentation	15
Field Exercises (FEX)	30
Final Exam	25
TOTAL	100

Participation and ethics (10%)

This item is essential, as this is a particular program with great emphasis on in-person involvement. Missing one class will significantly impact your grade. Furthermore, your participation is expected to be attentive and engaged, showing initiative, and bringing the necessary tools to the field exercises and class activities. It is expected of students to pay attention to their peers, guest lecturers, and instructors. It is expected students to be proactive during class, especially since during classes we will have working groups assigned with short exercises to strength critical thinking, and debate. Class participation and ethics can be a fuzzy item to assess; you can review the assessment rubric at the end of this syllabus.

Argumentative Paper (20%)

The Argumentative Paper (AP) consists of a short critical essay on a specific news item, from a PE perspective. The news items will be assigned to each student in week 4 of the course. The AP must have between 4 and 6 paragraphs of 9-10 lines each. The introduction presents the main argument(s) that will be developed and includes a brief outline of the AP. The essay's body is the most elaborated section, and it expands each argument, may contain detailed background information, and draws upon PE approaches. Each paragraph must focus on one central idea, including supporting evidence of the argument or critique, explanation, and statements linked to the issue. The last paragraph, the conclusion, will summarize the main ideas and identify potential new views or arguments to develop.

The AP must display robust critical thinking skills and use political ecology approaches to ground its arguments. Technical specifications: up to three pages, line spacing of 1.5, font: Arial or Times New Roman. The students will have one month to write this AP (excluding Iquitos field visit week). Please use APA style, and there is no minimum of references. Students will receive an assignment sheet and can review the assessment rubric at the end of this syllabus.

Student Presentation (15%)

The student will present the AP they worked to present in class. You will have 15 minutes. You can review the assessment rubric at the end of this syllabus.

Field Exercises (30%)

During the course there will be two FEXs, which will consist of participatory data collection and interpretation. The objective will be for the students to become familiar with ethnographic and

anthropological research methods: design, collection, and analysis. We will use different Participatory Rural appraisal (PRA) tools to investigate socio-environmental problems and conservation initiatives.

- **FEX 1 (15%)**
 - o Subject: The socio-environmental historical memory of the Santa Elena Community
 - o Methods: Storytelling: Timeline & Participant observation.
- **FEX 2 (15%)**
 - o Subject: Mapping power and power relations
 - o Methods: Mapping power relations between stakeholders of Parque de la Papa - Cusco

Additional detail on the grading structure will be provided on each FEX handout prior to the activity.

Final Exam (25%)

A written exam will be given based on material covered in lectures, readings, and field experiences. The exam will be open-note and a combination of short essay and essay questions. Grade corrections in any of the above items should be requested in writing within 24 hours after assignments are returned. No corrections will be considered afterward.

Grade corrections in any of the above items should be requested in writing at least 24 hours after assignments are returned. No corrections will be considered afterwards.

Grading Scheme

A	95.00 - 100.00%	B+	86.00 - 89.99%	C+	76.00 - 79.99%	D	60.00 - 69.99%
A-	90.00 - 94.99%	B	83.00 - 85.99%	C	73.00 - 75.99%	F	0.00 - 59.99%
		B-	80.00 - 82.99%	C-	70.00 - 72.99%		

General Reminders

Honor Code/Plagiarism – SFS places high expectations on their students and we hold students accountable for their behaviors. SFS students are held to the honor code below. SFS has a zero-tolerance policy towards student cheating, plagiarism, data falsification, and any other form of dishonest academic and/or research practice or behavior. Using the ideas or material of others without giving due credit is cheating and will not be tolerated. Any SFS student found to have engaged in or facilitated academic and/or research dishonesty will receive no credit (0%) for that activity.

“SFS does not tolerate cheating or plagiarism in any form. While participating in an SFS program, students are expected to refrain from cheating, plagiarism and any other behavior which would result in a student receiving credit for work which they did not accomplish on their own. Students are expected to report any instance of cheating or plagiarism by others.”

