

LAS 4935/ 6938: Environmental Justice and Development in Latin America: Afrodescendants, Peasants, and Indigenous Peoples' Rights

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Office Hours: to be defined and by appointment

Class Meeting Times and Location: Friday 12:50 - 3:50 (Periods 6-8) in the conference room, Grinter Hall 376 (3 hour seminar).

Graduate seminar open to advanced undergraduate students

This course emphasizes the conflicts and contradictions that have historically existed in the region between “development” and the expansion of rights for vulnerable populations. Development policies adopted by governments have affected rural populations by focusing on plantation economies, commodities, mining, and extractive and rentier industries. Conversely, in recent decades, there has been an increase in the adoption of legal strategies recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and peasants, including territorial rights and the rights of nature. These trends have seen varying degrees of progress, often encountering opposition, including various forms of violence against these populations.

This course proposes to critically examine the traditional approaches to development adopted by Latin American governments. Besides the historical high levels of inequality and poverty, this region has also been affected by the intertwined crises in energy, climate, and food. The course will specifically focus on the situations and experiences of indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and peasant populations. Drawing on perspectives from political ecology, critical agrarian studies, anthropology and geography, students will explore the historical, social, economic, and environmental factors that have shaped the lives and struggles of diverse rural populations in Latin America amidst recent global environmental and climate crises.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course:

- Students will have learned about theoretical discussions and diverse approaches to environmental justice with an emphasis on Latin America.
- They will have become familiar with the literature on the expansion of rights to indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and peasants, and will be able to analyze their scope, advantages and recent challenges for the exercise of those rights.
- They will be able to analyze discussions about development policies in Latin America, the actors involved, and the effects on rural populations.
- They will have carried out small investigations of cases in which development policies are applied that conflict with the rights that have been granted to various communities, also analyzing the political, social and legal strategies that various social groups in Latin America have adopted.

- Students will be able to make comparisons of national and regional cases in which development projects affect local populations, offering critical analysis of their social, political, cultural and environmental effects.

The **assessment** of these competencies will be carried out through analytical summaries of the readings/videos and papers, discussion facilitation, participation activities and a final paper.

Student Evaluation and Grading

A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit (undergraduates only).

Attendance and participation in weekly activities (15%): Class attendance is mandatory to facilitate the best learning environment for all students as this course is highly collaborative. Attendance will count for 5% of the final grade and encompasses both a student's physical presence in class. Participation (10%) involves their engagement in class activities and discussions, and fulfillment of those activities to good standard (rubric is provided on canvas). Students *may be excused from absences* with appropriate documentation according to the university policy (more information provided below).

Students that have an excused absence may still be responsible for completing the in-class activity in their own time.

Discussion facilitation (15%): each student will be responsible for leading the discussion in one session of the semester (sessions will be assigned during the first class). The leadership role will include: a) Presenting a summary of the main ideas of the reading (in a powerpoint presentation) along with one or several examples; b) Proposing one or two general questions to the group based on the readings, such as connecting the readings with other bodies of literature, or with case studies/examples; c) leading and moderating the conversation with the rest of the group.

Analytical summary of the readings (30%). Students should submit five (5) short analytical summaries of selected readings, choosing the sessions as related to their interests (between 400 and 500 words), including the following: a) main arguments from the readings (you may write it your own words, and/or you may quote some textual phrases in quotation marks “ ”, citing with APA standards and complement it with your own explanation); b) questions that are generated from the readings and possible answers or avenues for discussion.

Paper (40%) (Between 12 and 15 pages):

Choose a research problem (or a case) based on existing literature, where theories and empirical material are discussed (*If you are in doubt about the selection of a case, you can talk to the Instructor for suggestions or help in choosing a case*); b) analyze the problem in detail using concepts seen and worked on in class; c) appropriately cite the references and materials consulted (use the APA citation format in its latest version).

The suggested structure of the paper must include at least these sections: title; abstract (100 words); introduction that includes an explanation of the problem, previous literature, and main lines of work or approaches that have been worked on that problem

before; theoretical approach; description of main methodologies that have been used in the literature; examples of empirical data and its analysis; conclusions and references.

Students must make an oral presentation to the professor of their paper, lasting 10 minutes, explaining the main points and sections, the data and findings worked on.

