

Jan 6, 2026

ENV311 Lecture 1: Framing Environmental Issues in the Developing World

Development

- Aim towards reduction of poverty
- Progression/advancement towards goal (modernization)
- Binary Hierarchy: developed vs. developing world
- **Modernization theory:** assumes that all societies move through the same stages of development, that development is linear and progressive.
 - Assumes poor/developing countries are on their path to reach end point (Global North as end point)
 - Assumption 1: Development is natural and inevitable
 - Assumption 2: Underdevelopment exists independently
 - Leaves out history, and that much of the world that is 'underdeveloped' were more technologically significant earlier in history, and wealth in some places may have been dependent on the exploitation and impoverishment of others

1. James Ferguson, "Development, and the Anti-Politics Machine"

- Reading asks: What does development actually do? "What does it produce in practice?"
- Pushes against the common-sense view of development (technical)
 - Common-sense view: development is a well-intentioned effort to reduce poverty
- Prevents seeing what development actually does
- Asks what kind of reality does development actually produce and authorised
- There is a fundamental misunderstanding of this idea: Lesotho was misunderstood and misrepresented by the development industry/actors
 - Used to justify rural development interventions
 - Development agencies misunderstood the country and actively constructed a specific version of Lesotho that made certain economic relations invisible, in order to allow the work of development agencies in this area
 - Most men working were already a part of the economy, poverty wasn't caused by isolation/lack of development, but exploitation

How Development Depoliticalizes Poverty - Ferguson

- Development works by transforming political problems into technical/procedural ones
 - Framing poverty as "a lack of skills"
 - Framing leaves out political/economic context ex. Regional power relationships
 - Solution also becomes 'technical', intervention (development experiences) come in to fix problem
- Ferguson calls it an 'Anti-Politics Machine' because it obscures attention to economic and political and structural factors
- Development projects failed
 - More important question: What do aid programmes do besides fail to help poor people?
 - What do these projects actually accomplish? Establish bureaucratic state control

- Fail economy but succeed in setting up bureaucratic state control in really tightly managed ways → not necessarily good control
- Fails in what is sets out to do and succeeds in other ways

What Ferguson Teaches Us:

- Development is a power-laden process with depoliticizing effects
- With legitimacy through 'expert', technical knowledge, despite significant gaps in understanding of the local contexts in which they operate

2. Arturo Escobar's *Encountering Development*

- Not just a critique of an individual development project, but is more fundamental: what it is, how it came to exist, what it does to the world
- Concerned with power and not improving development
- Central claim: development is not a natural response to poverty, but a historically produced way of seeing the world
- Came after WWII: The Truman Doctrine → poverty framed as underdevelopment
- Poverty became a target to address, poverty became synonymous with underdevelopment
- Framing shifted attention away from historical and political causes such as colonization, instead framing poverty as a technical problem while giving other institutions authority to intervene

Creation of the 'Third World'

- Third world was created as an object of knowledge and intervention (through development discourse) → Production of knowledge
- Elevates expert knowledge over local ways of knowing → creates a top-down, technical approach
 - Treats people in the global south as needing intervention
- Creates solutions from afar (devoid of context) → misunderstanding takes place, not a true understanding of the reality
- Local economics are often dismissed

Poverty, Resources, and Environmental Degradation

- Development depoliticizes environmental degradation
- Nature is seen as a collection of resources that need to be properly managed
 - Nature seen as resources/tools to contribute to the economy
- When environmental degradation occurs it is seen as environmental resources being poorly managed
- Frames environmental problems as technical problems that can be solved with external help and development knowledge
- Development discourse and power:
 - What counts as legitimate use of nature, and who is authorised to manage it
- Other factors, such as global demand for resources, is ignored
- Reduces local communities access to nature/land even though these communities weren't directly responsible for the environmental degradation
- Questions of who profits?" are sidelined

Takeaway of Encountering Development: Development as Discourse

- Discourse → common sense working of the world

- Dominant ideas are often discourse that shape the way we think about things, often without question
- Framing poverty + environmental degradation as technical problems push other explanations out of view
- Development isn't a response to a reality/problem, but it helps to create that reality

-  Powerful way of thinking
-  Shapes how problems are defined and the corresponding solutions
-  Certain (technical) solutions become legitimate and necessary
-  Tangible impacts on peoples' lives; discourse undermines material practices

