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Anthropology Program
Wed 1-4 ; E53-354
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Environmental Conflict: (Anthro 21A.429J/STS.320J)

This graduate-level anthropology class uses a variety of contemporary environmental conflicts to explore the mutually co-produced relationships that exist among humans, non-humans, and natural environments as well as the social, economic, political, and ecological stakes that such conflicts represent. In particular, this class focuses on conflicts relating to climate change, natural gas exploration, toxic exposures/environmental health, multispecies relations, extractive economics, and how we judge what is “good” environmental knowledge. We will consider how particular environmental conflicts play out in different parts of the world, including the United States, Tanzania, Russia, China, and the Arctic region. While class materials are interdisciplinary, the orientation of the class is anthropological. It takes the vantage point of exploring these conflicts from the perspective of various actors “on the ground,” while asking what analytical concepts and frameworks can help make sense of these everyday realities. Historically, this class has encouraged active exploration through field trips and a hands-on citizen science workshop as well as the use of visual media. Class discussions will also include conversations about research methods, including ethnography, oral history, and “multimodal” techniques.

Class requirements: Classes form communities over the course of the semester. Given that this class meets only one day per week, **class attendance is crucial**. Consequently, unless there are extenuating circumstances - in which case please email me to let me know - you are expected to attend each class. Unexcused absences will result in a lowered grade. Students are responsible for all required weekly readings and for FOUR 1-2 page (single-spaced) reaction papers over the course of the semester (one for four out of the six questions/topics that structure the class). The reaction papers are meant to give a succinct overview of the main points of the readings you are engaging with while also offering your own perspective on the topic. Papers are due on the Friday after the class for which the reading is assigned. Please note you are NOT responsible for reading “recommended readings” – these readings are merely FYI, for consideration for final papers or for future exploration.

Graduate students are also responsible for a **15 pg. final research paper** exploring a particular environmental conflict. [Advanced undergraduates taking the class may request an alternate assignment]. Final paper topics will be due on March 22 and an annotated bibliography and outline on April 5. If you would like to submit a rough draft for feedback, please do that by May 3rd. The final paper is due on May 10, the last day of class. The reaction papers are worth 40% of the final grade; the research paper will also be worth 40%; and class participation will be

worth 20%.

Required Books:

- Candis Callison, 2014, *How Climate Change Comes to Matter: The Communal Life of Facts*. Duke University Press.
- Sara Wylie, 2018, *Fractivism: Corporate Bodies and Chemical Bonds*, Duke University Press.
- Anna Tsing, 2015, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in the Capitalist Ruins*, Princeton University Press.
- Alex Blanchette, 2020, *Porkopolis: American Animality, Standardized Life, and the Factory Farm*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Adriana Petryna, 2022, *Horizon Work: At the Edges of Knowledge in an Age of Runaway Climate Change*, Princeton University Press.

INTRODUCTION:

- **Feb. 8** - Introduction. In our current moment of overlapping crises, how is thinking ethnographically valuable in understanding and addressing the conflicts and crises we face?

PROBLEM ONE: Why Does It Take More Than Science to Generate Agreement on Climate Change?

- **Feb. 15** – *Making Climate Change Meaningful*

READ: Chapters 1, 3 & 4 in How Climate Change Comes to Matter: The Communal Life of Facts by Candis Callison. Chapters 1 & 5 from The Whale and the Supercomputer: On the Northern Front of Climate Change by Charles Wolforth.

FILM: (view clips in class): *Qapirangajuq: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change*, dir. Zach Kanuk, 2010

Feb 22 – *Climate Change II: Political Struggles and Disinformation*

READ: Chaps 2 & 5 in Callison; Chapter 6 “The Denial of Global Warming” in Merchants of Doubt by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway; Chap 20 “Hotter” in Kochland by Christopher Leonard

FILM: view clips in class of documentary “Merchants of Doubt” [2014]

REACTION PAPER DUE FRIDAY, Feb 24th

PROBLEM TWO: Natural Gas Exploration: Savior or Scourge?

-March 1 –

Climate Change and the Politics of Extractivism

READ: preface and Pgs. 1-114 in Fractivism by Sara Wylie.

