

USP 589 Theorizing Urban Natures

Winter 2023 (Credits 4)

Prof. C.N.E. Corbin

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3pm to 5pm use <https://ccorbin.youcanbook.me/>

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Geographer David Harvey famously stated that there is "nothing unnatural about New York City," an assertion that challenged dominant conceptualizations of nature as distinct from the built environment (or society, more broadly). How have dualisms such as "natural vs. unnatural" and "city vs. country" shaped our understandings of cities and the ecological systems to which they belong? How might an integrated conceptualization of co-evolving social, technological, and biophysical processes – that takes seriously issues of race, class, and gender, power, politics, and capital – help us better understand, imagine, and shape/produce urban natures?

This reading-intensive, discussion-driven graduate seminar introduces students of urban studies, planning, geography, environmental science, anthropology, and sociology to various ways of theorizing urban "nature." We will first think through "nature" and different ways of "knowing" it. We will then very briefly address methodological and theoretical approaches grounded in ecology, before focusing on social science frameworks emphasizing social processes. After discussing urban environmental history, we turn to more theoretically informed approaches, from urban political ecology with its Marxian emphasis on structure, to post-structuralist approaches that rethink subject-object relations: actor-networks, assemblages, non-human agency, and the role of affect and emotion, among others. We will discuss the historical evolution of these various theories (with attention to the social, political, and economic contexts in which they arose) while critically examining their differences and underlying assumptions. We will also address the implications of each framework for research, practice, and politics.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The course objectives are to:

- Introduce students to a variety of epistemological and ontological interpretations of urban "nature" used by researchers, i.e., different ways of "knowing" and the different ecologies that result
- Differentiate constructivist frameworks used in the social sciences from positivist frameworks used in urban ecology and other quantitative approaches
- Evaluate the implications of using these different approaches: for research, for management and policy, and for politics.

Students will be able to:

- Describe various approaches to understanding urban natures, including urban ecology, urban political ecology, actor-network theory, and others, and understand the differences and complementarities between these different frameworks
- Relate different frameworks to each other and to the historical and political economic contexts in which they arise
- Explain what is gained and what is lost by using a particular approach.

Course Structure & Assignments

At the graduate level, my job as a professor isn't to lecture, but rather, to structure the course, to ask questions, and to keep us on track, if necessary. Our goals each week are to critically engage with the readings, to situate them conceptually in relation to the other readings, and to think about their theoretical and methodological implications for your own research. In order for this to work, it's essential that you come to class having read all assigned readings and prepared to discuss them thoughtfully and critically. It will be obvious if you come unprepared. Grades are based on the following:

Participation (15%)

This is a discussion-driven seminar. You are responsible for reading the assigned materials before class and coming ready to discuss. We'll be building each week on the previous readings, so it's vital to come to class and to keep up with the readings. Everyone must join in the discussion. If you're shy, push yourself to talk. If you're a talker, be conscientious not to dominate the discussion, i.e., remember to "share air." To help move the discussion forward, you should come to class each week with one or two discussion questions. You will need to post these to the week's Discussion Questions forum on **Canvas by 6 pm on Sunday** so others have a chance to read over them before we meet. NB: You don't need to post questions to Canvas if you are leading discussion (see below), so everyone should post 7 times over the course of the term. Barring emergencies, please let me know ahead of time if you are unable to come to class.

Discussion Facilitation (15%)

Everyone will be required to lead the discussion at least once along with a partner. You should be prepared to walk us through the key concepts/arguments/theories from the week's readings. You should also be prepared to get our discussion started (and keep it going, if necessary!) with a few questions/topics/themes of import. Look over the discussion questions posted to Canvas by your peers as you organize your questions and discussion topics. Please prepare an outline/diagram/visual aid to steward us through this process. This can be a one-page handout, or you can use the blackboard.

Reading Responses (35%)

You are responsible for writing a short reading response (~250 to 500 words) for any 7 of our class meetings. You don't have to prepare a response the week that you lead discussion (so essentially you get one freebie). Your response should not simply summarize the key arguments from the reading; rather, it should synthesize the key insights you take from the ensemble of readings and raise new questions or can respond to some of the questions raised by others (see above). Please submit your responses before the start of class via Canvas. ****Please use 1" margins, 12pt Times New Roman font, and single-spaced!**** NB: You must turn in a response for any week you are absent, barring extenuating circumstances.

Paper (35%)

In addition to your weekly reading responses, you are required to write a final paper of 3,000 to 4,000 words, or 6 to 8 single-spaced pages (12 pt. Times New Roman, 1" margins). This should be a well-structured essay that

applies some of the theory we have covered in the course to your research or professional area of interest. Please submit as a Word or PDF document. You will have 5 minutes to present your paper to the class on our last day.

