ENVS 450/550: POLITICAL ECOLOGY
Winter 2007
Monday/Wednesday 10:00-11:20, 204 Villard

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Political ecology examines the politics (in the broadest sense of the word) of the environment. Whereas environmental politics courses often focus on the role of government and interest groups in shaping specific environmental policies, political ecology expands our understanding of ‘politics’ to examine the roles of: 1) environmental rhetoric (‘discourse’), ideology, and knowledge; 2) politics and environmental change; 3) economic systems (including ‘globalization’); 4) gender-based dimensions of resource ownership and use; 5) and everyday struggles within communities and households (including ‘community’-based resource management) as they shape human relationships with nature. Although much of the political ecology literature comes from studies of the less-developed ‘third world,’ this course also examines the political ecology of the ‘first world.’

Course requirements:

This is a reading-intensive course, with about 50-60 pages of required reading per class, much of it from academic journals. The materials must be read thoroughly prior to class. Students who are unable to meet this requirement should not enroll in the class.

Students will hand in written responses to each reading at the beginning of each class, and will take turns leading discussion (in pairs). Students will also be required to submit a 10-12 page (maximum) term paper that applies at least one set of concepts from the course to a real-world environmental problem chosen by the student. There are no examinations. Course grades will be assigned according to the following weights: reading responses—25%; classroom attendance and participation (including reading presentations)—25%; term paper—50%.

The textbook for this course is Robbins’ *Political Ecology*, which is available at the UO Bookstore now. Additional readings will be posted on the class Blackboard web page.

Above: Poor women in Nigeria seize ChevronTexaco facility and win major concessions (July 2002)
COURSE OUTLINE & READINGS

INTRODUCTION

January 8 – Introduction

I. WHAT IS POLITICAL ECOLOGY?

January 10 – The hatchet and the seed


January 17 – Critical tools


January 22 – A field crystallizes


II. CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

January 24


January 29


III. POLITICAL ECOLOGY NOW

January 31 – Degradation and marginalization


February 5 – Regeneration and empowerment


February 7 – Conservation and control


February 12 – Conservation and control Part 2


February 14 – Environmental conflict


February 19 – Environmental conflict Part 2


February 21 – Environmental identity and social movements


IV. REGIONAL POLITICAL ECOLOGY

February 26 – China


February 28 – The American West


March 5 – The American West Part 2


March 7 – The American West Part 3


V. BRINGING IT HOME: CONSCIOUSNESS IN A GLOBAL CONSUMER SOCIETY

March 12 – Fair trade


March 14 – Urban political ecology