Deadlines – Deadlines for written and oral assignments are instated to promote equity among students and to allow faculty ample time to review and return assignments before others are due. As such,

deadlines are firm; extensions will only be considered under extreme circumstances. Late assignments will incur a penalty of 10% of your grade for each day you are late. After two days past the deadline, assignments will no longer be accepted. Assignments will be handed back to students after a one-week grading period. Grade corrections for any assessment item should be requested in writing at least 24 hours after assignments are returned. No corrections will be considered afterwards.

Content Statement – Every student comes to SFS with unique life experiences, which contribute to the way various information is processed. Some of the content in this course may be intellectually or emotionally challenging but has been intentionally selected to achieve certain learning goals and/or showcase the complexity of many modern issues. If you anticipate a challenge engaging with a certain topic or find that you are struggling with certain discussions, we encourage you to talk about it with faculty, friends, family, the HWM, or access available mental health resources.

Participation – Since we offer a program that is likely more intensive than you might be used to at your home institution, missing even one lecture can have a proportionally greater effect on your final grade simply because there is little room to make up for lost time. Participation in all components of the course is mandatory, it is important that you are prompt for all activities, bring the necessary equipment for field exercises and class activities, and simply get involved.

Course Content

Type: D: Discussion, **FL:** Field Lecture, **GL:** Guest Lecture, **L:** Lecture, **O:** Orientation, **WS:** Workshop, **FEX:** Field Experience

**Be aware that this course is reading intensive.
All readings are required, unless mentioned otherwise.**

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)	Readings
PE01	Course Orientation During this session we will unpack the content of the course. We will review and discuss class dynamics, expectations, assignments, opportunities, and challenges.	O	1.0	
PE02	Introduction to Political Ecology (1/5) Start of the course quiz (non-graded) Why is ecology political? What is Political Ecology? What is apolitical ecology? Prepare for field visit Chiriyacu and Lamas (Waman Wasi)	L; O	2.0	Robbins, P. (2012). Chapter 1 Bowman, K. W., Dale, S. A., Dhanani, S., Nehru, J., & Rabishaw, B. T. (2021)
PE03	Field visit Chiriyacu: community conservation initiative Waman Wasi (Lamas): Reevaluation of Indigenous Culture as a means for conservation, intercultural dialogue	FL	2.0	Laird, S.E. (1991).

PE04	Introduction to Political Ecology (2/5) Timeline of political ecology Marxism /poststructuralism Amazon: pristine wilderness or managed landscape?	L; D	2.0	Optional: Roberts, J. (2020) 2023. "Political ecology". Watch documentary: unnatural histories: Amazon, BBC, 2021
PE05	Introduction to Political Ecology (3/5) Roleplay: The Prisoners Dilemma The Tragedy of the Commons - Myth of the Tragedy of the Commons Explication about Argumentative Paper	L; D	3.0	Ostrom E. (2008) Hardin, G. (1968)
PE06	Introduction to Political Ecology (4/5) Ecotourism for conservation and revaluation of indigenous cultures? Political ecology research tools Why and how of different PRA tools, practice for FEX 1: Timeline of the Santa Elena conservation initiative.	WS; O	3.0	Sontakki, B., Venkatesan, P., & Rao, V. K. J. (2019). <i>Page 1 to 4</i> Jamal, T., & Stronza, A. (2008)
PE07	Field visit Bosque de las Nuwas Santa Elena Ecofeminism and indigenous women Timeline of Santa Elena conservation area (FEX 1)	FEX; FL	2	Web post IFAD: Saving the Amazon: The story of the indigenous women fighting climate change (IDAF 2022) Perrini (2023)
PE08	Debrief field visit and discuss FEX1 Introduction to Political Ecology (5/5) Practice other PRA tools	L; D; WS	3.0	
PE09	The development and contested nature of conservation narratives (1/6) Documentary: Unnatural Histories Different narratives about the Amazon over time. Narrative analysis	L; D	3.0	Zinngrebe, Y. M. (2016) Evans, K., Murphy, L., & de Jong, W. (2014)
PE10	The development and contested nature of conservation narratives (2/6) Cordillera Escalera: the creation of a regional conservation area and conflicts over indigenous territories.	FL	2.0	Valderrama Zevallos (2023)