Due Wednesday, 3/22/2023, at 6 pm via Canvas

You may take this course P/NP or for a letter grade. My general rubric for graduate-level assignments is as follows:

- A+ or A Demonstrates original thought and synthesis of ideas, sophisticated, cogent analysis, and is clearly written or presented. Excellent work.
- A- or B+ Presents above average analysis with appropriate evidence to support the ideas and is clearly written or presented. Very good work.
- B or B- Shows a basic level of understanding, with analysis limited to the most obvious arguments. Writing is competent. Adequate work.
- C+ or below Misunderstands or misrepresents the material or is so poorly written presented as to obscure the analysis. Inadequate work.

Grading

Temporary P/NP option

P/NP grades have no impact on your grade point average (GPA), but P/NP courses on your transcript could possibly be viewed unfavorably by committees evaluating you for scholarships, graduate school, etc. Before choosing the P/NP option, review the university's policy and discuss with your academic advisor whether it is the right choice for you. You sign up for the P/NP grading option on Banweb; the instructor cannot see what you chose until they submit your final grade for the course. Make sure to check the deadline for changing your grading <https://www.pdx.edu/registration/academic-calendar>. Contact the registrar with any questions about the policy and registration.

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to be ethical not only in the classroom, but also out of the classroom. It is in all students' interest to avoid committing acts of academic dishonesty and to discourage others from committing such acts. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to the following examples, engages in any form of academic deceit; refers to materials or sources or uses devices not authorized by the instructor for use during any quiz or assignment; provides inappropriate aid to another person in connection with any quiz or assignment; engages in Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of claiming someone's work as your own through copying it without giving the creator of the work credit. Plagiarism can also include using another person's theories, ideas, or phrases without proper attribution. The simplest way to avoid plagiarizing is to always cite the sources from which you gather information or develop arguments – just cite anything you use from someone else (it actually makes your work stronger!). Plagiarism is a serious issue and is a violation of the [PSU Student ConductCode](#). University policy requires instructors to report all instances of plagiarism and penalize the perpetrator(s) according to guidelines set. Please see me if you ever have any questions about how to cite your work.

Submitting work online

For assignments that require uploading files to Canvas, it is the student's responsibility to verify that:

- (1) all files are submitted in Canvas prior to the deadline and
- (2) all submitted files are those that the student intends to be graded for the assignment

Submitting the "wrong" file by accident is not acceptable grounds for a deadline extension. Assignment grades will be based on the file submitted prior to the posted deadline. Files submitted in a format that cannot be accessed by

the instructor cannot be graded and will therefore receive a 0. Acceptable file formats are MS Office formats (e.g. Word, Excel, PowerPoint) or PDF files. Individual assignment instructions may contain a required file format.

Technology access

Proficiency in the use of Canvas, PSU email, and other computer tools such as ZOOM or part of google suite is required for this course. This course requires consistent access to functioning computer equipment and Internet access throughout the length of the course. Reliance on a cellular connection may not provide reliable and fast access to online learning resources. Here are some broadband programs that are free or low-cost:<https://www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/are-there-government-programs-to-help-me-get-internet-service>.

Student Resources

As PSU students, you have access to a number of excellent resources to assist you with writing and research. The PSU Writing Center offers in-person appointment and on-line tools to help you craft your papers (<https://www.pdx.edu/writing-center/>). The PSU library system also offers a number of resources to help you research more effectively and efficiently (<https://library.pdx.edu/services/students/>). I highly recommend you utilize both of these sources given that this course relies heavily on your writing and research for evaluation.

Emergency Funds: <https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/emergency-funds>

CUPA Dean's Hardship fund Contact Ryan Moczulski the Deans Fiscal Coordinator/Accountant by either email at rmocz2@pdx.edu or phone at 503-725-5234. This is an option in addition to university level emergency financial assistance and other financial services.

Access and inclusion for Students with disabilities

PSU values diversity and inclusion; My goal is to create a learning environment that is accessible, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. I am committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. Additionally, the Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment. The DRC works with students who have physical, learning, cognitive, mental health, sensory, and other disabilities.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations.

If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received your faculty notification letter from the DRC so we can discuss your accommodations.

The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, Suite 116. You can also contact the DRC at 503-725-4150 or, drc@pdx.edu. Visit the DRC online at <https://www.pdx.edu/disability-resource-center/>.

