

Producing commodities from nature: challenges and opportunities

1. IDENTIFICATION

PROFESSOR	: Beatriz Bustos G, associate professor, Department of Geography bibustos@uchilefau.cl
SCHEDULE	: Wednesday 3:00-6:15 pm
OFFICE HOURS	: by appointment
LEVEL	: IV-VI semester

2. OVERVIEW

Chile is a producer of multiple commodities: copper, wine, fruits, wood, salmon, stand out as the main activities of a country that has seen its deep geography and radically transformed by the production of natural resources for global markets. However, the wealth generated by these economic activities is not always reflected in the territories where they are located, and conflicts and demands arise for better access and distribution of the wealth associated with these resources. To understand how a country can generate wealth from its nature and the conflicts associated with it, this course proposes to examine the geography of commodities, that is, to understand the process by which an element of nature passes to integrate the circuits of production and capitalist accumulation. It will do so, from the theoretical perspective of political ecology.

Political ecology emerges as a sub-discipline within human geography in the mid-70s in a context of global economic crisis and the emergence of the international environmental movement, seeking to propose different answers to questions about environmental degradation and society. Thus, it assumes the perspective of political economy and an ethnographic methodology, emphasizing the production processes of nature, circulation through circuits of capitalist accumulation and distribution of benefits in society. In this context, the way in which nature inserts itself into the circuits of capitalist production becoming commodities - and the environmental and social consequences that derive from it - is a fundamental issue for political ecology and of great relevance for Chile today.

The course offers a review of the origins and concepts of political ecology and then focus on the specific analysis of various commodities: oil, bananas, chocolate, salmon, sugar cane, forests, water and wine, in order to reflect on geography economic and social that has occurred, in order to understand the social and environmental conflicts associated with said geography.

The course is structured as a reading and discussion seminar, where students will be responsible for leading weekly discussions of the assigned reading. It is an INTENSIVE course in reading and participation, so attendance is a fundamental component of the evaluation. The teacher will prepare introductions to the weekly themes and will support reflection in class.

3. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

At the end of this course, students should:

- Know the principles and concepts of political ecology as a subdiscipline of geography.
- Understand the dynamics of the political economy of commodities

4. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To be able to apply for analytical purposes the argumentative concepts and proposals of political ecology to the analysis of the geography of commodities
- To be able to prepare essays and book reviews using language and high-level disciplinary formats.

5. CONTENTS

DATE	S	Tema	Lecturas
13-Mar	1	Introduction – READING WORKSHOP	How to read an academic article
20-Mar	2	Origins and debates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Robbins, Paul. 2012. Political ecology: a critical introduction. Ch. 1 (9-24) recomendado Ch. 3 (49-81)• Zimmerer, Karl S. and Thomas J. Bassett 2003. Political Ecology: An Integrative Approach to Geography and Environment-Development Studies. Ch. 1. (1-29)
27-Mar	3	Key Concepts and its critics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blaikie, Piers and Harold Brookfield 1987. Land Degradation and Society. (27 p).• Robbins, Paul, 2012. Ch. 8 (157-176)• Vayda, A.P. y Walters, B.B. 1999. Against political ecology. Human Ecology 21(1):167-179.• Nygren, A. y Rikoon, S. 2008. Political ecology revisited: integration of politics and ecology does matters. Society and natural resources 21(9):767-782.
3-Apr	4	The production of nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cronon, William 1996. Introduction: in search of nature. In Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature William Cronon, ed. (New York: Norton) pp. 23-56• Braun, Bruce 2007. Nature. In a companion for Environmental Geography. Ch. 2 (19-36)• Smith, Neil, 1984. The production of nature. Ch 2
10-Apr	5	Nature as a commodity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prudham, S. (2009) Commodification, ch. 9 in a companion to Environmental geography (123-142)• Castree, N (2003) Commodifying what nature? Progress in human geography 27:3 (273-297)
17-Apr	6	Copper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finn. J. (1998) Tracing the veins. Cap 1 (1-29) 2 (29-72)
24-Apr	7	Banana	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grossman, L. (1998) The Political ecology of Bananas. Intro (1-33) 2 (60-86)
1-May	8	HOLIDAY – NO CLASSES	

DATE	S	Tema	Lecturas
8-May	9	FALL SEMESTER BREAK	
15-May	10	Oil	Bridge, G. (2011) Cap. 1 y 2.
22-May	11	Grapes	Tinsman, H (2014). Buying into the regime. Cap 1 (25-63) y 2 (64-102)
29-May	12	Rubber	Tully, 2011. The devil's milk. Intro, part 1 (26-62)
5-Jun	13	Sugar	Mintz, S. 1986. ch. 1- elegir 2 o 3 y 4 (1-151)
12-Jun	14	Salmon	Lien, M. 2015. Becoming Salmon. Intro, ch 5
19-Jun	15	Company Towns	• Green, 2010. The company Town. Intro, ch. 3, ch.7
26-Jun	16	Forest	Prudham, S. 2005. Ch 1. (1-25) ch. 3 (57-85)
3-Jul	17	Wine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veseth, M. (2011). Wine wars. Cap 1 y 2(3-27) • Overton y Murray (2012). Class in a glass. • Overton y Murray (2011) Playing scales.
10-Jul	18	Summary	

6. CLASS ETIQUETTE

The course is presented as a space for collective critical reflection, so participation in class is a requirement. The teacher is responsible for promoting an environment of reflection and debate of ideas that is positive, motivating and intellectually challenging. The students are responsible for arriving prepared to class with the readings of each week carried out. Failure to comply with this condition is cause for failure of the course.

