

ANTH 339  
Winter Term 2021  
Tues/Thurs 4:05-5:25  
Software for class and office hour: Zoom

Instructor: Maxime Polleri  
Office Hours: Tues. 5:00-5:30  
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<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/83408245103>

## ECOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

### **Course Abstract:**

This course examines the complex relationships between human beings and their environment from an anthropological perspective. We will address the particular set of theoretical and ethical concerns that surrounds contemporary environmental problems. In this, we will ask specific thematic questions, such as what is nature, how do we get to know about the environment, or how can humans delve in a permanently polluted world? By embracing the hallmark skills of anthropological research, the course underscores the different human experiences, beliefs, constructs, and behaviors that shape ecological matters. At the end of this class, students will have developed their own critical perspectives to analyze pressing environmental issues.

### **Course Materials**

Required readings will be compiled into an electronic course reader available on *myCourses*.

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Due to the ongoing effects of COVID-19 classes will be given online. Tuesday courses will be given live and recorded for the purpose of international students not based in the Eastern Standard Time zone. To prevent Zoom fatigue, Thursday courses will be made available as podcast.

The course grade includes summaries of weekly thematic readings and two essays. There will be 6 weekly thematic readings to summarize (max. 500 words; each worth 5% for a total of 30%). These reading summaries count as a participation grade and will not be evaluated by the instructors. However, failure to summarize the readings in *your own words* will result in the failure of the participation grade for the given summary (5% each). For the two essays (max 1500 words; each worth 35% for a total of 70%), students will have to answer a series of short analytical questions (4 per essay) based on the course thematic issues. The above assignments will be due as follows, submitted through MyCourses by 11:59 pm of the dates indicated below:

Summary for Thematic 1 – **Feb. 2**  
Summary for Thematic 2 – **Feb. 11**  
Summary for Thematic 3 – **Feb. 23**  
Summary for Thematic 4 – **Mar. 16**

Summary for Thematic 5 – **Mar. 30**  
Summary for Thematic 6 – **Apr. 13**

First Essay – **Mar. 9**  
Second Essay – **Apr. 30**

Beyond these deadlines, a penalty of one percentage point of your final grade per day late will apply. Students who provide a valid doctor's note in the case of illness, or similar evidence in case of a serious crisis such as a family death, will not be penalized.

**McGill University values academic integrity.** *Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information). (approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)*

**L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique.** *Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/))."*

*In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded." (approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see also the section in this document on Assignments and evaluation.)*

*Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue)."*

## Course Outline

### Introduction to Ecological Anthropology

Introductory Session – **Jan. 7**

Orlove, Benjamin S. 1980. Ecological Anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 9(1): 235-273. – **Jan. 12**

#### 1. What is Nature

Cronon, William. 1996. Introduction: In Search of Nature. In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. Cronon, William, 23-56. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. – **Jan. 14**

Descola, Philippe. 1996. Constructing Natures: Symbolic Ecology and Social Practice in Nature and Society. In *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*, eds. Descola, Philippe and Gísli Pálsson, 82-102. London: Routledge. – **Jan. 19**

Martello, Marybeth Long. 2004. Negotiating Global Nature and Local Culture: The Case of Makah Whaling. In *Earthly Politics: Local and Global in Environmental Governance*, eds. Jasanoff, Sheila and Marybeth Long Martello, 263-284. Cambridge: The MIT Press. – **Jan. 21**

#### 2. Environmental Knowledge

Cruikshank, Julie. 2006. Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination. Vancouver: UBC Press. [Read pp. 1-49 – **Jan. 26**

Mathews, Andrew S. 2014. Scandals, Audits, and Fictions: Linking Climate Change to Mexican Forests. *Social Studies of Science*. 44(1): 82-108. – **Jan. 28**

Pine, Kathleen H. and Max Liboiron. 2015. The Politics of Measurement and Action. *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, ACM: 3147-3156. – **Feb. 2**

#### 3. Political Ecology

Latour, Bruno. 2004. Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. [Read Introduction & Chapter I] – **Feb. 4**

Escobar, Arturo. 1999. After Nature: Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology. *Current Anthropology*. 40(1): 1-30 – **Feb. 9**

Weston, Kath. 2012. Political Ecologies of the Precarious. *Anthropological Quarterly*. 85(2): 429-455 – **Feb. 11**

#### **4. Capitalism, Neoliberalism, and Ecological Empires**

Hathaway, Michael. 2014. Wild Commodities and Environmental Governance: Transforming Lives and Markets in China and Japan. *Conservation and Society*. 12(4): 398-407. – **Feb. 16**

Graeter, Stefanie. 2017. To Revive an Abundant Life: Catholic Science and Neoextractivist Politics in Peru's Mantaro Valley. *Cultural Anthropology*. 32(1): 117-148. – **Feb. 18**

Kosek, Jake. 2010. Ecologies of Empire: On the New Uses of the Honeybee. *Cultural Anthropology*. 25(4): 650-678. – **Feb. 23**

#### **5. Delving in a Permanently Polluted World**

Liboiron, Max, Manuel Tironi, and Nerea Calvillo. 2018. Toxic Politics: Acting in a Permanently Polluted World. *Social Studies of Science*. 48(3): 331-349. – **Feb. 25**

Study break – **Mar. 2**

Study break – **Mar. 4**

Special Presentation by Vincent Ialenti on “Deep Time Reckoning” [No Readings] – **Mar. 9**

Polleri, Maxime. 2019. Conflictual Collaboration: Citizen Science and the Governance of Radioactive Contamination after the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster. *American Ethnologist*. 46(2): 214-226. – **Mar. 11**

Reno, Joshua. 2015. Waste and Waste Management. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 44: 557-572. – **Mar. 16**

#### **6. Environmental Suffering, Racism, and Inequality**

Auyero, Javier and Débora Alejandra Swistun. 2009. Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown. New York: Oxford University Press. [Read Introduction and Chapter 1] – **Mar. 18**

Auyero, Javier and Débora Alejandra Swistun. 2009. Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown. New York: Oxford University Press. [Read Chapter 7 and Conclusion] – **Mar. 23**

Stawkowski, Magdalena E. 2016. “I Am a Radioactive Mutant”: Emergent Biological Subjectivities at Kazakhstan's Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site. *American Ethnologist*. 43(1): 144-157. – **Mar. 25**

Murphy, Michelle. 2017. Alterlife and Decolonial Chemical Relations. *Cultural Anthropology*. 32(4): 494-503. – **Mar. 30**

## **7. Planetary Crises, Sustainability, and Energy**

Masco, Joseph. 2010. Bad Weather: On Planetary Crisis. *Social Studies of Science*. 40(1): 7-40. – **Apr. 1**

Swyngedouw, Erik. 2010. Apocalypse Forever? Post-political Populism and the Spectre of Climate Change. *Theory, Culture & Society*. 27(2-3): 213-232. – **Apr. 6**

Smith, Jessica, and Mette M. High. 2017. Exploring the Anthropology of Energy: Ethnography, Energy and Ethics. *Energy Research & Social Science*. 30: 1-6. – **Apr. 8**

Boyer, Dominic. 2011. Energopolitics and the Anthropology of Energy. *Anthropology News*. 52(5): 5-7. – **Apr. 13**

## **Conclusion**

Concluding session – **Apr. 15**