

Sustainable Development, Ethnic Minorities, and Environmental Justice

Kevin Woods

3 credits

Time: Friday 9-12am, 1-4pm

Built into any system of domination is the tendency to proclaim its own normalcy.

-Trouillot in *Silencing the Past*

The bourgeoisie has only one solution to its pollution problems: it moves them around.

-Saying adapted from Frederick Engels

Course Rationale:

This course has been designed to address the current environmental situation in Southeast Asia, with particular focus on northern Thailand, Burma, Laos and Yunnan, China. The sole aim of the course is to provide students with a progressive framework within which to critically examine the environmental problems in this region, which will present a post-modern approach to dissecting a sweeping array of social-environmental dilemmas people face today. This framework will be built upon a social justice platform, with particular emphasis on ethnic minorities, the peoples who are disproportionately affected by the environmental degradation from the political-economic systems. In this way, the readings and activities will examine *power* as a cross-cutting connector that links environment and development to other disciplines, and which will reveal the modern environmental movement: environmental justice. I will challenge students to try to step-out of their own culture and background and instead examine “environment” and “development” from other perspectives, in order to realize that these discourses are contrived politically and culturally, racist, and manipulated by global elites in order to maintain the status quo. By uncovering the political, economic and social systems that “environment” and “development” operate within, students will better understand why and how a new fight for power has emerged – an ethno-ecological movement. And it is my sincere hope that each student enrolled in this short two-month course will leave with not only a [renewed] commitment to fight social-environmental injustices, but more importantly a more nuanced, thoughtful, and appropriate strategy for 21st century environmental advocacy.

Course Activities:

The course will be divided into four major topics which will be covered during the full Friday classes. Students will be assigned numerous readings for the following class, some of which will be required, others only for recommended readings. The readings will help prepare students for an engaging, thought-provoking discussion, complimented by lecture to fill in the gaps. Since the class time is six hours, it is essential that students fully participate during the class to make this arrangement work. Although this program highlights action-learning, it is essential to read the handouts in order to better understand the “action” and discussion. While the readings may at first be a bit challenging, I promise that they will be enriching and lead to provocative discussion during class.

I would also like to present an alternative method to in-class discussion, which is geared towards those who are shy and for those who would like to continue discussion outside of class or ask questions during the week while people are reading. I am going to

attempt to set up an online forum where students can post leading questions, comments from what they have read so far, or experiences they have had during the week that fit with what we are working on. In this way, these new concepts that we will all be struggling with will not have to be squeezed into just one day, but rather can be a continuous dialogue accessible to all class participants at any time of the day. I too will check it and probe students and help answer any unanswered questions. Although this method of communication can lead to problems as e-communication can be easily misunderstood, but my hope is that this alternative e-method will reflect that this course is not just a class, but a journey that never ends.

In addition to readings/lecture/discussion, there will also be three guest speakers – an American and Thai scholar activist and writer, and a Karen environmental activist. Students will have come to class having read their articles they wrote, or articles pertaining to their activities, in order to ensure a rich discussion and understanding of their one-hour talk.

Finally, there will be one full-day field trip to a Karen village a few hours from Chiang Mai to visit a charismatic Karen headman who has been engaged with social-environmental justice issues. The field trip will help put the readings and discussions in context and help inspire the class to pursue these topics in more depth in the future.

Course Grading

In order to assess the achievements of the student, encourage active participation, and push students to reflect on their experiences during the course, the grading will be broken down as follows:

1. Class participation: 30%
 - a. This refers to *active* participation that shows you are challenging yourself, your fellow students, and your professor. This also includes discussion on the E-forum. This will also be a method to assess how much the students are reading the assigned articles, since if you don't read at least some of the articles, then you will not participate very well.
2. Small group presentations: 20%
 - a. At the beginning of each class, a small group of students (3-4) will present a synthesis of the readings for that day, along with a list of provocative questions which will help shape the discussion during the rest of that class. It is expected for the group to get together before the class in order to prepare the presentation, and to decide which key points they want to address and which issues they would like to push further. This is only an informal presentation to the rest of the class; no written form is necessary. The group will then help lead the class in further examining the articles for that day and provoke discussion.
3. Mid-term exam: 20%
 - a. This will be a written take-home exam that does not need to be studied for unless you feel compelled to do so. I will provide a list of questions, and you only have to pick one to answer. Since it is take-home, you have the whole week before next class to work on it, using whatever resources you choose, including me and your fellow

students. This will be done the week before the field trip so that no other reading assignments are expected in order to give you time for the exam question. This will act more as a method to engage yourself in the material than for me to check-up on your progress.