PE11	<p>The development and contested nature of conservation narratives (3/6) Exclusion of Indigenous communities in the establishment of protected area ACR Cordillera La Escalera.</p> <p>Preparation for Iquitos Field Trip</p>	GL; O	3.0	Bontempi, A., Venturi, P., Del Bene, D., Scheidel, A., Zaldo-Aubanell, Q., & Zaragoza, R. M. (2023)
PE12	<p>The development and contested nature of conservation narratives (4/6) Conservation and the “Green Economy” Climate change mitigation/REDD+ (Field lectures on the Yarapa River by Richard Bodmer) Rubber boom in the Peruvian Amazon CREA: ex-situ conservation and political obstacles</p>	FL	6.0	Gonzalez, A. (2021)
PE13	<p>The development and contested nature of conservation narratives (5/6) The importance of power relations, how to analyze power relations Participation ladder</p>	L; WS	2.0	Heikkinen (2021) Gustafsson, M. T., & Schilling-Vacaflor, A. (2022).
PE14	<p>The development and contested nature of conservation narratives (5/6) Global and local conservation narratives in the Amazone – guest lecture by Wil de Jong</p>	GL, D	2.0	Evans, K., Murphy, L., & de Jong, W. (2014).
PE15	<p>Presentation of Argumentative Papers</p> <p>Preparation Field Visit Cusco FEX2: Mapping of power relations between stakeholders of Parque de la Papa - Cusco</p>	WS, O	3.0	
PE16	<p>Contemporary PE Issues (1/6) In-situ and ex-situ conservation of native potatoes: conservation and indigenous cosmovision. Who’s knowledge counts? FEX2: power relations</p>	FL	3.0	Graddy (2013)
PE17	<p>Contemporary PE Issues (2/6) Payment for water related ecosystem services: Piuray lake. Justice or injustice?</p>	FEX2	2.0	Dextre, R. M., et al. (2022). Estrada Zúñiga, Antezaa, Bueno de Mezquita Béjar (2015)

PE18	Contemporary PE Issues (3/6) History of socio-ecological conflicts in the Peruvian Amazon. Documentary: "When to worlds collide" Debate using PE Narrative Analysis	L; D	2.0	
PE19	Contemporary PE Issues (4/6) Dimensions of environmental justice Ecofeminism, environmental racism, Intersectionality	L, D	3.0	Svarstad, H., & Benjaminsen, T. A. (2020)
PE20	Contemporary PE Issues (5/6) Carbon credits: Climate justice or Greenwashing? Using a PE and EJ perspective Field visit to Cordillera Azul	FL	2.0	
PE21	Contemporary PE Issues (6/6) Guest lecture: Indigenous rights and environmental justice Course Wrap-up Quiz - post evaluation (non-graded)	L, D	3.0	Ravikumar, A., Uriarte, E. C., Lizano, D., Farré, A. M. L., & Montero, M. (2023).
PE22	Course review	L	2.0	
		Total	52	
		UMN Instructional Hours*	62.4	

*[UMN defines](#) an instructional hour as a 50-minute block. SFS syllabi are written in full 60-minute hours for programming purposes. Therefore 50 full hours = 60 UMN instructional hours (for four credit courses) and 25 full hours = 30 UMN instructional hours (for two credit courses).