Sexual Harassment and Safe Campus

Portland State is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or sexual harassment, know that help and support are available. Information about PSU's support services on campus, including confidential services and reporting options, can be found on PSU's Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website at: <http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help> or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672 or

schedule Online at <https://psuwrc.youcanbook.me> . You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to:

- PSU's Title IX Coordinator: Julie Caron by calling 503-725-4410, via email at titleixcoordinator@pdx.edu or in person at Richard and Maureen Neuberger Center (RMNC), 1600 SW 4th Ave, Suite 830
- Deputy Title IX Coordinator: Yesenia Gutierrez by calling 503-725-4413, via email at yesenia.gutierrez.gdi@pdx.edu or in person at RMNC, 1600 SW 4th Ave, Suite 830

Please be aware that all PSU faculty members and instructors are required to report information of an incident that may constitute prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. This means that if you tell me about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence that may have violated university policy or student code of conduct, I have to share the information with my supervisor, the University's Title IX Coordinator or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. However, the Title IX Coordinators will keep the information confidential and refer you to a confidential advocate. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module *Creating a Safe Campus*.

Course Materials: USP 589 Theorizing Urban Natures	
Week 1 1/10/2023	Introduction
	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreements for Multicultural Interaction in the (<i>virtual</i>) Classroom, Adapted from the East Bay Meditation Center Agreements • Getting and Giving Feedback on Academic Work [An excerpt from "How to Be a Good Graduate Student" by Marie desJardins (March 1994)] • How to succeed in a graduate seminar • Discussion or Aggression? Arrogance and Despair in Graduate School by Toril Moi • Braun, Bruce. "Environmental Issues: Writing a More-than-Human Urban Geography." <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 29, no. 5 (2005): 635–50.
Week 2 1/17/2023	Knowing Nature: <u>No Class</u>
	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." <i>Environmental History</i> 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 7–28. • Polanyi, Karl. "The Self-Regulating Market and the Fictitious Commodities: Land, Labor, and Money." In <i>The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time</i>, 71–80. Beacon Press, 2001. • Demeritt, David. "What Is the 'Social Construction of Nature'? A Typology and Sympathetic Critique." <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 26, no. 6 (2002): 767–90. • Smith, Neil. "Ideology of Nature." In <i>Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space</i>, 10–48. Verso Books, 2010.
Week 3 1/24/2023	Urban Environmental History
	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cronon, William. "Dreaming the Metropolis." In <i>Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West</i>, 23-54. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992. • Whiston Spirm, Anne. "Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Fredrick Law Olmsted." In <i>Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature</i>, edited by William Cronon, 91–113. W. W. Norton & Company, 1996. • Rosen, Christine Meisner, and Joel Arthur Tarr. "The Importance of an Urban Perspective in Environmental History." <i>Journal of Urban History</i> 20, no. 3 (1994): 299–310. • Parsons, Kermit Carlyle, and David Schuyler. "From Garden City to Green City: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard." Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. [Intro & Chapter 1]