Assignments and Exam	Percentage of Final Grade
Attendance/Participation & in class activities	5% / 10%
Discussion facilitation	15%
Analytical summary of the readings (selection)	30%
Paper	40%
Total	100%

Grading Scale (%)

92.0 – 100	A
89.5 – 91.99	A-
86.5 – 89.49	B+
82.5 – 86.49	B
79.5 – 82.49	B-
76.5 – 79.49	C+
72.5 – 76.49	C
69.5 – 72.49	C-
66.5 – 69.49	D+
62.5 – 66.49	D
59.5 – 62.49	D-
< 59.5	E

Bibliographic material for the course

There is no single book that serves as the guiding text for the course. All required readings listed in the Course Syllabus (below) will be available as PDF documents on the Canvas page of the course or accessible through URLs provided by the professor.

Weekly Topic Schedule and Assignments (Schedule is always subject to change)

Week and Date	Topic	Readings
<p>WEEK 1- January 17th</p>	<p>Course Introduction</p> <p>What do we mean by justice, environment and rights? Ice-breaker activity and discussion starter questions.</p>	<p>No readings</p>
<p>WEEK 2 - January 24th</p>	<p>Environmental justice: “traditional” approaches and Latin American perspectives: Distributive, decolonial and intersectional approaches</p>	<p>Newell, P. (2007). Trade and environmental justice in Latin America. <i>New Political Economy</i>, 12(2), 237-259.</p> <p>Álvarez, L., & Coolsaet, B. (2020). Decolonizing environmental justice studies: a Latin American perspective. <i>Capitalism nature socialism</i>, 31(2), 50-69.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Milanez, B., Martinez-Alier, J., & Muradian, R. (2017). The Latin American and Caribbean Environmental Justice Atlas: A Description and Some Reflections. In R. Muradian & L. Rival (Eds.), <i>Governing the Latin American and Caribbean Environment: Beyond the Mirage</i> (pp. 203-230). Routledge.</p> <p>Martinez-Alier, J., Temper, L., Del Bene, D., & Scheidel, A. (2016). Is there a global environmental justice movement?. <i>The Journal of Peasant Studies</i>, 43(3), 731-755.</p>
<p>WEEK 3 - January 31st</p>	<p>Environmental justice and intersectionality in LatAm: Green colonialism and decolonial feminism</p>	<p>Malin, S. A., & Ryder, S. S. (2018). Developing deeply intersectional environmental justice scholarship. <i>Environmental Sociology</i>, 4(1), 1-7.</p> <p>Ramirez, M. M., Vélez-Zapata, Y., & Maher, G. (2023). Green Colonialism and Decolonial Feminism in Latin America. <i>Journal of Latin American Geography</i>, 22(1), 78-96.</p>
<p>WEEK 4 - February 7th</p>	<p>Legal Frameworks, rights and strategic litigation in LatAm</p> <p>-The poverty-inequality-</p>	<p>Lemaitre, J. (2008). Legal fetishism: Law, violence, and social movements in Colombia. <i>Rev. Jur. UPR</i>, 77, 331.</p>

	<p>environment nexus in LatAm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evolving notions of environmental justice and legal empowerment efforts -Collective and individual rights that influence environmental justice -Environmental justice movements in LatAm and their legal frameworks 	<p>Assis, M. P. (2021). Strategic litigation in Brazil: exploring the translocalisation of a legal practice. <i>Transnational Legal Theory</i>, 12(3), 360-389.</p> <p>Viaene, L., & González-Serrano, M. X. (2024). The right to be, to feel and to exist: Indigenous lawyers and strategic litigation over Indigenous territories in Guatemala. <i>The International Journal of Human Rights</i>, 28(4), 555-577.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>MacLennan, M., & Perch, L. (2012). Environmental justice in Latin America and the Caribbean: Legal empowerment of the poor in the context of climate change. <i>Climate Law</i>, 3(3-4), 283-309.</p> <p>Schlosberg, D. (2013). Theorising environmental justice: the expanding sphere of a discourse. <i>Environmental politics</i>, 22(1), 37-55.</p> <p>Gonzalez, C. G. (2015). Environmental justice, human rights, and the global south. <i>Santa Clara J. Int'l L.</i>, 13, 151.</p>
<p>WEEK 5 - February 14th</p>	<p>Entangled crises in LatAm region: energy, climate, food and economic crises: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantatiocene, Ecocide and Terricide</p>	<p>Féliz, M., & Melón, D. E. (2023). Beyond the Green New Deal? Dependency, racial capitalism and struggles for a radical ecological transition in Argentina and Latin America. <i>Geoforum</i>, 145, 103653.</p> <p>Fraser, N. (2023). Rethinking Justice in an Era of Entangled Crises. <i>Journal of Political Philosophy</i>, 31(2), 225-243.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Moore, J. W. (2017). The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis. <i>Journal of Peasant Studies</i>, 44(3), 594-630.</p>
<p>WEEK 6 - February 21st</p>	<p>Environmental justice and indigenous peoples' rights.</p>	<p>Ulloa, A. (2017). Perspectives of environmental justice from Indigenous peoples of Latin America: A relational Indigenous environmental justice. <i>Environmental Justice</i>, 10(6), 175-180.</p>