Reading List

Readings in **Bold** are required

1. Bontempi, A., Venturi, P., Del Bene, D., Scheidel, A., Zaldo-Aubanell, Q., & Zaragoza, R. M. (2023). Conflict and conservation: On the role of protected areas for environmental justice. *Global Environmental Change*, 82, 102740.
2. Bowman, K. W., Dale, S. A., Dhanani, S., Nehru, J., & Rabishaw, B. T. (2021). Environmental degradation of indigenous protected areas of the Amazon as a slow onset event. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 50, 260-271.
3. Dextre, R. M., Eschenhagen, M. L., Hernández, M. C., Rangelcroft, S., Clason, C., Couldrick, L., & Morera, S. (2022). Payment for ecosystem services in Peru: Assessing the socio-ecological dimension of water services in the upper Santa River basin. *Ecosystem Services*, 56, 101454.
4. Estrada Zúñiga, A., Antezana Julián, W., & Sallo, C. (2016). Justicia O Injusticia: El Agua de Piuray. Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos Bartolomé de Las Casas, Comité de Gestión de la Microcuenca Piuray Ccorimarca, and Universidad Nacional de San Antonio Abad del Cusco, Cusco, Peru.

5. Gonzalez, A. (2021). Voiceless development, toxic injustice, criminal resistance: A study of Peruvian natural resource extraction through the political ecology of voice. *Environment and Development: Challenges, Policies and Practices*, 305-335. (Chapter 11)
6. Graddy, T. G. (2013). Regarding biocultural heritage: In situ political ecology of agricultural biodiversity in the Peruvian Andes. *Agriculture and human values*, 30(4), 587-604.
7. Gustafsson, M. T., & Schilling-Vacaflor, A. (2022). Indigenous Peoples and multiscalar environmental governance: The opening and closure of participatory spaces. *Global Environmental Politics*, 22(2), 70-94.
8. Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons: the population problem has no technical solution; it requires a fundamental extension in morality. *science*, 162(3859), 1243-1248.
9. Heikkinen, A.M. (2021). Climate change, power, and vulnerabilities in the Peruvian Highlands. *Reg Environ Change* 21, 82.
10. Jamal, T., & Stronza, A. (2008). Dwelling'with ecotourism in the Peruvian Amazon: Cultural relationships in local—global spaces. *Tourist Studies*, 8(3), 313-335.
11. Laird, S.E. (1991). *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*, Chapter 9: Forest, Culture and Conservation. United Nations Environment Programme
12. Ostrom, E. (2008). Tragedy of the commons. *The new palgrave dictionary of economics*, 2, 1-4.
13. Perini (2023), L. Indigenous Women Activists in Latin America Against Colonialism, Capitalism and Patriarchy: Voices for a 'New World'. *Rivista di Studi Politici* 19 (3), 1/2023, 87-110
14. Ravikumar, A., Uriarte, E. C., Lizano, D., Farré, A. M. L., & Montero, M. (2023). How payments for ecosystem services can undermine Indigenous institutions: The case of Peru's Ampiyacu-Apayacu watershed. *Ecological Economics*, 205, 107723.
15. Robbins, P. (2012). *Political Ecology: a critical introduction* (Second, Issue December). Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
16. Roberts, Jason. (2020) 2023. "Political ecology". In *The Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, edited by Felix Stein. Facsimile of the first edition in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*.
17. Sontakki, B., Venkatesan, P., & Rao, V. K. J. (2019). *Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Tools & Techniques. A Training Manual for the IFS probationers published by ICAR and ICAR-NAARM, Hyderabad.*
18. Stronza, A. L., Hunt, C. A., & Fitzgerald, L. A. (2019). Ecotourism for Conservation? *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 44, 229–253.
19. Svarstad, H., & Benjaminsen, T. A. (2020). Reading radical environmental justice through a political ecology lens. *Geoforum*, 108, 1-11.
20. Valderrama Zevallos M. (2023). Conservation Without Indigenous Peoples. The case of Kichwa territories in Cordillera Escalera and Cordillera Azul in San Martin, Peru.
21. Zinngrebe, Y. M. (2016) Conservation narratives in Peru: envisioning biodiversity in sustainable development. *Ecology and Society* 21 (2):35.