Comparing Ferguson and Escobar

1. Development is a producer of knowledge (not neutral)
 - Development frames poverty as a specific, technical problem
 - Ferguson → Lesotho is misunderstood and constructed as something it's not
 - Escobar → development came to be as an idea after WWII
2. Depoliticization as a central function of development
 - Both authors argue that development systematically remove politics from view by framing poverty as a technical problem needing a technical solution
3. Expansion of power through "failure"
 - Development often doesn't succeed in the ways it aims to
 - Ferguson → development projects fail economically but set up centralized state authority
 - Escobar → development is embedded in institutional power, which benefits these systems
4. Subject formation and governance
 - Development produces subjects that are governed, managed, and approved by 'experts' in developed world
 - Ferguson → Rural populations are constructed as passive, needing to be governed, not individual agents
 - Escobar → Development creates categorized of poor and underdeveloped to justify interventions
5. Implications for environmental interventions
 - Both are fundamental for understanding why inequality is produced
 - Environmental degradation is framed as a local mismanagement problem
 - Ignores political struggles/influence
 - 'Expert' knowledge overrides Indigenous and local knowledge

Key Difference:

- Ferguson: how development operates in practice through bureaucratic systems
 - Shows how machine works on the ground
- Escobar: focuses on how development operates as a global discourse that defines reality itself
 - Shows how machine came to existence in the first place and why it seems so natural

Summary:

- Development not a neutral effort to alleviate poverty
- Powerful system of knowledge and governance
- Authors not suggesting to "do nothing": it is through critiques that alternative paths/futures can be imagined

- Aim to question what is known about development
- Engage with critiques to fully understand problems and imagine what is possible beyond without reproducing the same problems we're critiquing

Questions to Consider Throughout the Course:

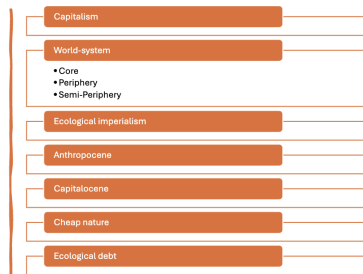
- What development problems are being defined? What history is erased? What kinds of power are produced?
 - Focus on structural
- If development is part of the problem, what does this imply for contemporary environmental solutions such as sustainable development, climate adaptation, or green growth?

Jan 13, 2026

Lecture 2: Histories of Development and Ecological Imperialism

Key Concepts

Key Concepts



Key Question → What do we mean by environmental issues?

- Unsustainability
- Mismanagement of resources
- Feedback loops
- Environmental crises are inseparable from concepts of power and structure

The Basics of Capitalism

- Economic system
- Characterized by:
 1. Private ownership of productive resources
 - ❖ Lands, factories, mines, etc are privately owned → get to limit who uses/accesses them to generate profit
 - ❖ Often seized through colonial resources
 - ❖ Use resources to generate profit
 2. Production for exchange and profit
 - ❖ Goods aren't produced primarily for personal use but for profit
 - ❖ Sell goods for higher than the cost of inputs
 - ❖ Who produces and who consumes? (Most production occurs in the global South and consumption is elsewhere)
 3. Market coordination
 - ❖ Coordinate economic activity: prices, supply, demand, labour
 - ❖ Depoliticizes resource allocation
 - ❖ Market governs itself
 4. Generalized wage labour
 - ❖ Work becomes commodified
 - ❖ Labourers work for wages to then buy goods in the market
 5. Competition
 - ❖ Firms/companies compete with each other
 - ❖ Supposedly encourages efficiency and innovation but also drives cost cutting measures

- ❖ Punishes stagnation, creating systemic pressures that tie capitalism to expansion, technology improvements etc
- 6. Continuous growth and capital accumulation
 - ❖ Capitalism is unique and requiring continuous growth
 - ❖ Profits must be reinvested to generate most profits → capital accumulation
 - ❖ Growth isn't optional
 - ❖ Ecological issues: pressure to find new inputs (labour, energy, resources, land) and new markets to see these goods

Why Does Capitalism Matter Ecologically?

