

Environmental Political Thought

Convenor

Dr Sean Fleming, Christ's College (srf44@cam.ac.uk)

Time

Wednesdays from 3-5PM, starting on 26 January 2022

Description

How should human societies relate to the Earth and to other species? What kinds of political institutions are conducive to a sustainable society? This module explores a range of contemporary political ideas about the environment—from reformist to radical, from optimistic to apocalyptic, from left to right, and from West to East. The focus is on critiques of liberal environmentalism.

Until fairly recently, the environment was of little concern to most political theorists. Politics was understood as a human activity, and political theory was concerned with the question of how human beings ought to live with each other. But in the age of climate change, questions about how human beings should relate to the environment and to other species have become difficult to ignore. Older strands of political thought, such as liberalism, socialism, and conservatism, have had to adapt. New worldviews, such as deep ecology, have emerged. Some defunct ideas and ideologies, such as Malthusianism and primitivism, have re-emerged. Meanwhile, Indigenous and non-Western thinkers have challenged the dominant understandings of the environment in Europe and North America. Once seen as a peripheral concern, the environment is now at the forefront of political theory.

This seminar will guide participants through the classic works, the cutting edge, and the darkest corners of environmental political thought. We will analyze, compare, and critique a series of 'green' ideologies and question the boundaries between these ideologies. Participants will develop a better understanding of the worldviews and assumptions that inform environmental policymaking, activism, and political debate.

Teaching

The module comprises seven two-hour seminars.

Readings

Participants are expected to read all *essential readings* in advance and come to the seminars prepared to discuss them. These will be available on the Moodle site or through the library. The *further readings* are optional but will be helpful for exploring a topic in more depth and for developing an essay idea.

Assessment

Participants will be graded on the basis of a 3,000-word essay, which is due on 17 March. Further instructions and a list of topics will be provided in January.

Week 1 – Liberal and Post-Liberal Environmentalism

Essential reading:

- Marcel Wissenburg, "Liberalism," in *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 20-34.
- Robyn Eckersley, *The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 1-18.

Further reading:

- Robyn Eckersley, "Exploring the Environmental Spectrum: From Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism," in *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 35-47.
- Andrew Vincent, "Green Political Theory," in *Political Concepts*, eds. Richard Bellamy and Andrew Mason (Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 182-95.
- Teena Gabrielson, Cheryl Hall, John M. Meyer, and David Schlosberg, "What is Environmental Political Theory?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 3-14.
- John Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*, Third Ed. (Oxford, 2013).
- Andrew Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, Third Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001).
- Derek Bell, "Liberal Environmental Citizenship," *Environmental Politics* 14, no. 2 (2005): 179-94.
- David Miller, "Social Justice and Environmental Goods," in *Fairness and Futurity: Essays on Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice*, ed. Andrew Dobson (Oxford, 1999), pp. 151-72.
- Marcel Wissenburg, *Green Liberalism: The Free and the Green Society* (London: UCL Press, 1998).
- Robyn Eckersley, "Review of *Green Liberalism*," *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning* 1, no. 3 (1999): 261-63.
- John Dryzek, *Rational Ecology: Environment and Political Economy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).
- Robert Goodin, *Green Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

Week 2 – Democracy and the Environment

Essential reading:

- Terence Ball, "Democracy," in *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge*, pp. 131-47.
- Val Plumwood, "Has Democracy Failed Ecology? An Ecofeminist Perspective," *Environmental Politics* 4, no. 4 (1995): 134-68.

Further reading:

- Quan Li and Rafael Reuveny, "Democracy and Environmental Degradation," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (2006): 935-56.

- Manus Midlarsky, "Democracy and the Environment: An Empirical Assessment," *Journal of Peace Research* 35, no. 3 (1998): 341-61.
- Graham Smith, *Deliberative Democracy and the Environment* (London: Routledge, 2003).

Week 3 – Conservatism and Conservation

Essential reading:

- Wendell Berry, "Think Little," "The Total Economy," and "The Agrarian Standard," in *The World-Ending Fire: The Essential Wendell Berry* (London: Penguin, 2018), pp. 48-58, 66-81, 133-43.
- Bruce Pilbeam, "Natural Allies? Mapping the Relationship between Conservatism and Environmentalism," *Political Studies* 51, no. 3 (2003): 490-503.

Further reading:

- Roger Scruton, "Conservatism," in *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge*, pp. 7-19.
- Roger Scruton, *How to Think Seriously about the Planet: The Case for an Environmental Conservatism* (Oxford, 2012).
- John Bliese, "Traditionalist Conservatism and Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 19, no. 2 (1997): 135-51.
- Philip Cafaro, "Patriotism as an Environmental Virtue," *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 23, no. 1-2 (2010): 185-206.

Week 4 – Deep Ecology and Social Ecology

Essential reading:

- Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," *Inquiry* 16 (1977): 95-100.
- Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement," *Natural Resources Journal* 20, no. 2 (1980): 299-322.
- Murray Bookchin, "Social Ecology Versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," *Green Perspectives: Newsletter of the Green Program Project*, no. 4-5 (Summer 1987): 1-23.