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jones, Karen R. "The Lungs of the City': Green Space, Public Health and Bodily Metaphor in the Landscape of Urban Park History." <i>Environment and History</i> 24, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): 39–58.
Week 4 1/31/2023	Urban Political Ecology
	<p><u>Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robbins, Paul. "Political versus Apolitical Ecologies." In <i>Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction</i>, Second Edition., 11–24. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Harrill, Rich. "Political Ecology and Planning Theory." <i>Journal of Planning Education and Research</i> 19, no. 1 (1999): 67–75. Swyngedouw, Erik, and Nikolas C. Heynen. "Urban Political Ecology, Justice and the Politics of Scale." <i>Antipode</i> 35, no. 5 (2003): 898–918. Heynen, Nik. "Urban Political Ecology I: The Urban Century." <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 38, no. 4 (2014): 598–604. Angelo, Hillary, and David Wachsmuth. "Urbanizing Urban Political Ecology: A Critique of Methodological Cityism." <i>International Journal of Urban and Regional Research</i> 39, no. 1 (2015): 16–27. Gandy, Matthew. "Urban Political Ecology: A Critical Reconfiguration." <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 46, no. 1 (2022): 21–43.
Week 5 2/7/2023	Metabolism and Flows
	<p><u>Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swyngedouw, Erik. "Metabolic Urbanization: The Making of Cyborg Cities." In <i>In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism</i>, edited by Nik Heynen, Erik Swyngedouw, and Maria Kaika, 20–39. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006. Barles, Sabine. "Society, Energy and Materials: The Contribution of Urban Metabolism Studies to Sustainable Urban Development Issues." <i>Journal of Environmental Planning and Management</i> 53, no. 4 (June 1, 2010): 439–55. Broto, Vanesa Castán, Adriana Allen, and Elizabeth Rapoport. "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Urban Metabolism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Urban Metabolism." <i>Journal of Industrial Ecology</i> 16, no. 6 (2012): 851–61. Wachsmuth, David. "Three Ecologies: Urban Metabolism and the Society-Nature Opposition." <i>The Sociological Quarterly</i> 53, no. 4 (September 1, 2012): 506–23. Newell, Joshua P., and Joshua J. Cousins. "The Boundaries of Urban Metabolism: Towards a Political-Industrial Ecology." <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 39, no. 6 (December 1, 2015): 702–28.
Week 6 2/14/2023	Neoliberal Natures
	<p><u>Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> McCarthy, James, and Scott Prudham. "Neoliberal nature and the nature of neoliberalism." <i>Geoforum</i> 35, no. 3 (2004): 275–283.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castree, Noel. "Neoliberalism and the Biophysical Environment 1: What 'Neoliberalism' Is, and What Difference Nature Makes to It: Neoliberalism and the Biophysical Environment 1." <i>Geography Compass</i> 4, no. 12 (2010): 1725–33. • Bakker, Karen. "The Limits of 'Neoliberal Natures': Debating Green Neoliberalism." <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> 34, no. 6 (2010): 715–35. • Quastel, Noah. "Political Ecologies of Gentrification." <i>Urban Geography</i> 30, no. 7 (2009): 694–725. • Gould, Kenneth, and Tammy Lewis. "Conceptualizing Green Gentrification." In <i>Green Gentrification</i>, 23–41. Routledge, 2016.
<p>Week 7 2/21/2023</p>	<p>Networks, Assemblages, and Situated Knowledge</p>
	<p><u>Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." <i>Feminist Studies</i> 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99. • Murdoch, Jonathan. "Inhuman/Nonhuman/Human: Actor-Network Theory and the Prospects for a Nondualistic and Symmetrical Perspective on Nature and Society." <i>Environment and Planning D: Society and Space</i> 15, no. 6 (1997): 731–56. • Holifield, Ryan. "Actor-Network Theory as a Critical Approach to Environmental Justice: A Case against Synthesis with Urban Political Ecology." <i>Antipode</i> 41, no. 4 (2009): 637–58. • Blok, Anders. "Urban Green Assemblages: An ANT View on Sustainable City Building Projects." <i>Science & Technology Studies</i> 26, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 5–24. • Mollett, Sharlene, and Caroline Faria. "Messing with Gender in Feminist Political Ecology." <i>Geoforum</i>, Risky natures, natures of risk, 45 (March 1, 2013): 116–25.
<p>Week 8 2/28/2023</p>	<p>Radical Ecologies</p>
	<p><u>Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kovel, Joel. "The Dialectic of Radical Ecologies." <i>Capitalism Nature Socialism</i> 14, no. 1 (2003): 75–87. • Shantz, J. "The Talking Nature Blues: Radical Ecology, Discursive Violence and the Constitution of Counter-Hegemonic Politics." <i>Atenea</i> 26, no. 1 (2006): 39–58. • Pulido, Laura, and Juan De Lara. "Reimagining 'Justice' in Environmental Justice: Radical Ecologies, Decolonial Thought, and the Black Radical Tradition." <i>Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space</i> 1, no. 1–2 (2018): 76–98. • LeiLani, Nishime, and Kim D. Hester Williams. "Introduction: Why Racial Ecologies?" In <i>Racial Ecologies</i>, edited by Nishime LeiLani and Kim D. Hester Williams, 3–15. University of Washington Press, 2018.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Svarstad, Hanne, and Tor A. Benjaminsen. "Reading Radical Environmental Justice through a Political Ecology Lens." <i>Geoforum</i> 108 (January 1, 2020): 1–11.
Week 9 3/7/2023	Ecologies of Power & Control
	<p><u>Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mukerji, Chandra. "Military Ambitions and Territorial Gardens." In <i>Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles</i>, 39–97. Cambridge University Press, 1997. • Taylor, Dorceta E. "Central Park as a Model for Social Control: Urban Parks, Social Class and Leisure Behavior in Nineteenth-Century America." <i>Journal of Leisure Research</i> 31, no. 4 (1999): 420–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.1999.11949875. • Weizman, Eyal. "Settlements: Optical Urbanism." In <i>Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation</i>, 111–37. Verso Books, 2012.
Week 10 3/14/2023	5 Minute Presentations
Finals Week!!! Final Projects Due on Wednesday, 3/22/2023, by 6 pm	