- Capitalism has a particular ideology, so any environmental intervention/sustainability measure has to make sense economically
- Three main ideas:
 1. Capitalism requires continuous growth, but resources are finite and can be depleted
 - Will eventually run out of new frontiers
 2. Capitalism depends on cheap inputs, so there's always an undervaluation of things that actually have value (ie. timber)
 3. Doesn't just use nature, but reorganizes it to make it profitable
 - Market logic

Histories of Global Capitalism

- Global system that reorganizes how land. Labour and nature relate to each other
- Economic systems before capitalism
 - a. Subsistence and peasant agrarian economies
 - ❖ Societies ran around subsistence, things were created to be consumed, not for profit
 - ❖ Weren't seeking to produce more than use value
 - ❖ Went along with nature (ex. Time of day, climate, season)
 - ❖ 'End to the day' workers went home when the sun went down
 - ❖ Under customer tenure instead of under private property
 - b. Tributary and imperial system
 - ❖ Large empires: ex. Ottoman empire
 - ❖ Got money by taxing, hierarchical and expanding
 - ❖ Not organized around perpetual growth
 - ❖ Profit accumulation was not structurally mandatory
 - c. Feudal Europe
 - ❖ Wealth tied to land and lordship
 - ❖ Trade and markets were peripheral not central
 - ❖ No commodification of nature/labour (no labour exchanged for wages)
- Reshaped the entire world through unequal change and often violent ecological transformation
- Ecological imperialism isn't just about colonization, it's about the material and ecological conditions that made capitalism possible, profitable, and durable in the first place

Capitalism as a World-System

- Emerges in the 16th and 19th centuries; expands outward

- Becomes a global system through conquest/colonization/slavery
- It is simultaneously...
 - ❖ A mode of production →
 - introduces commodification of land/labor/nature
 - Surplus of goods
 - Private property becomes normalized
 - Markets become main method for distributing goods and organizing production
 - ❖ A world system (Wallerstein)
 - Capitalism is international, goes beyond boundaries of original nation state
 - Europe becomes industrial core
 - Wealth flows Northward to Europe, production flows Southward
 - ❖ An ecological regime
 - Recognizes nature into resources for extraction, where value is revealed by plugging resources into economy
 - Forests become timber reserves, soil becomes plantations, oceans become fisheries, and people become labour inputs → all commodified

Test question:

Capitalism → reorganizes nature into resources

Capitalism as a World System II

- World system structure though hierarchy with:
 - ❖ Core → high profit consumption goods
 - ❖ Semi-periphery → contains economies with mixed characteristics
 - Play a dual ecological role → are exploited but push exploitation towards the periphery
 - ❖ Periphery → cheap labour and raw materials
- See Wallerstein' s world system theory model
- Ability to externalize labour costs elsewhere

Core-Periphery Structure of Capitalism World-System

- Periphery locked into role as resource provider, structurally exploited, made dependant on the core
- A system predicated on unequal exchange and wealth extraction/enjoyment
- South → North: cheap resources, commodities, ecological surplus
- North → South: manufactured goods, finance, debt, governance
- What is the key point:
 - ❖ The wealth of the core is linked to underdevelopment of periphery
 - ❖ Structural to the world system, reflects centuries of unequal exchange, not an accident

Capitalism as Ongoing and Growth Dependent

- Capitalism must expand to survive - needs new markets, resources, ecological frontiers
- Formal colonialism ends yet the structure of unequal exchange persist
- Environmental burdens unequally distributed too
- Costs are internalized while benefits are externalized beyond global South

Ecological Imperialism

- Break into two parts:
 - ❖ Ecology → relationships between living beings and the environment
 - Also includes how humans organize and react with nature, how resources are used, the way society shapes the environment, etc
 - ❖ Imperialism
 - Powerful states expand control over other resources/peoples usually through conquest, colonization, etc
 - Reorganizes resources to the benefit of the Imperial power
- What is overlooked without synthesis between ecology and imperialism
 - ❖ See nature as separate from power and politics → just a neutral thing that exists
 - ❖ See imperialism and domination as only military or economic, but not environmental