Further reading:

- Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
- Martha Lee, *Earth First! Environmental Apocalypse* (Syracuse University Press, 1995).
- Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1985).
- Edward Abbey, *The Money Wrench Gang* (London: Penguin, 2004 [1975]).
- Arne Naess, "A Defence of the Deep Ecology Movement," *Environmental Ethics* 6, no. 3 (1984): 265-70.

- Ariel Salleh, "Deeper than Deep Ecology: The Eco-Feminist Connection," *Environmental Ethics* 6, no. 4 (1984): 339-45.
- Warwick Fox, "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and Its Parallels," *Environmental Ethics* 11, no. 1 (1989): 5-25.
- Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Week 5 – Primitivism and Critiques of Modern Technology

Essential reading:

- Theodore Kaczynski (the Unabomber), "Industrial Society and Its Future," *Washington Post*, 19 September 1995, especially paragraphs 1-5, 33-76, 143-84, and 204-12.
- Chellis Glendenning, "Notes Toward a Neo-Luddite Manifesto," *Utne Reader* (March/April 1990).

Further reading:

- Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 1964 [1954]).
- Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (London: Marion Boyars, 2009 [1973])
- Sean Fleming, "The Unabomber and the Origins of Anti-Tech Radicalism," *Journal of Political Ideologies* (forthcoming), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2021.1921940>
- Theodore Kaczynski (the Unabomber), "Chapter 2: Why the Technological System Will Destroy Itself," in *Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How*, Second Edition (Scottsdale, AZ: Fitch & Madison, 2020).
- Mauro Lubrano, "Stop the Machines: How Emerging Technologies Are Fomenting the War on Civilization," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (forthcoming), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2021.1919097>
- John Zerzan, "Future Primitive," in *Future Primitive Revisited* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 1994).
- Wendell Berry, "Horse-Drawn Tools and the Doctrine of Labor Saving" and "Feminism, the Body, and the Machine" in *The World-Ending Fire: The Essential Wendell Berry* (London: Penguin, 2018), pp. 152-59, 244-62.
- Paul Kingsnorth and Dougald Hine, "Uncivilisation: The *Dark Mountain* Manifesto," 2009.
- Derrick Jensen, *Endgame Volume One: The Problem of Civilization* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006).
- Kirkpatrick Sale, *Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

Week 6 – Neo-Malthusianism and Eco-Fascism

Essential reading:

- Garrett Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor," *Psychology Today* (1974).
- Pentti Linkola, "A Perspective on the State of the World, or the ABC of the Deep Ecologist," in *Can Life Prevail?: A Revolutionary Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (Arktos, 2002), pp. 166-71.
- Betsy Hartmann, "The Greening of Hate: An Environmentalist's Essay," in *Greenwash: Nativists, Environmentalism & the Hypocrisy of Hate* (Southern Poverty Law Centre 2010), pp. 13-15.
- Peter Staudenmaier, "Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and Its Historical Antecedents," in *Ecofascism Revisited: Lessons from the German Experience*, eds. Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier (Porsgrunn: New Compass Press, 2011), 13-42.

Further reading:

- Daniel Rueda, "Neoecofascism: The Example of the United States," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 14, no. 2 (2020), pp. 95-126.
- Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968).
- Philip Cafaro, *How Many Is Too Many?* (University of Chicago Press, 2014).
- Monica Aufrecht, "Rethinking 'Greening of Hate': Climate Emissions, Immigration, and the Last Frontier," *Ethics and the Environment* 17, no. 2 (2012): 51-74.

Week 7 – Environmentalism Beyond the West

Essential reading:

- Farah Godrej, "Culture and Difference: Non-Western Approaches to Defining Environmental Issues," in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 39-56.
- Enrique Salmón, "Kincentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human-Nature Relationship," *Ecological Applications* 10, no. 5 (2000): 1327-32.

Further reading:

- Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation," *Environmental Ethics* 11, no. 1 (1989): 71-83.
- Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900*, (Cambridge, 1986).
- Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1995).
- Helaine Selin, ed., *Nature Across Cultures: Views of Nature and the Environment in Non-Western Cultures* (Manchester: Springer, 2003).
- Kevin Behrens, "An African Relational Environmentalism and Moral Considerability," *Environmental Ethics* 36, no. 1 (2014): 63-82.

- Andrew Geddis and Jacinta Ruru, "Places as Persons: Creating a New Framework for Māori-Crown Relations," in *The Frontiers of Public Law*, ed. Jason Varuhas (Hart Publishing, 2019).
- J. Peter Brosius, "Endangered Forest, Endangered People: Environmentalist Representations of Indigenous Knowledge," *Human Ecology* 25, no. 1 (1997): 47-69.
- Elizabeth Macpherson, *Indigenous Water Rights in Law and Regulation* (Cambridge, 2019).
- Jacinta Ruru, "Listening to Papatūānuku: A Call to Reform Water Law," *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* 48, no. 2-3 (2018): 215-24.
- Catherine Magallanes, "Maori Cultural Rights in Aotearoa New Zealand: Protecting the Cosmology That Protects the Environment," *Widener Law Review* 21, no. 2 (2015): 273-328.
- Coleen Fox et al., "'The River Is Us; The River is in Our Veins': Re-Defining River Restoration in Three Indigenous Communities," *Sustainability Science* 12, no. 4 (2017): 521-33.