		<p>Gómez-Betancur, L., Vilarity Q, S. P., & Torres R, D. (2022). Ecosystem services as a promising paradigm to protect environmental rights of indigenous peoples in Latin America: the constitutional court landmark decision to protect Arroyo Bruno in Colombia. <i>Environmental Management</i>, 69(4), 768-780.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Fladvad, B., Klepp, S., & Dünckmann, F. (2020). Struggling against land loss: Environmental (in) justice and the geography of emerging rights. <i>Geoforum</i>, 117, 80-89.</p>
WEEK 7 - February 28th	Climate change and indigenous populations	<p>Whyte, K. P. (2017). Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene. <i>English Language Notes</i>, 55(1-2), 153-162.</p> <p>Cediel-Becerra, N. M., Prieto-Quintero, S., Garzon, A. D. M., Villafañe-Izquierdo, M., Rúa-Bustamante, C. V., Jimenez, N., ... & Garnier, J. (2022). Woman-sensitive one health perspective in four tribes of indigenous people from Latin America: Arhuaco, Wayuú, Nahua, and Kamëntsá. <i>Frontiers in Public Health</i>, 10, 774713.</p>
WEEK 8 - March 7th	<p>Environmental justice and Afrodescendant populations: Racism, necropolitics, ecology; geographies of resistance & Afrodescendants.</p> <p><u>Case study: Mining and Black Communities: Colombia and Ecuador</u></p>	<p>Juárez-Rodríguez, P. (2023). Geographies of Resistance: Afro-Latin American Environmental Movements. <i>Latin American Perspectives</i>, 50(2), 45-63.</p> <p>Anton-Sánchez, F. (2007). The Afrodescendant Movement in Latin America: The Struggle for Rights and Recognition. <i>Latin American Perspectives</i>, 34(6), 32-50.</p> <p>Tubb, D. (2020). <i>Shifting livelihoods: Gold mining and subsistence in the Chocó, Colombia</i>. University of Washington Press (Part III).</p> <p>Rebolledo Monsalve, E., Jiménez Prado, P., Molinero Ortiz, J., & Toulkeridis, T. (2022). Differences in Fish Abundance in Rivers under the Influence of Open-Pit Gold Mining in the Santiago-Cayapas Watershed, Esmeraldas,</p>

		<p>Ecuador. <i>Water</i>, 14(19), 2992</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Anton-Sánchez, F. (2018). Afro-Latin America: The Dynamics of Race and Ethnicity. <i>Latin American Research Review</i>, 53(2), 215-228.</p> <p>Góngora, M., Vera, J., & Costa, A. (2019). The Social and Economic Conditions of Afrodescendant Communities in Latin America. <i>Journal of Development Studies</i>, 55(4), 566-582.</p>
<p>WEEK 9 - March 14th</p>	<p>Collective land rights of Black Communities, displacement and dispossession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Cimarronaje</i> and land appropriation by Black communities. - ILO Convention 169, Multicultural turn, land rights, policies and challenges (cases studies analysis). - Challenges and inter-ethnic conflicts - Traditional mining and fishing <p><u><i>Case study: the Port of Rio de Janeiro</i></u></p>	<p>Bowen, M. L. (2021). <i>For Land and Liberty: Black Struggles in Rural Brazil</i>. Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Cárdenas, R. (2024). <i>Raising Two Fists: Struggles for Black Citizenship in Multicultural Colombia</i>. Stanford University Press.</p> <p>Costa, S., & Gonçalves, G. L. (2019). <i>A port in global capitalism: Unveiling entangled accumulation in Rio de Janeiro</i>. Routledge (chapters 3 and 4).</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>French, J. H. (2009). <i>Legalizing identities: Becoming Black or Indian in Brazil's northeast</i>. Univ of North Carolina Press.</p> <p>Asher, K. (2020). <i>Black and green: Afro-Colombians, development, and nature in the Pacific lowlands</i>. Duke University Press.</p> <p>Baquero-Melo, J. (2015). The intersection of race, class, and ethnicity in agrarian inequalities, identities, and the social resistance of peasants in Colombia. <i>Current Sociology</i>, 63(7), 1017-1036.</p> <p>Escobar, A. (2008). <i>Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes</i>. Duke University Press.</p> <p>Williams & Kramer (2019), Agricultural biodiversity maintenance in a coastal socio-ecological system: the Pearl Lagoon Basin,</p>