FILM: begin *Gasland*, dir. Josh Fox, 2010

March 8

READ: Pgs. 115-278 in Fractivism

Skype discussion with Prof. Sara Wylie, Northeastern

FILM: finish *Gasland*, dir. Josh Fox, 2010

REACTION PAPER DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 10

PROBLEM THREE: How Do We Know How Toxicity Affects Bodies?

March 15

Do Bodies Have Histories? READ: selections from Nancy Langston, Toxic Bodies (along with two brief supplemental readings on endocrine disruption “The Politics of Plastic” by Sarah Vogel and “The Big Test for Bisphenol A” in *Nature*); Chapter 4 in Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge by Linda Nash; pgs. 81- 116 in Manual for Survival: A Chernobyl Guide to the Future by Kate Brown (2019); Chap 8 in Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade by Gabrielle Hecht (2012)

Film: *A Healthy Baby Girl*, dir. Judith Helfand, 1997

March 22

From Environmental Justice to Climate Justice

READ: Chap 3 in Jason Corburn, Street Science (2005); Chap 7 in Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement by Robert Gottlieb (2005); “Post-Carbon Amnesia: Toward a Recognition of Racial Grief in Renewable Energy Futures” by Myles Lennon (2020) in *Science, Technology, and Human Values*; Chris Walley and Sara Wylie “Civic

Technoscience and the 'ParaIndustrial' Carbon Economy: Balloon-Mapping in a Rust-Belt City"
(unpublished manuscript)

GUEST SPEAKER: TBA

FINAL PAPER TOPICS DUE IN CLASS

REACTION PAPER DUE: March 24

March 29th – NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

PROBLEM FOUR: HOW ARE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRECARITY LINKED?

April 5 –

What Can Supply Chain Capitalism Teach Us about the Environment?

READ: selections from Anna Tsing's The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins (2015).

DUE: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY for final paper

April 12

Bringing Together Labor and Environmental Studies

READ: selections from Porkopolis by Alex Blanchette (2020), Duke University Press.

GUEST LECTURER: Alex Blanchette

Recommended: intro to How Nature Works: Rethinking Labor on a Troubled Planet, eds. Sarah Besky and Alex Blanchette

REACTION PAPER DUE FRIDAY APRIL 14

PROBLEM FIVE: How Are We All Connected?

April 19

Exploring Methods and Rethinking Conservation **READ:** “They Scorn Us Because We are Uneducated”: Power and Knowledge in a Tanzanian Marine Park” in *Ethnography* by Christine Walley; Chap 5 “On the Backs of Elephants” in Michael Hathaway *Environmental Winds: Making the Global in Southwest China*; Hugh Gusterson, “Ethnographic Research”; Alessandro Portelli “The Peculiarities of Oral History.”

IN CLASS DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH METHODS: - discussion of ethnographic fieldwork, oral histories, multimodal and collaborative research methodologies; view fieldnotes and other research “artifacts”

April 26 –

Multi-Species Connectedness and Indigenous Futures. **READ:** Kyle White “Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene;” “Capitalist Transformation and Settler Colonialism: Theorizing the Interface” in *American Anthropologist* by Ikaika Ramones and Sally Merry; selections from Robin Wall Kimmerer *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

Recommended Reading: The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography,” by S. Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich, *Cultural Anthropology* 25(4):545-576, 2010; Donna Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*

IN CLASS: screening and discussion: “Our Sacred Obligation” (on youtube) w/ Santana Rabang, Children of the Setting Sun Productions

REACTION PAPER DUE FRIDAY April 28

May 3 – CONCLUDING CONVERSATION: Envisioning Alternative Futures

READ: *Horizon Work: At the Edges of Knowledge in an Age of Runaway Climate Change* by Adriana Petryna

IF SUBMITTING ROUGH DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER FOR FEEDBACK, DUE TODAY

May 10 – FIELD TRIP: MOUNT AUBURN CEMETARY

Meet at Egyptian Revival Gateway on Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge; the cemetery is easily accessible by 71 and 73 buses from Harvard Square as well as by bicycle [bike racks located within main gate])

TOUR AND CONCLUDING CONVERSATION

Recommended reading: pgs. 1-53; Donald Worster, section on Thoreau in Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas

FINAL PAPERS DUE