Ecological Imperialism II

- Process through which imperial powers transform environments and ecological systems to extract resources, reorganize wealth
 - ❖ Wealth accumulation and uneven ecological consequences
 - ❖ Can involve states, corporations and financial institutions
 - ❖ Appropriate ecological commons of other regions
 - ❖ Take solace within hierarchical structure of the world system
- Common dynamic and flow: New Frontier → EXtraction → Commodification → Export → Profit in Core → Environmental Costs in Periphery
- Colonization transported livestock, seeds, pathogens, remade landscapes, reorganized resource frontiers, turned nature into something for profit
- EI describes capitalism expansionary drive, combined with hierarchical structure of world system, and how this organizes benefits from periphery → core
 - Burdens flow opposite way from core → periphery

Five Characteristics of Ecological Imperialism (first three)

1. Capital accumulation requires expansion
 - ❖ Capitalism expands outwards geographically in search of new resources/labour pools etc
 - ❖ Not only about land, socioeconomic relationships are reorganized
 - ❖ Nature itself becomes measurable, tradable
2. Operates through unequal power systems
 - ❖ Requires unequal power in markets, military, institutions
 - ❖ Core regions set rules that benefit itself
 - ❖ Peripheral regions are disciplined into compliance
 - ❖ Unequal power is institutionalized, written into policies, can be invisible
3. Produces ecological debt and unequal exchange
 - ❖ Peripheral regions incur ecological debt (lose water, soil fertility, absorb pollution, face climate vulnerability)
 - ❖ Meanwhile value is generated from these losses and peripheral regions don't receive this value

The Fourth Characteristic of Ecological Imperialism: Resistance and Counter-Resistance

- System shaped by resistance and counter-resistance
- Imperialism is not just something empires do to passive territories
- Through resistance the system adapts
 - ❖ Shaped by how people resist
- Counter-resistance to reassert control and restore accumulation
 - ❖ Political, legal-institutional, ideological, economic/discursive, economic/politics, and coercive (criminalization of protests, militarization, policing of Indigenous land defenders, etc)
 - ❖ Return to authoritarian governments
- Forms of resistance challenge imperial access to land/resources (which capital treats as cheap labour)
- Problem for capitalism: Resistance disrupts the access of capital to the resources they need to expand
- Ex. If workers strike, labour is no longer cheap or accessible, when environmental groups protest pollution, waste is no longer externalized freely
- Resistance forces Imperialism to change its tactics → countermovement to ways of resistance
- Capitalism continues to survive because it adapts to challenges and reimagines itself

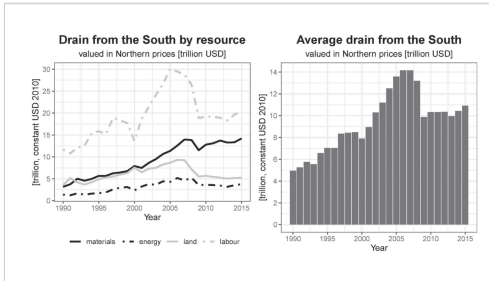
Neoliberalism: Brief Overview

- Set of economic ideas and policy practices dominant from late 1970s onward
 - ❖ Also includes ideological frameworks
 - ❖ Particular version of capitalism that originates in the 1970s onward
 - ❖ Argues that markets are efficient way to organize societies, intervention of state should be lessened
 - ❖ Individuals should be able to take care of themselves
 - ❖ In practice, associated with privatization where state sells off their enterprises
 - ❖ Deregulation of labour, environmental, financial and social policies
- Basics:
 - ❖ Privatization and market supremacy
 - ❖ Reregulation and minimal state
 - ❖ Trade liberalization
 - ❖ Austerity (cutting public spending, shrinking social services like healthcare and education) and structural adjustment
 - ❖ Commodification (turning more aspects of life like land/education into things that can be bought and sold into the market)
- Neoliberalism was placed into the global South through structural adjustment programs
- Example of structural adjustment programs offered through World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- Still had negative consequences for countries in the global south → they went into more debt
- Neoliberalism doesn't see ecological destruction as synonymous with capitalism
- Updates language of domination to terms that sound more equitable (ex. Reform, efficiency, good governance etc)

Final Characteristic of Ecological Imperialism: Continued Capital Accumulation

- Ongoing capital accumulation in imperial centers
- Structural function remains; transferring value from periphery to core

- Imperialism's endurance (beyond formal territorial conquest)
- Doesn't disappear because it continues to perform its structural function (transforming benefits from periphery → core)
- Should have ended when colonies became independent, but it maintains as long as core benefits