		Nicaragua. <i>Human Ecology</i> , 2019, Vol. 47, No. 1, 111-120 ref. 53.
WEEK 10 - March 21st	Spring break	Spring break
WEEK 11- March 28th	<p>Peasants, land rights and recognition in Latin America: Peasants as a political subject of rights</p> <p><i>Case study: Peasants' labor, caring labor and labor in plantations.</i></p>	<p>Narotzky, S. (2016). Where have all the peasants gone?. <i>Annual review of Anthropology</i>, 45(1), 301-318.</p> <p>Marin-Burgos, V. (2017). Oil Palm Expansion and Peasant Environmental Justice Struggles in Colombia. <i>Contested Extractivism, Society and the State: Struggles over Mining and Land</i>, 197-218.</p> <p>UN Declaration on the rights of peasants.</p> <p>Vía Campesina (2022), Declaration of Peasant Rights: An Instrument in the Struggle for Land.</p> <p>Vía Campesina (2023), "Acknowledgment of peasants as a political subject of rights is a historical debt from the Colombian Polity".</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Wolf, E. R. (2013). Peasants. In <i>Sociological Worlds</i> (pp. 25-35). Routledge.</p> <p>Hougaard, I. M. (2022). Masking the Past, Legitimizing the Present: State-Making and Precariatization in the Agro-Industrial Landscape, Colombia. In <i>Global Power and Local Struggles in Developing Countries</i> (pp. 86-111). Brill.</p> <p>Murphy, M. W., & Schroering, C. (2020). Refiguring the Plantationocene: racial capitalism, world-systems analysis, and global socioecological transformation. <i>Journal of World-Systems Research</i>, 26(2), 400-415.</p>
WEEK 12 - April 4th	<p>Conservation, communities' rights and green grabbing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effects of conservation policies on the indigenous and peasants' rights - Green grabbing and 	<p>Barletti, J. P. S., & Larson, A. M. (2019). Environmental justice in the REDD frontier: Experiences from the Amazon and beyond. In Nicholas A. Robins and Barbara J. Fraser (Eds), <i>Landscapes of Inequity: The Quest for Environmental Justice in the Andes/Amazon Region</i>. Lincoln University of Nebraska Press.</p>

	appropriation of nature	Fairhead, J., Leach, M., & Scoones, I. (2014). Green grabbing: a new appropriation of nature?. In <i>Green Grabbing: a new appropriation of nature</i> (pp. 11-36). Routledge. Optional: Ojeda, D. (2014). Green pretexts: Ecotourism, neoliberal conservation and land grabbing in Tayrona National Natural Park, Colombia. In <i>Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature</i> (pp. 131-150). Routledge.
WEEK 13- April 11th	Energy transitions and environmental justice Energy and climate crises and the “Sustainable and inclusive energy transition” approach (ECLAC). Impacts on ecosystems. Case studies	Ulloa, A. (2023). Aesthetics of green dispossession: From coal to wind extraction in La Guajira, Colombia. <i>Journal of Political Ecology</i> , 30(1), 1-22. Chomsky, Aviva, Leech, Garry; Striffler, Steve (2007), <i>The People Behind Colombian Coal</i> . Ed. Pisando Callos.
WEEK 14- April 18th	Reading days	

Honesty Policy regarding cheating, plagiarism, etc.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Click [here to read the Conduct Code](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

To promote learning and the development of critical thinking, the use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, is prohibited in the writing of texts, essays and papers. The objective is for students to elaborate their work with their own ideas, strengthening their skills in reading, processing and analyzing information. This will allow them to generate original results based on human processes and critical thinking, essential for academic and personal growth. The papers will be reviewed using the Turintin tool to detect cases of plagiarism or use of this type of tools in the writing of the papers.

Use of Smartphones

To encourage attention and focus on course topics, the use of cell phones and other electronic devices during classes is prohibited. Students are expected to minimize their

use as much as possible and only use them in case of emergencies or for activities strictly related to course content. This measure is intended to create a more concentrated and productive learning environment, avoiding distractions that may interfere with the educational process.

Title IX

For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, or stalking, there are resources available. To learn more or to report an incident, go to: <https://titleix.ufl.edu>. Also, please be advised that your instructor is required to report instances of sexual harassment, sexual assault, or discrimination.

We are an inclusive classroom

University is an opportunity to learn from one another, no matter our background, ethnicity, nationality, disability status, sexuality, gender and gender identity, religion, and socioeconomic background. Make no mistake, you are here because you deserve to be, and you have the potential to do great things. In this classroom, my goal is to provide a learning environment that is inclusive to all. If you are struggling or experiencing challenges to your learning, please do not hesitate to discuss with me.