

THE ANTHROPOLOGY AND POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

(Course Syllabus – Fall 2014, Anthropology 490, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Professor Arturo Escobar

Course Description

This course is intended as an upper division seminar devoted to a study in contemporary anthropology and new directions in research or applications. There are few topics in the field that would fulfill this mandate with greater relevance as climate change. Not only has anthropological research in this field been growing steadily over the past decade, one can argue that anthropological contributions to the debate on the underlying causes of climate change and to envisioning the needed transformations to address them could be particularly enriching of the debates.

Although we will pay some attention to the science of climate change, the seminar will focus on the social, cultural, political, and policy dimensions of climate change. We start by reviewing some of the main scientific debates on the subject, relying chiefly on the most recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This is followed by a review of recent anthropological approaches to the problem. On the social, economic, and political side, we will pay significant attention to the interrelations among capitalism, globalization, and global warming in particular; this includes a critical examination of the various proposals concerning so-called ‘carbon trading’ schemes and the ‘green economy,’ which currently constitute the main strategies offered by mainstream institutions to the climate crisis. Culturally, we will ask critical questions about the ways in which climate change stems from particular ways of knowing and being, currently encompassed under the heading of “modernity.” Finally, the policy side of the seminar will concentrate the processes by which decisions concerning climate change are taken internationally, with significant attention to policy-making at the United Nations level.

The seminar will emphasize collective learning and research. To this end, participants will be assigned to small groups at the end of Week III; these groups will identify, in conversation with the instructor, a particular research topic that the group will then will develop throughout the semester. Besides brief periodic in-class reports during the semester, we will hold a ‘research workshop’ during the last week of the semester where more formal research results will be presented.

Course meeting time: The class meets on Monday and Friday 11:00-12-15.

Course Evaluation: Class attendance and participation are very important (20% of the grade). Each participant will have the opportunity to do at least two presentations in class, either individually or in small groups. When presenting on the class readings, students will be expected to send in advance discussion questions based on the week’s readings.

There will be three written assignments as follows:

(1) A succinct, initial statement on the current ecological crisis, intended to reflect your provisional understanding of the climate and sustainability crisis and its relation to culture, politics, and economics. You may base your statements on the readings as well as on your experience, feelings, and background (2-3 pages double space). Due after Week II (9/12). 15%

(2) A take-home midterm reflecting your learning process about the climate change frameworks reviewed in the first half of the semester. Due on Monday class right after Fall break (10/20)

(3) A final paper, between 8-12 double-spaced pages, based on your own perspective on the research you carried out with your group; this should reflect both the individual and collective learning process. 25%. Due on the scheduled final exam day (there will be no final exam).

(4) In addition, 15% of the grade will correspond to your collective research and oral report.

Honor Code: Students are expected to adhere to UNC's Honor Code.

Required books:

Orrin Pilkey and Keith Pilkey. 2011. *Global Climate Change: A Primer*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Patrick Bond. 2012. *Politics of Climate Justice. Paralysis Above, Movement Below*. Cape Town, South Africa: University of Kwa Zulu Natal Press.

Naomi Klein. 2014. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Felix Dodds, Jorge Laguna-Celis and Liz Thompson. 2014. *From Rio+20 to a New Development Agenda: Building a Bridge to a Sustainable Future*. London: Routledge.

Reading List:

Week I. Triggers: The politics and science of climate change (8/25, 8/29)

Watch: "Welcome to the Anthropocene. Climate Change."

<http://www.anthropocene.info/en/home>

Watch: Statement by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, a 26-year old poet from the Marshall Islands, at United Nations Climate Summit, September 23, 2014.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mc_lgE7TBSY

World Meteorological Organization. 2013. "A Summary of Current Climate Change Findings and Figures."

<http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/factsheet/documents/ClimateChangeInfoSheet2013-03final.pdf>

Bill McKibben. 2012. "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math." *Rolling Stone*, August 2.

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719>

Watch: <http://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/08/17/changes-everything-trailer-naomi-kleins-coming-blockbuster>

"Conversation with Naomi Klein." *Earth Island Journal* Autumn 2013.

http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/eij/article/naomi_klein/

People's Climate March, 9/212014, NYC: <http://peoplesclimate.org/march/>

Orrin Pilkey and Keith Pilkey. 2011. *Global Climate Change: A Primer*, pp. 1-52.

Vandana Shiva. 2008. *Soil, Not Oil. Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis*. Cambridge: South End Press, pp. 1-8.

