

Course title: Key Concepts of Cultural and Political Ecology				
Course code: MPD 126		No. of credits: 2	L-T-P: 26-4-0	Learning hours: 30
Pre-requisite course code and title (if any):				
Department: Department of Policy Studies				
Course coordinator(s): Dr Swarup Dutta			Course instructor(s): Dr Swarup Dutta	
Contact details: swarup.dutta@terisas.ac.in				
Course type: Core			Course offered in: Semester 2	
Course description This course discusses the basic concepts of Cultural and Political Ecology in order to enhance the students' understanding of these dimensions of sustainable development. The first part critically analyzes the dynamic features of human societies and their use of natural resources, both in historical and contemporary situations. It also provides an understanding of the inter-relationships between cultural practices, environment and livelihoods, emphasizing upon the role of culture in conservation and sustainable development. In the second part of the course the students would also be engaged in discussions on contemporary issues such as the human dimensions of global environmental change, and the power relations affecting local and global human use of the environment from the perspective of political ecology. Students would be introduced to political ecology as a field of study as well as an analytical approach.				
Learning objectives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To show the students the close inter-linkages between society and environment. • To familiarize students with community practices, traditional ecological knowledge and native worldview. • To introduce students to social and political conditions surrounding the causes, experiences and management of environmental problems • To discuss critical issues such as access and entitlements, resource use, role of social movements, participation, governance and vulnerability. 				
Course content				
Module	Topic	L	T	P
1.	Understanding the Theory of Cultural Ecology The theory of Cultural ecology begins with the recognition that all peoples and cultures are faced with environmental issues and it unveils the processes by which a society adapts to its environment. Examining the culture core and periphery, the students will analyse the interrelationship between environment, technology and society. As environment is one of the factors of culture change, the focus will be on how the human adapts their environment which leads to the process of cultural evolution. Two central points of discussion of this module are: a) the interrelationship of exploitative or productive technology and environment b) the behaviour patterns involved in the exploitation of a particular area by means of a particular technology c) impact of the human-environment nexus on the other aspects of culture	6		
2.	Human Control of Environment The main aim of this module to orient the students with the various processes through which communities exploit and conserves their natural environment. They will learn about the environment manipulation and resource management by studying knowledge system of the communities and method of exploitation and conservation. Various case studies will be analysed - starting from hunting and gathering and pastoral to horticultural and agricultural societies. a) Hunting and Gathering (<i>case study –the Mbuti of Ituri Forest</i>) b) Pastoralism (<i>case study –the Masai of East Africa</i>) c) Horticulture and Intensive Agriculture (<i>Case Study: ancient and contemporary Mayan Civilization</i>)	6	2	
3.	Indigenous Knowledge and Environment The objective of this module is to understand how the physical products and expressions of indigenous cultures are intimately connected to the knowledge and their local environment. Two major components will be discussed:	2		

	<p>a) Conceptualisation of Indigenous knowledge (Knowledge-practice-belief Complex)</p> <p>b) Indigenous Knowledge, Biodiversity Conservation (Sacred Groves)</p>			
4.	<p>Understanding Political Ecology – Theory and Method</p> <p>The objective of this module is to study the relationship of political, economic and social factors of environmental issues and challenges. Environmental problems are shaped by social processes and these processes largely include political economy, gender relations, International political relations, e.g. colonialism and neo-colonialism, scientific and technical modifications of the environment etc. Two major highlights will be:</p> <p>a) How politics shape environmental problems?</p> <p>b) How power relations shape environmental knowledge?</p>	4		
5.	<p>Political ecology of environmental degradation and marginalization</p> <p>This module will specifically highlight how the process of marginalization leads to simultaneous and increasing impoverishment and land degradation in and amongst the global poor. With the help of Political ecology perspective, the students will analyse how politically and socially marginal (disempowered) people are pushed into ecologically marginal (vulnerable and unstable) spaces and economically marginal (dependent and poorly adaptable) social positions.</p> <p>a) <i>Case Study: Sahelian Famine in Africa</i></p>	4		
6.	<p>Decentralization and participation and environmental governance</p> <p>This module will begin with the concept of decentralization and its various types. The students will be able to understand how the process of decentralization efficiently help to meet the local needs by making government and administration more flexible, accountable and responsive. Second part of the discussion will focus on the concept of participation mainly its definition and processes. Final section will be devoted to the understanding on environmental governance with special attention on decentralized environmental governance. Hence, three topics of discussion will be –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralization (definition, type and processes) • Participation (participation as a key tool of good governance) • Environmental Governance (special focus on decentralized environmental governance) 	4	2	
	Total	26	4	0
<p>Evaluation criteria:</p> <p>Course grades will be based on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment-1 (20 %): Submission of assignment will be based on empirical observation in the Group Practicum fieldwork. As the mandate of the group practicum for the students is to go to a remote part of the country for conducting fieldwork, it would be very useful for them to observe community's interaction and relationship with the environment. They will specifically highlight how culture mediate the environment with the help of technology, how technology shapes the culture and how culture changes due to the change in core and periphery. The students will submit minimum 1500 words empirical observation document after the completion of group practicum. [End of 12 week] • Assignment-2 (20 %): The student will submit an assignment based on a review of a paper with special focus on current environmental challenges from the point of view of political ecology. [end of 16 week] • Final Written Exam: 60 % • Test 1 [Syllabus – module 1-6 in case of written test] 60 % [End of 18 week] 				
<p>Learning outcomes</p> <p>Learning outcomes:</p> <p>Upon completion of the course, students would be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. recognize and appreciate human cultural variation and ingenuity in terms of unique adaptations to varied bio-physical environments 2. discuss environmental problems from an anthropological / political ecological perspective apply knowledge of diverse human adaptations and socio-political issues to analyse contemporary environmental problems 				