4. Final exam: 30%
 - a. The final exam will be open to interpretation by the student. This could be in the form of a paper (no longer than 20 pages), but I encourage students to explore other expressive, yet meaningful, methods to engage with the powerful lessons learned during the course. This could be in the form of an art piece, a performance, a group-led exercise, a culinary experiment, a tour, a discussion, etc... I am open to any possibilities. However, I want to make it very clear that doing an exercise other than a written paper does *not* mean a way out of doing hard work. In fact, I would expect more from a student who chooses an alternative exam – the student must prove to me that they have understood the concepts I am trying to teach, and went through a personal exploratory journey in trying to re-convey that message back to me.

Finally, I think it is very important to have class camaraderie and fun. In conclusion, I am a determined individual who expects a lot from my students, and takes each student's progress personally; however, I am very fun, energetic, and passionate, and so want to create a non-competitive, highly-enjoyable, yet intellectually-engaging atmosphere in my class.

Course Schedule:

Feb. 24: *Introduction: Political Ecology and Environmental Justice*

- a. The first day of class will be broken down into literature covering two different general concepts or discourses:
 - i. Political or Social Ecology or Environmental Anthropology
 - ii. Environmental Justice or Environmental Rights
- b. The readings assigned for this day (yes, reading before we even meet for the first day) will introduce the key framework within which we will be engaging with for the duration of the course. The readings will perhaps generate more questions than answers, but that is the whole point – it will give a common platform from which to launch into a highly energetic debate during class.
- c. Other sub-themes which will emerge during these readings, and which will continuously re-emerge during the duration of the course, include, but clearly are not limited to: indigenous knowledge, indigenous rights, culture of nature and the nature of culture, racism, environmental democracy, ethnic identity, state politics, and conflict.

Readings: (note: read BEFORE our first class!)

Required:

- Bryant, R. "Political Ecology: A Critical Agenda for Change?" In Third World Political Ecology. Eds. Bryant and Bailey. Routledge: New York.
- Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). 2002. One Species, One Planet: Environmental Justice and Sustainable Development. Washington, DC. Pp. 1-24.
- Greenough, P. and A. Tsing. 2003. "Introduction." Pp. 1-18. In: Nature in the Global South: Environmental Projects in South and Southeast Asia. P. Greenough and A. Tsing (Eds). Duke University Press.
- Guha, R. 2000. "The Southern Challenge." Pp. 98-124. In: Environmentalism: A Global History. Longman: NY.
- Harvey, D. "The Environment of Justice." In: Justice, Difference and Politics. Pp. 365-?.
- Merchant, C. 1992. "Introduction: What is Radical Ecology?" Pp. 1-14. In: Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World. Routledge: New York.

Recommended:

- Brosius, J.P. 1999. "Analyses and Interventions: Anthropological Engagements with Environmentalism." *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 40. No. 3. Pp. 277-309.
- Dove, M. "Local Dimensions of 'Global' Environmental Debates: Six Case Studies." In: Environmental Movements in Asia. Pp. 44-63.
- Escobar, A. 1999. "After Nature: Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology." *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 40, Issue 1. Pp. 1-30.
- Guha, R. 2000. "Socialism and Environmentalism." Pp. 125-137. In: Environmentalism: A Global History. Longman: NY.
- Martinez-Alier, J. "Political Ecology, Distributional Conflicts, and Economic Incommensurability."
- Merchant, C. 1992. "Social Ecology." Pp. 132-154. In: Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World. Routledge: New York.
- Paulson, S. et. al. 2003. "Locating the Political in Political Ecology: An Introduction." *Human Organization*. Vol. 62, No. 3. Pp. 205-217.
- Pena, D. "Endangered Landscapes and Disappearing Peoples?: Identity, Place, and Community in Ecological Politics." Pp. 58-81. In: The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics and Pedagogy. Eds. Adamson, Evans and Stein. U of Arizona Press: Tucson.
- Schlosberg, D. 2004. "Reconceiving Environmental Justice: Global Movements and Political Theories." *Environmental Politics*. Vol. 13, No. 3. Pp. 517-540.