Susanne Moser. Forthcoming. "Getting Real About It: Meeting the Psychological and Social Demands of a World in Distress." *Sage Reference Handbook on Environmental Leadership*,

http://susannemoser.com/documents/Moser_Getting_Real_About_It-preprint.pdf

Part One: Science and Anthropology in the Climate Change Debates

Week II. Scientific aspects of climate change 1 (9/5; 9/8)

Orrin Pilkey and Keith Pilkey. 2011. *Global Climate Change: A Primer*, pp. 52-109.

National Science Foundation. c. 2010. *Solving the Puzzle. Researching the Impacts of Climate Change Around the World*. Washington, DC: NSF (Read Introduction and skim one more chapter on a major topic: Sky, Sea, Ice, Land, Life, People).

<http://www.nsf.gov/news/nsf09202/index.jsp>

Look at: <http://www.ipcc.ch/organization/organization.shtml>

IPCC. 2014. "Summary for Policy Makers." IN: *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report (AR5)*

<http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/>

Earle Ellis. 2011. "Anthropogenic Transformation of the Terrestrial Biosphere." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 369: 1010-1035.

Look at:

<http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/past-issues/online-content/is-modern-civilization-unsustainable>

<http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/debates/planet-of-no-return-a-breakthrough-debate/paradigm-of-no-return>

http://ecotope.org/people/ellis/papers/brook_2013.pdf (Are there planetary tipping points?)

Week III. Scientific aspects of climate change 2 (9/8; 9/12)

IPCC. 2013. "Summary for Policymakers." In: *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.*

http://www.climatechange2013.org/images/report/WG1AR5_SPM_FINAL.pdf

IPCC. 2014. "Summary for Policymakers." In: *Climate Change 2014, Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.*

http://ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/images/uploads/WG2AR5_SPM_FINAL.pdf

IPCC. 2014. "Summary for Policymakers." In: *Climate Change 2014, Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.*

http://report.mitigation2014.org/spm/ipcc_wg3_ar5_summary-for-policymakers_approved.pdf

Anthony Barnosky, et. al. 2012. "Approaching a State Shift in Earth's Biosphere." *Nature* 486: 52-58 (7June).

Week IV. Anthropological engagements with climate change (9/15; 9/19)

Simon Bratterbury. 2008. "Anthropology and Global Warming: The Need for Environmental Engagement." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*

Carla Roncoli, Todd Crane, and Ben Orlove. "Fielding Climate Change in Cultural Anthropology." In *Anthropology and Climate Change: From Encounters to Actions*, eds. Susan A Crate and Mark Nuttall (Editor) January 2009.

Susan Crate. 2011. "Climate and Culture: Anthropology in the Era of Contemporary Climate Change." *Ann. Rev. of Anthropology* 40: 175-194.

Daniel Sandweiss and Alice Kelley. 2012. "Archaeological Contributions to Climate Change Research: The Archaeological Record as a Paleoclimatic and Paleoenvironmental Archive." *Ann. Rev. of Anthropology* 41: 371-391.

Heather Lazrus. 2012. "Sea Change: Island Communities and Climate Change." *Ann. Rev. of Anthropology* 41: 285-301.

West, Colin. 2008. "Local Perceptions and Regional Climate Trends on the Central Plateau of Burkina Faso." *Land Degradation and Development*

West, Colin, and M. Vásquez-León. 2008. "Misreading the Arizona Landscape: Reframing Analyses of Environmental Degradation in Southeastern Arizona." *Human Organization* 67(4):373-383.

Part Two: The Political Ecology of Climate Change

Week V. Introduction to the political economy of climate change (9/22, 9/29)

Patrick Bond. 2012. *Politics of Climate Justice*, pp. x-51.

Watch: "The Bill" (by Germanwatch): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWfb0VMCQHE>

Nnimmo Bassey. 2012. *To Cook a Continent. Destructive Extraction and the Climate Crisis in Africa*. Cape Town: University of Kwa Zulu Natal Press, pp. 2-12, 100-116.

Patrick Bond. 2012. *Politics of Climate Justice*, pp. 52-142.

People's Agreement of Cochabamba: <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/2010/04/24/peoples-agreement/>

Via Campesina. 2009. *Small scale sustainable farmers are cooling down the earth*. <http://viacampesina.net/downloads/PAPER5/EN/paper5-EN.pdf>

Some web resources on climate, food, trade and technology (critical perspectives):

Vía Campesina: <http://viacampesina.org>

ETC Group: <http://www.etcgroup.org/en/>

Genetic Resources Action International, GRAIN: <http://www.grain.org>

Institute for Food and Development Policy: <http://www.foodfirst.org/>

Focus on the Global South: <http://www.focusweb.org/>

Oxfam: <http://www.oxfam.org/en/>

Grist. <http://grist.org/>

Global Exchange (San Francisco): <http://www.globalexchange.org/>

Third World Network: <http://www.twinside.org.sg/>

Indigenous Peoples and Community Conserved Territories and Areas, ICCA:
<http://www.iccaconsortium.org/>

Week VI. Market solutions to market problems? On carbon trading schemes (10/3, 10/6)

The Story of Cap and Trade: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA6FSy6EKrM>

Tamra Gilbertson and Oscar Reyes. 2009. *Carbon Trading. How it works and why it fails*. Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation Critical Currents No. 7.