Pedagogical approach

Class sessions will entail a lecture component, combined with discussion of assigned readings and the documentaries shown. Students would be required to participate in four ethnographic film screening workshops, for which they would be assigned to read 2-3 articles / research papers. Students would have to write two assignments which will be evaluated on the basis of empirical understanding as well as the critical review of the subject, which would be evaluated by the instructor.

Course Reading Materials (* = compulsory readings)

Module 1:

- Steward, Julian (2005), *The Concept and Method of Cultural Ecology The Environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture, and Sustainable Living*, edited by Nora Haenn and Richard R. Wilk, New York University Press
- Steward, Julian (1955). 'The Concept and Method of Cultural Ecology' in *Theory of Culture Change*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- FRAKE OC. (1962) *Cultural Ecology and Ethnography*, American anthropologists available in <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1525/aa.1962.64.1.02a00060>
- Gunn Michael C. (1980) *Cultural Ecology: A Brief Overview the Nebraska Anthropologist*, Volume 5
- Morris Freilich 1967 *Ecology and Culture: Environmental Determinism and the Ecological Approach in Anthropology Source: Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 40 (1), pp. 26-43

Module 2:

- Sutton, M and Anderson, E.N. 2004, *An Introduction to Cultural Ecology*, New York: Altamira Press.
- Hart, John A. 1978. *From Subsistence to Market: A Case Study of the Mbuti Net Hunters*. *Human Ecology*, Vol. 6. No. 3. pp. 325-353.

Module 3:

- Singh B.P. (2017). Biodiversity, tribal knowledge and life in India. *Environment and Social Psychology*, 2(1),1–10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18063/ESP.2017.01.001>.
- Ramakrishnan, P. S. 2008. *The Cultural Cradle of Biodiversity*. National Book Trust. New Delhi.
- Ramakrishnan, P. S. 2001. *Ecology and Sustainable Development*, New Delhi: National Book Trust.
- Colding, Johan and Folke, Carl. 2001. *Social Taboos: "Invisible" Systems of Local Resource Management and Biological Conservation*
- Gadgil, M and Vartak, V.D. 2004. *The Sacred Uses of Nature*. In Ramachandra Guha (ed.). *Social Ecology*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp. 82-89
- Harris, Marvin. 1992. *The Cultural Ecology of India's Sacred Cattle*. *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 7. pp. 51-66.
- UNESCO 2016 *Indigenous and Local Knowledge(s) and Science(s) for Sustainable Development*

Module 4:

- Bryant, R. & Bailey, S. (1997). *Third World Political Ecology*. London: Routledge. Introduction & Chapter 1: pp. 1-26.
- Bell, David; Fawcett, Leesa, Keil, Roger; Penz, Peter; (1998) *Political Ecology: Global and Local (Routledge Studies in Governance and Change in the Global Era)* Routledge UK.
- Forsyth, T. (2003). *Critical Political Ecology*. London: Routledge. Chapter 7: pp. 168-201.

Module 5:

- Perreault, Tom; Bridge, Gavin; McCarthy, James; (2015) *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology (Routledge: UK)*
- Robbins, Paul; (2012) *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*, John Wiley & Sons
- Robbins, Paul; Hintz, John and Sarah A. Moore (2014) *Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction*, Wiley-Blackwell

Module 6:

- Batterbury, S.P.J. & Fernando, J.L. (2005). Rescaling governance and the impacts of political and environmental decentralization: an introduction. *World Development*, 34(11): pp. 1851—1863.
- Larson, A.M. & Ribot, J.C. (2004). Democratic decentralisation through a natural resources lens: an introduction. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 16(1): pp. 1-25.
- Leach, M., Mearns, R. & Scoones, I. (1997). Challenges to community-based sustainable development: dynamics, entitlements and institutions. *IDS Bulletin*, 28(4): pp. 4-14.

Advanced Reading Material

- Neumann, R.P. (2005). *Making Political Ecology*. London: Hodder Arnold.

Additional information (if any)**Student responsibilities**

Attendance: At-least 75% attendance will be necessary to be able to appear for the final exam.

Course reviewers:

1. Prof Vinay Kumar Srivastava, Department of Anthropology, Delhi University
2. Dr Ram Prasad Mitra, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Delhi University