March 3: Politics of Apolitical Conservation: Forests, Indigenous Peoples, Forestry Departments, and Nature Conservationists

- a. This topic will perhaps take up almost two full classes because of its depth and wide-ranging issues. The interest in this topic stems from my own personal career transformation and current research on conservation in Burma.

- b. Discussion/lecture will touch upon a breathe of topics, including indigenous forest management, community forestry, state forestry objectives, protected areas vs. people, shifting cultivation, international conservation agendas, urban elite naturalists, eco-tourism, land tenure security and resource conflict.
- c. Two speakers will come in for each of the classes that we are addressing these issues: one will be a Thai scholar activist who focuses on the politics of nature conservation with the Karen in northern Thailand, and the other speaker will be a Karen social-environmental activist working on indigenous knowledge and community forestry advocacy.

Readings:

Required:

- Brechin, S. et al. 2002. "Beyond the Square Wheel: Toward a More Comprehensive Understanding of Biodiversity Conservation as Social and Political Process." *Society and Natural Resources*. Vol. 15, Pp. 41-64.
- Laungaramsri, P. 2001. "On the Construction of Nature Conservation." Pp. 62-89. In: Redefining Nature: Karen Ecological Knowledge and the Challenge to the Modern Conservation Paradigm. Earthworm Books: Chennai.
- Peluso, N.L. 1993. "Coercing conservation? The politics of state resource control." *Global Environmental Change*. June, Pp. 199-217.
- Wilshusen, P. et. al. 2002. "Reinventing a Square Wheel: Critique of a Resurgent 'Protection Paradigm' in International Biodiversity Conservation." *Society and Natural Resources*. Vol. 15, Pp. 17-40.

Recommended:

- Brosius, J.P. 1999. "Green Dots, Pink Hearts: Displacing Politics from the Malaysian Rain Forest." *American Anthropology*. Vol. 101, No. 1. Pp. 36-57.
- Brosius, J.P. 2003. "Voices for the Borneo Rain Forest: Writing the History of an Environmental Campaign." Pp. 317-346. In: Nature in the Global South: Environmental Projects in South and Southeast Asia. P. Greenough and A. Tsing (Eds). Duke University Press.
- Li, T. 2002. "Engaging Simplifications: Community-Based Resource Management, Market Processes and State Agendas in Upland Southeast Asia." *World Development*. Vol. 30, No. 2. Pp. 265-283.
- Song, S. and R. M. M'Gonigle. 2001. "Science, Power and System Dynamics: the Political Economy of Conservation Biology." *Conservation Biology*. Vol. 15, No. 4. Pp. 980-989.

Guest Speaker: Thai scholar activist who focuses on the politics of nature conservation with the Karen in northern Thailand.

March 10: Forests, Indigenous Peoples, Forestry Departments, and Nature Conservationists

Readings:

Required:

- Fahn, J. 2003. "Forests and Farmers: Only the Haunted Jungles Survive." Pp. 143-174. In: A Land on Fire: The Environmental Consequences of the Southeast Asian Boom. Westview Press: Colorado.
- Ganjanapan, A. 2000. "Local Control and Management of Community Forest." Pp. 182-199. In: Local Control of Land and Forest: Cultural Dimensions of Resource Management in Northern Thailand. RCSD: CMU.
- Gravers, M. 2001. "Karen Notions of Environment – Space, Place and Power in a Political Landscape." Pp. 55-84. In: Forest in Culture – Culture in Forest: Perspectives from Northern Thailand. Poulsen et. al (Eds.).
- Laungaramsri, P. 2001. "The conservation Problematic: An Anthropology of Foresters and Nature Conservationists." Pp. 90-124. In: Redefining Nature: Karen Ecological Knowledge and the Challenge to the Modern Conservation Paradigm. Earthworm Books: Chennai.
- Schwartzman, S. et. al. 2000. "Rethinking Tropical Forest Conservation: Perils in Parks." *Conservation Biology*. Vol. 14, No. 5. Pp. 1351-1357.
- Schwartzman, S. et. al. 2000. "Arguing Tropical Forest Conservation: People versus Parks." *Conservation Biology*. Vol. 14, No. 5. Pp. 1370-1374.