<http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/sites/thecornerhouse.org.uk/files/OscarTamCarbonTrade.pdf>

Laura Rival. 2013. "From Carbon projects to Better Land-Use Planning: Three Latin American Initiatives." *Ecology and Society* 18(3): 1-17.

United Nations Environment Program: Green Economy

<http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/>

(see, e.g.,

<http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/AboutGEI/WhatisGEI/tabid/29784/Default.aspx>)

World Development Movement. c. Fall 2012. "Green Economy or Greedy Economy"

<http://www.wdm.org.uk/greeneconomy> (and watch short video with Hannah Griffiths)

Larry Lohmann. 2011. "The Endless Algebra of Climate Markets." *Capitalism, Nature Socialism* 22(4): 93-116

<http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/resource/endless-algebra-climate-markets>

Week VII. The political economy of climate change 2: Capitalism vs. the climate (10/10, 10/13)

Naomi Klein. 2014. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, pp.

Week VIII. “This changes everything”: On climate change and grassroots politics (10/20, 10/24)

Naomi Klein. 2014. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, pp.

**Part Three. Issues in culture, policy, politics and culture
in the era of the anthropocene**

Week IX. The anthropocene (10/27, 10/31)

Watch: “Welcome to the Anthropocene”: <http://www.anthropocene.info/en/home> (and website)

“The Anthropocene. A Man-Made World.” *The Economist* (May 26, 2011).
<http://www.economist.com/node/18741749> (and watch video at the end with Earl Ellis).

Zalasiewicz, Jan, Mark Williams and Colin Waters. In press. “The Anthropocene.” In J. Adamson, ed. New York: NYU Press.

Anthony Barnosky, et. al. 2012. “Approaching a State Shift in Earth’s Biosphere.” *Nature* 486: 52-58 (7June).

Laura Ogden, et. al. 2013. “Global Assemblages, Resilience, and Earth Stewardship in the Anthropocene.” *Frontiers Ecol. Environ* 11(7): 341-347.

Gisli Pálsson, et. al. 2013. “Reconceptualizing the ‘Anthropos’ in the Anthropocene: Integrating the Social Sciences and Humanities in Global Environmental Research.” *Env. Science and Policy* 28: 3-13.

Raymond Cléménçon. 2012. “Welcome to the Anthropocene: Rio + 20 and the Meaning of Sustainable Development.” *Journal of Env. And Dev.* 21(3): 311-338.

Look at “AAURA: Aarhus U. Research on the Anthropocene,” <http://anthropocene.au.dk/>

Week X. What the UN is/not doing (11/3, 11/7)

Rio + 20: Review <http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

[Felix Dodds](#), [Jorge Laguna-Celis](#) and [Liz Thompson](#). 2014. [From Rio+20 to a New Development Agenda: Building a Bridge to a Sustainable Future](#), pp. 1-115.

UN Conference on Sustainable Development. *Outcome Document*. Rio de Janeiro, June 2012.
<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html>

United Nations Environment Program: Green Economy

<http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/>

(see, e.g.,

<http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/AboutGEI/WhatisGEI/tabid/29784/Default.aspx>)

[Felix Dodds](#), [Jorge Laguna-Celis](#) and [Liz Thompson](#). 2014. *From Rio+20 to a New Development Agenda*, pp. 133-225.

United Nations Open Working Group “Outcome Document” on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E

Week XI. The role of conservation and indigenous communities (11/10, 11/14)

IUCN/ICCA Consortium. 2012. *Bio-cultural diversity conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities. Examples and analysis*. Geneva: IUCN.

[http://www.iccaconsortium.org/wp-](http://www.iccaconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/images/stories/Database/publications/biocultural_div_booklet_reprint.pdf)

[content/uploads/images/stories/Database/publications/biocultural div booklet reprint.pdf](http://www.iccaconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/images/stories/Database/publications/biocultural_div_booklet_reprint.pdf)

An ICCA proposal. c. 2014. “Coping with climate change and droughts: how the Abolhassani Indigenous Tribal Confederacy reinvented their natural resource management on their customary territory”.

Ashis Kothari. 2014. “India 2100: Towards Radical Ecological Democracy.” *Futures* 56: 62-72.

