NRSM 571 International Conservation and Development (ICD)  
(CRN 75265) Tuesday/Thursday 3:30-5, 3 credits, online

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student meetings by appointment/remote

Course Description
Debates about conservation and development have been brewing for decades. Today the issue is not about whether something needs to be done towards how humans across the globe understand and interact with nature, but what and how? Indeed, there is growing recognition that human influence on the environment has come to dominate all nonhuman processes to the point that the 21st century represents a distinct era in the geological record: the Anthropocene. Anthropogenic climate change has become for many the clincher in demonstrating the need to rethink and reorient how we behave. For some, the ensuing debate focuses on how to reduce our (global) carbon emissions and transition to a green economy. While not disagreeing, others contend the discussion must go deeper to critically question the relationship between humans and nature itself, and the particular force of humans’ impact on nature (including “conservation”) through the dominant form of economy practiced around the globe: capitalism. The influence of the latter is so pervasive that some argue the term “anthropocene” should be replaced by “capitalocene.”

The literature as well as positions on the Anthropocene conservation debate have exploded over the past decade. In this graduate seminar, we cannot possibly examine all of the issues. Instead, my objective is to identify some of the key debates about conservation and development within a global context. These entail both instrumental and critical perspectives: instrumental refers to examining issues related to the implementation of programs and practices, whereas critical focuses on revealing the underlying and often problematic assumptions and intent behind policy and revealed in particular practices including conflicts.

Admittedly, your instructor’s education as a rural, environmental and development sociologist with extensive field research in the South (Philippines, Indonesia, Belize and Bhutan) and in Western Montana influence the choice of approach, topics and readings. These are strongly shaped by my commitment to the approach of political ecology. Political ecology is a social-ecological systems perspective that is built around critical social theory. It approaches human relations with nature as inseparable from social relations of power, to the need for post-colonial methodologies and to social and environmental justice entailing structural political-economic and cultural transformations to address global environmental problems. From my interpretation of the academic debates and these personal commitments and experiences over the past 35 years, I focus this class around two forces that I see as paramount. The first pertains to debates over human-nature dichotomies and the second, over combining conservation with contemporary capitalism (which is what is meant today by development). As we will see in this course, the different combinations of these positions lead to different stances towards “conservation” and “development,” including how and if they should be integrated or not, and in case of the latter, under what conditions. Throughout the course, I also encourage all of us to draw out implications of these debates for practical and political challenges of conducting ICD research, both in light of key forces we will discuss and the covid-19 pandemic and its aftermaths.
Given the realities of the Covid-19 pandemic, this course is taught entirely on-line. I agree this is not ideal, but I consider it the safest modality for all of us. Please bear with me, the rest of the class, and the remote technology as we move through the semester; all suggestions for improving any of these dimensions are highly appreciated and should be emailed to the instructor. As I think fitting given all the uncertainties, there may be changes along the way as we need to adapt to changing conditions. But I promise to communicate these well in advance and seek your input as much as I can.

In light of the above, I have tried to structure the course with flexibility. For the majority of the semester, for each “Tuesday” class you will watch a lecture by myself or a guest lecturer or a video – all of which you can view according to your own schedule. When they entail a powerpoint presentation I will have the powerpoint available on our moodle page ahead of the lecture. Sometimes there will be two or more assigned for the week; this is because the schedule of classes for the semester require additional contact/assignment to meet requirements. We will discuss these along with assigned readings for that week in a zoom call on the scheduled Thursday time (3:30-5pm). Please note that I have scheduled the last two weeks of the class as zoom meetings on both Tuesday and Thursday class times. For those who cannot make the Tuesday time, (with class permission) I will record and upload the discussion to our class moodle page. Or if many have conflicts for the Tuesday time, another option is we can reschedule when everyone can meet -- we can decide this together later on.

My goal for the lectures and videos is to provide background and examples on the topic scheduled for that week, specifically to clarify terms, provide intellectual context, and highlight major themes and debates that we will take up through discussion on Thursdays. You will get the most of the class if you watch the lecture/videos, read all assigned readings (as early in the week as possible), think seriously about the questions submitted to Jill on each Wed (discussed below), and come to each Thursday zoom class prepared to ask questions, examine, analyze, and (over time) contribute to the group developing a critical understanding of the topics.

**Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives**

Students successfully completing the course will:

- Acquire an understanding of contemporary debates and positions within the field of ICD
- Develop knowledge to think critically about key terms and approaches in ICD (i.e., definitions of and tensions in defining and reconciling conservation and development;)
- Begin applying acquired knowledge to develop a final paper which will inform your Master’s thesis or professional paper; and
- Begin identifying issues related to conducting research (especially field research) in an international setting

**Readings**

All readings are available from UM Moodle ([Moodle Login Page](#)) -- login with your username/password and listed under NRSM 571. These include articles published in journals as well as book chapters and from the internet. For some weeks, I include an “Additional” section that are not required, but are either classics or suggested further reading on topics. We can always add to this list. As such I encourage you to email Jill any resources you think relevant and I will upload them to our additional reading lists.

