



Political Ecology and Environmental Justice

Dr Will Lock

Department of International Development

30-Credit, Year 3 Module

Spring Term 2025

US

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

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GLOBAL STUDIES

Module Overview

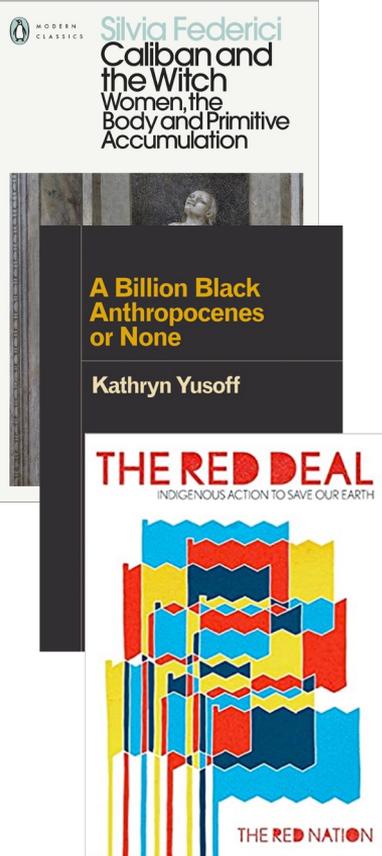
Should we all be **vegan**? What is **extractivism**? What are the environmental consequences of **electric cars**? How does **carbon offsetting** work? How are indigenous groups mobilising against **environmental violence**? In this module, we engage with these and other environmental justice concerns through the lens of **political ecology**.

Political ecology is a **multidisciplinary** field of study that analyses the relationships between **Nature and Society** and the connections between **environmental change** and **social (in)justice**.



Module Overview

In the first section of this module, we will explore the origins of political ecology in currents of **human geography, anthropology** and **ecosocialism** and examine the critical role of **feminist** and **decolonial** political ecologists. We will explore the relationship between political ecology and other disciplines such as science and technology studies and how demands for environmental justice are converted into policies (such as the **Green New Deal**). The second section will provide you with the **methodological and practical training** required for your assignments and the third section will consist of a series of case studies – on **extractivism, diets and agriculture, resistance** and **toxicity** – drawing on current issues of political ecological concern and featuring guest lectures from political ecologists at Sussex.



Teaching Format and Assessment

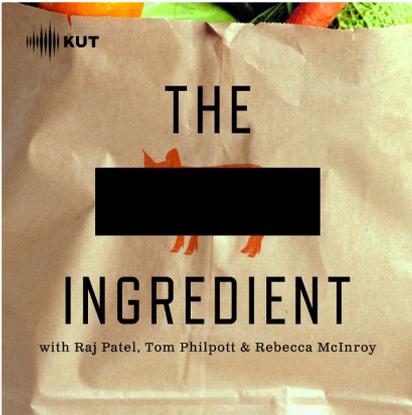
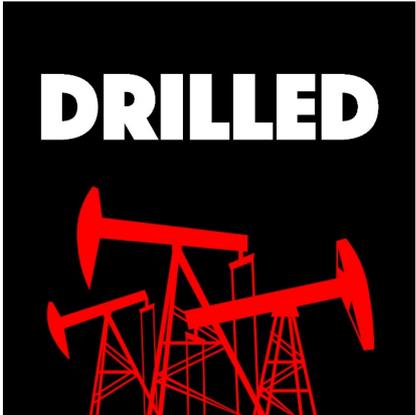
This is an interactive module, with a 3-hour seminar each week and your assessments will encourage you to approach political ecology as a **public-facing discipline** that engages with social movements.

In Week 9 you will submit a **short group-produced podcast** and **associated personal reflection** highlighting an environmental justice concern, drawing on your emerging understanding of political ecology analysis. These could be global or local in scope (for example, fracking, air pollution, carbon offsetting or pipeline developments on indigenous territories).

The final assessment will be a **long-form blog submission** (3,000 words) designed to enhance public understanding of a contemporary environmental justice concern.



Podcasts and Public Communication





Module Convenor

My research focuses on the emerging world of **'Green Capitalism'** and the role of **carbon markets, for-profit conservation** and **nature-based solutions** in delivering **'Net Zero'** carbon promises.

I conducted fieldwork in a conservation and reforestation project in the Peruvian Amazon, working with cocoa farmers implementing **agroforestry models** and producing **FairTrade and organic** certified beans for largely European chocolate consumers.

I am interested in both the emergence of **reforestation as a climate solution** and the link between sustainable supply chains and conservation/deforestation at **forest frontiers**, as well as possible avenues for reframing **ecosystem restoration**, beyond carbon plantations and commodity crops (such as rewilding).

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