Fall 2016
EES 79904, CRN 32830
Ecology & Political Theory
Professors Menser and Dahbour

Philosophy 779: Ecology and Political Theory, profs. Menser (EES) and Dahbour [Philosophy], Monday, 6:30-8:30

In the Age of the Anthropocene, philosophy no longer needs to argue for the moral value of the preservation and non-exploitation of nature. It must now attempt to formulate political ideas that can point toward an equitable, sustainable, and resilient maintenance of the conditions for human life. That is the premise of this course. In it, we hope to explore the emerging literature of environmental political theory, but from a wider perspective that is not premised on the human-environment dichotomy, but assumes that all forms of human society depend upon, and therefore require the justification of, particular systems of political ecology. We will explore this idea in its various facets—historical, institutional, local, and global.
First, recent literature re-reading the history of political philosophy (Plato to Adorno) from an ecological perspective will be considered. Second, ecological theories of democracy and the state—rethinking local political institutions for a sustainable future—will be discussed. Third, concepts of global environmentalism and ecological sovereignty—and which is more appropriate for addressing such concerns as food and water shortages, climate and ecosystem change, and environmental security and ecological refugees—will be examined. Finally, normative concepts employed in environmental policy debates, such as ecological modernization, sustainable development, and ecosystem resilience, will be explored.
Readings will be selected from such authors as William Ophuls, John Bellamy Foster, Maria Mies, Madhav Gadgil, Melissa Lane, John O’Neill, Piers Stephens, Robyn Eckersley, John Gray, Andrew Dobson, Kyle Pows Whyte, Andrew Light, Dale Jamieson, Michel Serres, and Daniel Deudney, among others. EES