Assigned readings include chapters from the following books (available from our moodle page). We will not be reading the entire books. I consider these to be key references in the field. You may purchase them on your own, they would be stellar additions to your personal library, but it is up to you:


### Grading, Evaluation and Due Dates

The course may be taken for either a traditional letter grade or credit/no credit (also known as pass/fail). The decision is up to you. I encourage you to discuss the grading option with your graduate committee advisor. You need to let the registrar know your choice of grading. See below for evaluation criteria for the two grading options.

#### Credit/No Credit [pass/fail]

- Participation/Weekly Questions 100% throughout the semester

#### Traditional Letter Grade:

- Participation/Weekly Questions 30% throughout the semester
- Final paper abstract and short bibliography 20% Sept 24 (word doc, email to Jill)
- Final paper 50% Nov 25 (or before)  
  **Total 100%**

### Participation/Weekly Questions

All students in the class should expect to do all assignments as pertaining to grade option, hand in weekly question set and attend zoom meetings as scheduled, unless an emergency and/or other arrangements made (i.e., if you class conflicts during the last two weeks when we will be meeting on zoom for tues/thurs classes).

All class participants should email Jill by the end of each Wed at least 1-2 observations/questions that pertain to the lecture/video and 1-3 observations/questions related to assigned readings. These should reflect a serious grappling with the material, and may entail anything from point out something important to you or requesting clarification, background on intellectual genealogy, and/or theoretical or practical considerations. Feel free to also include additional background or context if you need to illuminate your observation/question, but please try and keep each submission to less than 2 pages. I will review them before our Thursday zoom call, and refer to them in our discussions. These will be an extremely important means for me (and others) to know what are relevant concerns and questions for each of you, so please give them considerable thought.

### Final Paper

Those choosing to receive a letter grade in the course will need to turn in a final paper. The topic of your final paper should relate to a dimension of international conservation and development. It may address a new topic or approach not discussed in class, or deepen a debate regarding something we have discussed; it may speak to a theoretical and/or philosophical issue, methodological or something related to moving practical action forward. You may also do a critical bibliography on a topic new to you entailing reading, summarizing and identifying where the different literatures fit within the literature and debates in the field, and your own view of their contributions building on insights from class readings. This latter format may be particularly useful for
those of you just beginning your graduate program and unsure of your thesis topic and its literature. While I strongly encourage you to select a topic and approach that relates to your interest, ideally to a potential thesis/professional paper, you need to connect your topic, and how you are approaching it, within the context of class readings, themes and debates. You are also encouraged to work with the instructor to assist you at any stage of the final paper; please email me to schedule a call or zoom meeting.

The abstract should consist of a tentative title, 1-3 paragraphs of clear description of the underlying question or debate entailing how you will address the topic, but recognizing that this will change as you engage further with the class. It should also include a bibliography of at least 5 references that you have identified as relevant to the topic/question (to make sure there are sufficient resources for you to complete the paper). Please think carefully about your topic and do not change it after the abstract and bibliography have been submitted.

Final papers should be 10-15 pages (including references), typed in double-spaced, 11-12 point font, and properly referenced (any social science style e.g., APA or ASA is acceptable as long as you follow it consistently). These formats will have you cite your sources in text (last name of the author and the year is fine, include page number if using a direct quotation) and in a bibliography or reference list at the end of the paper. Your final paper will be evaluated on clarity of topic and question(s) asked, thoroughness of literature review, compelling case if an argument is being made, and overall quality of organization and writing.

Useful Web Sources:
POLLEN (Political ecology network).
[excellent documentaries]
Center for International Forestry Research (includes the former world agroforestry center) (CIFOR)
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
Rights and Resources

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability that adversely affects your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154 or 406-243-2243. I will work with you and DSS to provide appropriate accommodation.

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code.

Respect and civility. We all have our own filters, experiences and triggers. Active listening and showing respect for others’ views are paramount in this class; as is being sensitive to taking a fair share of time for talking in class.

Changes to the syllabus. While the basic structure and required assignments in the course will not change, as noted above, given the uncertainty of so many things during a global pandemic, and in pursuit of flexibility and adaptation, there could be changes (or additions) in readings or the schedule. All changes will be communicated clearly. I encourage students to share articles and other resources relevant to the class with me and the class throughout the semester, which Jill will post on moodle. AND please let me know if I can do anything to accommodate your schedules and lives during this uncertain and stressful time!!
Course Schedule

Aug 20  Introduction to the Course, Each Other and International Conservation & Development (ICD)
In this first meeting, we will review the syllabus and the subject of ICD. Who are we, why are we here, what do we want to learn in this course?