Assessment Rubrics

Participation and ethics (10%)

	Criteria	Exceeding expectations (25-20)	Adequate (19-15)	Needs work (14-0)
1	Frequency of participation	Students initiate contributions at least once each class and show commitment and initiative in working groups.	Students initiate contribution in at least half of the classes and contribute occasionally to the working groups.	Students do not initiate contributions, and instructor input is always required, and shows little commitment and does not contribute to the working groups.
2	Quality of comments	Comments are always insightful and constructive, use appropriate terminology, and contribute to the collective critical analysis of the class.	Comments are sometimes constructive, occasional signs of insight. Grasp appropriate terminology.	Comments are not informative. Lack of appropriate use of terminology. Strongly rely on personal opinions and personal inputs.
3	Listening skills	Student listens attentively and respectfully to their peers, instructor, and guest lecturer; and contributes to the debates based on their understanding of the debate or discussion.	Student is mostly attentive when their peers, instructor, and guest lecturer are present. They occasionally need encouragement or reminders from the instructor to focus on the topic.	Student is often non-attentive and needs constant reminders to focus on the class topic. Occasionally disrupt comments while others speak. Diverts from discussion or debate without clear intent to go back to the main topic.
4	Preparedness	The student reads the assigned readings and understands the concepts and main ideas. Students elaborate on their own opinion and share in class their interpretation.	Students read the assigned readings most of the time; their understanding of them is basic and they share their opinions.	Students often arrive at class without reading, and their opinions and suggestions do not follow the class dynamic.

Argumentative Paper (20%)

	Criteria	Exceeding expectations (50-45)	Adequate (44-35)	Needs work (34-0)
1	Coherent thesis idea and organization	Essay is engaging and shows a sound development of a thesis as appropriate to assignment purposes. The essay displays clear organization with appropriate and logical transitions. The introduction, body, and conclusion are clearly defined and coherent.	The essay is competent and well-developed, thesis represents a basic understanding of the assigned topic. The essay shows good organizations but lack of proper transitions. Introduction, body and conclusion are repetitive and do not support the main idea.	The essay shows mostly intelligible ideas; thesis is weak and unclear, too broad and only indirectly supported. Essays is poorly organized, and unclear. Introduction, body and conclusion are vague and repetitive.
2	Quality of arguments: supporting evidence	Essay displays evidence supporting concepts and ideas, includes citations. The AP shows critical thinking arguments about the assigned paper, displaying factual observations.	The essay displays some evidence supporting concepts and ideas, with citations but some of them are not correct. The AP shows some arguments using critical thinking with objective observations.	Essay lacks supportive evidence; the ideas and concepts are unclear; citations are incorrect. The AP lacks critical thinking analysis, arguments are not objective and excessively quote the assigned paper rather than analyze it.

Student Presentation (15%)

	Criteria	Exceeding expectations (25-20)	Adequate (19-15)	Needs work (14-0)
1	Preparation	Students present an abundance of material related to the AP. The presentation is clear and provides evidence to support the arguments.	There is enough information presented, it lacks balance and little consistency.	Unclear information does not support APs arguments.
2	Organization	Information is presented in a logical and interesting sequence which the audience can follow.	Information is presented in a logical sequence and easy to follow.	It is difficult to follow the sequence; transitions are not clear.
3	Visuals	Excellent and creative visual aids support and enhance the understanding of the AP.	Visual aids are appropriate and help the presenter.	Little or no visual aids, excess of text.
4	Technical	The presentation has no errors (grammatical or misspellings). The presentation is done within the time assigned.	The presentation has no more than two errors. The presentation has a few minutes (+/-) off from the assigned time.	The presentation has many errors. The presentation has more than five minutes (+/-) off from the assigned time.