Recommended:

- Bryant, R. "Asserting Sovereignty Through Natural Resource Use: Karen Forest Management on the Thai-Burmese Border." In: Resources, Nations and Indigenous Peoples: Case Studies. Eds??
- Bryant, R. et. al. 1993. "Introduction: Forest Transformations and Political Ecology in Southeast Asia." *Global Ecology and Biogeography Letters*. Vol 3. Issue 4/6. Pp. 101-111.
- Darlington, S. 2003. "Practical Spirituality and Community Forests: Monks, Ritual, and Radical Conservationism in Thailand." Pp. 347-366. In: Nature in the Global South: Environmental Projects in South and Southeast Asia. P. Greenough and A. Tsing (Eds). Duke University Press.
- Fox, J. et. al. 2000. "Shifting Cultivation: A New Old Paradigm for Managing Tropical Forests." *BioScience*. Vol. 50, No. 6. Pp. 521-528.
- Ganjanapan, A. 2000. "The Local Construction of Rights in Community Forestry." Pp. 202-220. In: Local Control of Land and Forest: Cultural Dimensions of Resource Management in Northern Thailand. RCSD: CMU.
- Ganjanapan, A. 2000. "Conflicting Patterns of Land Tenure Among Ethnic Groups in the Highlands." Pp. 156-180. In: Local Control of Land and Forest: Cultural Dimensions of Resource Management in Northern Thailand. RCSD: CMU.
- Heinrich Boll Foundation. 2002. "Livelihood Rights." Pp. 25-33. In: *The Jo'Berg Memo. Fairness in a Fragile World: Memorandum for the World Summit on*

- Sustainable Development*. W. Sachs (Ed.).
- Laungaramsri, P. 2001. "Rai, Rai Lu'an Loy, Rai Mun Wian and the Politics of 'Shifting Cultivation'." Pp. 177-217. In: Redefining Nature: Karen Ecological Knowledge and the Challenge to the Modern Conservation Paradigm. Earthworm Books: Chennai.
- Lohmann, L. 1993. "Land, Power and Forest Colonization in Thailand." *Global Ecology and Biogeography Letters*. Vol 3. Issue 4/6. Pp. 180-191.
- Peluso, N. 2003. "Territorializing Local Struggles for Resource Control: A Look at Environmental Discourses and Politics in Indonesia." Pp. 230-252. In: Nature in the Global South: Environmental Projects in South and Southeast Asia. P. Greenough and A. Tsing (Eds). Duke University Press.
- Rigg, J. 1993. "Forests and Farmers, Land and Livelihoods, Changing Resource Realities in Thailand." *Global Ecology and Biogeography Letters*. Vol 3. Issue 4/6. Pp. 277-289.
- Santasombat, Y. 2003. "Local Knowledge." Pp. 41-58. In: Biodiversity: Local Knowledge and Sustainable Development. RCSD: CMU.
- Santasombat, Y. 2003. "Local Knowledge and Resource Management Systems." Pp. 124-194. In: Biodiversity: Local Knowledge and Sustainable Development. RCSD:
- Sato, J. 2000. "People in Between: Conversion and Conservation of Forest Lands in Thailand." *Development and Change*. Vol. 31. Pp. 155-177.

Guest Speaker: Karen social-environmental activist working on indigenous knowledge and community forestry advocacy for the Karen.

Hand-out mid-term exam questions today

March 17: No class

March 24: (Mid-term Exams due!)

Field Trip to Karen village in Ampur Sameung

March 31: *Sustainable Development: State vs. Society, Politics and Economics vs. Environment*

- a. This topic will merge environment with development, with a historical perspective. We will attempt to dissect the fallacy of "sustainable development" by looking at the mandates of big regional/international players, such as ASEAN, the Mekong River Commission, the ADB, etc. and how they try to sell mega-development with a green guise.
- b. We will focus on mega-development projects, with case studies of several mega-dams in the region, particularly the proposed Salween dams along the Burma-Thailand border. Dams will

help highlight the politics that underlie development, question the validity of sustainable development, and how the most marginalized people are the very same people who benefit the least from these projects.