Foundational Processes and Perspectives

Aug 25
Getting Personal, Getting Political: ICD Research and Action Through the Lens of Political Ecology
Lecture by Dr Jill Belsky

Readings

Additional:
- To see where political ecology fits within the “conservation social sciences” see the following: Roth, p50-55 on political ecology

Aug 27  Discussion (with Dr Siebert)

Sept 1 Co-Evolved Ethno-Biosphere
Guest Lecture Dr. Stephen Siebert, Emeritus Professor, Forest Management, UM (and founder of the ICD option/Master’s Program in Resource Conservation)

Readings
- Siebert, S. and J. Belsky. 2014. Historic livelihoods and land uses as ecological disturbances and their role in enhancing biodiversity: An example from Bhutan. *Biological Conservation* 177:82-89.

Sept 3  Discussion (with Dr Siebert)
Sept 8  **Historic Land Uses and Legacies: Biophysical Principles and Practices**
Guest Lecture Dr. Stephen Siebert, Emeritus Professor, Forest Management, UM

**Readings**

Sept 10  **Discussion**

Sept 15  **From Colonialism to Globalized “Development” Projects: What is Valued?**
Lecture by Dr Jill Belsky
Lecture by Marilyn Waring

**Readings**
- McMichael 2016 chapters 1-4

**Additional:**
- *Lecture by Dr. Tania Li* (2017). *There is no one trajectory of development*

Sept 17  **Discussion**

Sept 22  **Feminist/Peoples’ Environmental and Food Movements: Greenbelt and La Via Campesina**
Watch video “Taking Roots: The Vision of Wangari Maathai”
Watch Phil McMichael, “Connecting local struggle with Global Activism in the Intergovernance Arena: The Importance of the Food Sovereignty Narrative”

**Readings**
- McMichael 2016 p169-178, chapters 7-8
- The Economist, July 11-17th 2020 (print edition) – two articles on “The New Ideology of Race”

Sept 24  **Discussion**
Conservation and Development Approaches and Debates

Sept 29  The Contested Nature of Conservation through Protected Areas
Lecture by Dr Jill Belsky

Readings
- (Background/skim) IUCN on protected areas:

Additional:
- (skim)

Oct 1 Discussion

Oct 6 Conservation Conflicts: Case Study in Lore-Lindu National Park, Indonesia
Guest Lecture Dr. Stephen Siebert, Emeritus Professor, Forest Management, UM

Readings

Additional:

Oct 8 Discussion

Oct 13 Integrating Conservation and Development: Communities in Conservation
Watch video Community Ecotourism in Gales Pt (Produced by Outside TV, 2000) – link to be provided
Watch (very short) video on wild harvesting

Readings
- Stasja Koot, 12 February 2019, Trophy Hunting for Conservation and Development?

**Additional:**
- **Lecture by Jill Belsky (2017) “Creating community forests in Bhutan and Montana.”**

**Oct 15** Discussion

**Oct 20** Social Institutions in Environmental Governance
Lecture by Dr. Jill Belsky
Lecture by Dr. Elinor Ostrom, 2012 Hayek Lecture: Prof Elinor Ostrom speaks on market failure and government regulation

**Readings**
- Cleaver, F. 2012. *Development Through Bricolage: Rethinking Institutions for Natural Resource Management.* London and NY: Routledge. chaps 1,2,4,5 [note we will focus on these chapters, but more chapters are included in two pdfs]

**Additional:**
- **Watch Dr. Elinor Ostrom, give The Prize Lecture**

**Oct 22** Discussion

**Oct 27** Market-Based Conservation (Includes PES, Green Neoliberalism, Neoliberal Conservation)
Lecture by Dr Jill Belsky
Watch video: Buyer be Fair

**Readings**
[Background on Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)]
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Payment_for_ecosystem_services#:~:text=Payments%20for%20ecosystem%20services%20(PES,sort%20of%20ecological%20service.
Igoe et al., 2009. Problematising Neoliberal Biodiversity Conservation: Displaced and Disobedient Knowledge
Financialization of Nature [Friends of the Earth International]
Additional:


Oct 29 Discussion

Nov 3 Capitalism and Climate Change

Watch video: This changes everything, Naomi Klein

Additional:

[lecture by Naomi Klein available]

Readings


Nov 5 Discussion

Towards Radical Conservation Innovation and Transformation

Nov 10 The end or beginning of Sustainability, Resilience, Convivial Conservation or ...?

Tuesday ZOOM Class Discussion

Readings

Nov 12
Four Conservation Positions and a Case for Convivial Conservation: Towards a Refocus on the Links between Conservation and Development
Thursday ZOOM Class Discussion

Readings
• What is CONVIVA?

Key Literature Cited in Above:

Nov 17  Conducting ICD Research: Practical Challenges and Opportunities
Tuesday ZOOM Class Discussion

Readings
• (skim) Asia Forest Network. Participatory rural appraisal for community forest management: tools and techniques. 2002.

Nov 19  Course Wrap Up
Thursday ZOOM Class Discussion

• Lecture by Dr Paul Robbins, “Is less more or is more less: scaling the political ecologies of the future”

Feel free to email ahead or come to class with topics to discuss, questions, observations, readings to share; and be prepared to briefly summarize key insights from your final paper.

Final paper due on or before Nov 25. Email as a word doc to jill.belsky@umontana.edu

Have a healthy and happy Thanksgiving