Respect for class space is manifested in the following attitudes:

1. Arrive at the time.
2. Attend classes. The minimum attendance to pass this course is 80%. Unless medical justification.
3. Arrive prepared to discuss the themes of the week.
4. Deliver work on time. DELAYED jobs are NOT ACCEPTED.

The teacher will submit comments of the works with a note within a maximum of 2 weeks from the date of delivery.

Plagiarism or copying of ideas and works written by others without due citation, is NOT ACCEPTED. It will be cause for failure of the course.

7. EVALUATION

Book review (40%)

At the end of the semester students must submit one (1) review of one of the book read in class, which must be read in its entirety. The idea is for the student to "dialogue" with the proposed arguments, refute, corroborate or question them, using references to other authors or arguments that he/she has known in class or for other readings, for which, the work must of necessity use minimum bibliography beyond the book in question. More detailed instructions will be given at the beginning of the course. The review could

be an essay or a poster, or any artistic expression that complies with engaging the arguments of the book reviewed.

Critical response (30%, 15% each)

The best way to process ideas about texts is to turn them into written reflection, that is why, and as a way to motivate the dialogue in class, there is a MANDATORY WEEKLY DELIVERY of critical responses.

Critical responses are ESSAYS OR DRAWINGS where students reflect on the main arguments of the text read. These weekly reflections, are NOT SUMMARIES, but a dialogue with the author and therefore they explain the position of the reader (student) with respect to what has been read, in a disciplinary sense. Students can choose to skip submitting a reflection three weeks. The delivery of 10 weekly reflections will be rewarded with a point to the grade obtained by the students in the critical response evaluated.

Of the critical responses that all students will deliver each week, only two (2) will be evaluated. These should be 1500 words, and include appropriate references. Students can choose according to their times and preferences the week they will deliver the essay to be evaluated, but the first one should be submitted before week 8 and the second before week 12.

The essays must be delivered at BEGINNING of class. Late responses will not be accepted.

Participation in class (30%)

Students will be evaluated for their contribution to the discussion, participation in debates, contributions to reflection, attendance and good behavior in the course space.

7. REFERENCES

The teacher will make available to the students digital versions (PDF) of the chapters to be read at the beginning of the semester.

Blaikie P, Brookfield H, 1987 Land Degradation and Society (Methuen, London)

Braun, B. 2007. Nature. In Castree, Noel, et al., eds. A companion to environmental geography. John Wiley & Sons, 2007.

Bridge G, Billon P L, 2013 Oil. (Polity Press, Cambridge, UK)

Castree N, 2003, "Commodifying what nature?" Progress in Human Geography 27 273-297

Cronon W, 1996, "Introduction: in search of nature", in Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature Ed W Cronon (Norton, New York) pp 23-56

Finn, Janet L. 1998. Tracing the veins: Of copper, culture, and community from Butte to Chuquicamata. Univ of California Press.

Green, H. 2010. The company Town. The industrial edens and satanic mills that shaped the american economy. Basic Books.

Koeppel D, 2009 Banana. The fate of the fruit that changed the world (Plume)

Lien, M. 2015. Becoming Salmon. Aquaculture and the domestication of a fish. University of California Press

Mintz S W, 1985 Sweetness and power. the place of sugar in modern history (Penguin Books)

Nygren A, Rikoon S, 2008, "Political ecology revisited: integration of politics and ecology does matters. " Society and natural resources 21 767-782

Overton, John, Warwick E. Murray, and Glenn Banks. 2012 "The race to the bottom of the glass? Wine, geography, and globalization." Globalizations 9.2: 273-287.

Overton, John, and Warwick E. Murray. 2011 "Playing the scales: Regional transformations and the differentiation of rural space in the Chilean wine industry." Journal of Rural Studies 27.1: 63-72.

Peet R, Watts M, 1996 Liberation Ecologies. Environment, development, social movements (Routledge)

Prudham S, 2005 Knock on wood. nature as a commodity in Douglas-Fir Country (Routledge, New York)

Robbins P, 2012 Political Ecology. A critical Introduction (Wiley-Blackwell)

Smith N, 1984 Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space. (The University of Georgia Press)

- Tinsman, Heidi. 2013. *Buying into the regime: grapes and consumption in Cold War Chile and the United States*. Duke University Press.
- Tully, J. 2011. *The devil's milk. A social history of rubber*. Monthly Review Press.
- Vayda A P, Walters B B, 1999, "Against political ecology" *Human Ecology* 21 167-179
- Veseth, Mike. *Wine wars: The curse of the blue nun, the miracle of two buck chuck, and the revenge of the terroirists*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011.
- Walker P, 2005, "Political Ecology: Where is the Ecology?" *Progress in Human Geography* 29 73–82
- Zimmerer K S, Bassett T J, 2003 *Political Ecology. An integrative approach to geography and environment-development studies* (The Guilford Press)