- c. An American scholar-activist/environmental journalist will come to the class to talk about the general environmental issues affecting the region, and how the marginalized peoples are the ones most severely impacted.

Readings:

Required:

- Adams, W.M. 1995. "Green Development Theory?: Environmentalism and Sustainable Development." Pp. 87-99. In: Power of Development. J. Crush (Ed.). Routledge: New York.
- Fahn, J. 2003. "Dams: The Price of Power." Pp. 81-108. In: A Land on Fire: The Environmental Consequences of the Southeast Asian Boom. Westview Press: Colorado.
- Hirsch, P. 2002. "Global Norms, Local Compliance and the Human Rights-Environment Nexus: A Case Study of the Nam Theun II Dam in Laos. Pp. 147-?. In: Human Rights and the Environment: Conflicts and Norms in a Globalizing World. Ed. Ed Zarsky. Earthscan: London.
- Parnwell, M. and R. Bryant. 1996. "Conclusion: Towards Sustainable Development in South-East Asia?" Pp. 330-343. In: Environmental Change in South-East Asia: People, Politics and Sustainable Development. Eds: Parnwell and Bryant. Routledge: New York.
- Shrestha, N. 1995. "Becoming a Development Category." Pp. 266-277. In: Power of Development. J. Crush (Ed.). Routledge: New York.

Recommended:

- Chapman, E.C. and He Daming. "Downstream Implications of China's Dams on the Lancang Jiang (Upper Mekong) and their Potential Significance for Greater Regional Cooperation, Basin-Wide." Online.
- Escobar, A. 1995. "Imagining a Post-Development Era." Pp. 211-227. In: Power of Development. J. Crush (Ed.). Routledge: New York.
- Fahn, J. 2003. "The Pipeline: A Snake in the Woods." Pp. 191-216. In: A Land on Fire: The Environmental Consequences of the Southeast Asian Boom. Westview Press: Colorado.
- Merchant, C. 1992. "Sustainable Development." Pp. 211-234. In: Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World. Routledge: New York.
- Porter, D. 1995. "Scenes from Childhood: The Homesickness of Development Discourse." Pp. 63-86. In: Power of Development. J. Crush (Ed.). Routledge: New York.
- Watts, M. 1995. "'A New Deal in Emotions': Theory and Practice and the Crisis of Development." Pp. 44-62. In: Power of Development. J. Crush (Ed.). Routledge: New York.

Guest Speaker: American scholar-activist/environmentalist.

April 7: *Transboundary Environmental Governance and Public Participation*

- a. Our last topic will have a more optimistic note by looking at some progressive strategies to address these problems the course has raised. This will include transboundary environmental governance, environmental democracy, public participation in decision-making for development projects, and other suggestions for furthering the environmental justice agenda.

Readings:

Required:

Badenoch, N. 2002. Transboundary Environmental Governance: Principles and Practice in Mainland Southeast Asia. World Resources Institute (WRI): Washington DC. Pp. 1-33.

Heinrich Boll Foundation. 2002. "Governance for Ecology and Equity." Pp. 49-71. In: *The Jo'Berg Memo. Fairness in a Fragile World: Memorandum for the World Summit on Sustainable Development*. W. Sachs (Ed.).

Woods, K. 2005. "Transboundary Environmental Governance in the Greater Mekong Subregion: The Politics of Participation." *Watershed: People's Forum on Ecology*. Vol. 10, No. 2, Pp. 10-23.

Recommended:

Consensus Statement of the First Annual Regional Environmental Forum (REF). 2002. Pp. 1-4.

Dore, J. Environmental Governance in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region. World Resources Institute (WRI): Washington DC. Pp. 1-59.

Dupar, M. and N. Badenoch. "Introduction." Pp. 491-509. In: Environment, Livelihoods and Local Institutions: Decentralization in Mainland Southeast Asia. World Resources Institute (WRI): Washington DC.

April 14: No Class

Happy Songkran!!

April 21: *Final Synthesis/Wrap-Up Discussions*

FINAL PROJECTS DUE!!

April 25: *Final Grades Due*