Week XII. The contributions of ecological economics (11/17, 11/21)

Paul Antunes, et. al. 2013. “Introduction: NGOs and ecological economics.” In Hali Healy, Joan Martínez Alier, Leah Temper, Mariana Walter, and Julien Gerber, eds. *Ecological Economics from the Ground Up*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-32.

Leah Temper. 2013. “Let them eat sugar: life and livelihood in Kenya’s Tana Delta.” In *Ecological Economics from the Ground Up*, pp. 140-162.

Supriya Singh. 2013. “Payment for Ecosystems Services in India from the Bottom Up.” In *Ecological Economics from the Ground Up*, pp. 390-402.

Beatriz Rodríguez Labajos and Joan Martínez Alier. 2013. “The economics of ecosystems biodiversity: when is money valuation appropriate?” In *Ecological Economics from the Ground Up*, pp. 488-512.

Joan Martínez-Alier, et al. 2014. “Between activism and science: grassroots concepts for sustainability coined by Environmental Justice organizations.” *Journal of Political Ecology* 21: 19-60. http://jpe.library.arizona.edu/volume_21/Martinez-Alier.pdf

Week XIII. Some statements on transitions to a post-carbon age (11/24, 12/1)

Thomas Berry. 1999. *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*. New York: Bell Tower, pp. 3-11

Joanna Macy. 2012. *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy* (Novato, CA: New World Library), pp. 1-41, 185-238.

Rob Hopkins. 2011. *The Transition Companion. Making Your Community More Resilient in Uncertain Times* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing), pp. pp.13-53; 280-292

Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee. 2013. *Spiritual Ecology. The Cry of the Earth*. Point Reyes, CA: The Golden Sufi Center (Selections)

José Arguelles. 2011. *Manifesto for the Noosphere. The Next Stage in the Evolution of Human Consciousness*. Berkeley: Evolver Editions, 1-37.

Barbara Marx Hubbard. 2012. *Birth 2012 and Beyond. Humanity's Great Shift to the Age of Conscious Evolution*. USA: Shift Books, pp. xv-50.

Review:

Transition Network: <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/blogs/rob-hopkins>

Future Earth: <http://www.icsu.org/future-earth>

The New Earth Project: <http://www.new-earth-project.org/>

Websites / internet resources on climate change/ sustainable development:

Triggers on climate change, sustainable development, and transitions:

The Story of Cap and Trade: <http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-cap-trade/>

People's Agreement of Cochabamba: <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/2010/04/24/peoples-agreement/>

Earth Charter: <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Read-the-Charter.html>

United Nations:

UNFCCC: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

COP 17 (Durban): <http://www.cop17-cmp7durban.com/>

UN Environment Program, UNEP: <http://www.unep.org/>

Rio + 20: <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?menu=14>

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

UN Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, DESA:

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/climate-change/index.shtml>

UN-DESA Div. of Sustainable Development (See CSD): <http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/index.shtml>

United Nations Development Program, UNDP: <http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home.html>

Convention on Biological Diversity: <http://www.cbd.int/>

Agenda 21: <http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/>

Millennium Ecosystems Assessment: <http://www.maweb.org/en/index.aspx>

Critiques:

Center for Civil Society, Durban: <http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/>

Corner House: <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/>

Climate Progress: <http://thinkprogress.org/romm/issue/?mobile=nc>

Climate and Capitalism: <http://climateandcapitalism.com/>

<http://www.corpwatch.org/>

Via campesina: <http://viacampesina.org/en/>

Indigenous Peoples and Community Conserved Territories and Areas, ICCA:

<http://www.iccaconsortium.org/>

Mainstream conservation NGOs:

Nature Conservancy: <http://change.nature.org/cop17-durban/?gclid=CLEzzLbY-6wCFYbd4AodLlnrNQ>

World Wildlife Fund, WWF:

<http://www.worldwildlife.org/who/media/press/2011/WWFPresitem25388.html>

World Resources Institute, WRI: <http://insights.wri.org/news/2011/12/reflections-cop-17-durban>

Intl. Union for the Conservation of Nature, IUCN: <http://www.iucn.org/what/tpas/climate/>

Clean Energy Group: <http://www.cleanegroup.org/>

Some critical NGOs/publications:

Corner House: <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/>

Friends of the Earth: <http://www.foe.org/>

Oilwatch: <http://www.oilwatch.org/>

Greenpeace: <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/>

Centro Latinoamericano de Ecología Social, CLAES: <http://www.ambiental.net/claes/>

Yasuní: <http://www.sosyasuni.org/en/>

Accion Ecológica (Quito): <http://www.accionecologica.org/>

Social network for sustainability: <http://www.wiser.org/article/About>