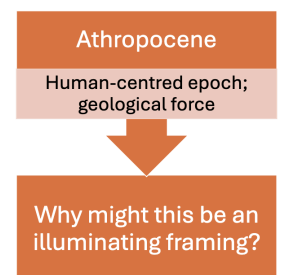
- Seeing a drain of resources from South to North

More World Ecology, and “Cheap Nature”

- Idea of a world ecology
- Capitalism operates through “cheap nature”
 - ❖ A systemic devaluation
- Helps to explain expansion of capitalism geographically
- Collapsing binary between society and nature
- Instead of imagining the economy as a separate sphere, argues that capitalism works THROUGH nature
- Capitalism has always depending on “cheap nature”
 - ❖ Cheap work (human and non human), labour or care that is undervalued or underpaid
 - ❖ Cheap land
 - ❖ Cheap energy/ecological process (ex. Forests, oceans)
- Explains why capitalism has geographically expanded elsewhere

Anthropocene vs. Capitalocene

- Anthropocene → human centered epoch, time period defined by human presence causing harm, impacting ecology
 - ❖ Defined by human beings as a species that have become themselves a geological force
 - ❖ Names a new era in earth's history, in which humans are fundamentally affecting the planet
 - ❖ Suggest that humanity is now a world making force, not just limited by the environment
 - ❖ Changes how science, politics, ethics think about our responsibilities to challenge the damage we are causing



Problem One: Universalism

- Presents humanity as an undifferentiated whole
 - ❖ Talks about humans as a single unified species, but not all humans contribute to ecological damage and not everyone suffers equally
 - ❖ Ask: do all humans pollute/consume/benefit equally?
- Some countries, classes, corporations and historical actors are more responsible than others
 - ❖ Some actors are far more responsible than others → the richest 10% produces 50% of total global emissions
 - ❖ Global North industrialization depends on resource extraction, many current effects are because of European industrialization
 - ❖ Indigenous peoples have been ecological stewards towards the land but suffer climate impacts disproportionately
 - ❖ Peripheral regions lose more and absorb environmental harms while core regions emit more, consume more, etc
- Return to world systems framework (core, semi-periphery, periphery)

Problem Two: Historical Specificity

- Not all historical systems organize nature in this way, require cheap nature/see nature as capitalist resource, externalize costs globally, expand indefinitely

The Capitalocene

- Should replace Anthropocene with Capitalocene
- Ecological crisis not necessarily caused by humans; a historically specific system (capitalism)
- Shift in language restores responsibility → there's a structural responsibility
- Forces us to acknowledge that capitalism is a world-ecological project, not just an economic system
 - ❖ Capitalism not only organizes markets, it organizes nature and environments
 - ❖ Capitalism depends on ecological transformations, shapes and uses the world itself
 - ❖ Break into its two parts:
 - a. **World**
 - b. **Ecological**
 - ❖ Capitalism is global in its origins, it integrates different regions into a single system, creates global divisions in labour/ecological burdens, ecological b/c capitalism depends on appropriate land/nature, treats nature as a cheap set of inputs, environmental transformations are necessary for accumulations

Political Stakes of the Capitalocene

- Anthropocene renders climate change as a tech problem requiring technological solutions, but capitalism can stay in place
- Capitalocene says ecological damage is economic

Green Growth (and its problems)

- Promises that societies can continue economic growth, but can decouple economic growth from ecological harm

- Makes a lofty promise about sustained economic growth without environmental harm
- Two assumptions:
 - ❖ Decoupling → GDP/economic measurements can increase while environmental impacts decrease (not necessarily intertwined)
 - ❖ Efficiency → marks and technological innovation can reduce resource use (just need advanced technology so we don't need to rely/extract resources)
- Attractive to governments that benefit from the current system
- Problems:
 - ❖ Empirical → decoupling has not occurred, effects are balanced out (ex. people tend to consume more green goods because they think its better)
 - ❖ Rarely addresses global inequality → Europe reduces domestic emissions but consumption emissions remain high because production is just relocated elsewhere
- Green growth, even though it sounds good, can reproduce ecological imperialism

Climate Crisis and Unequal Geographics

1. Unequal responsibility
 - ❖ Climate change often presented as a universal problem, but we can see not all parts of the world contribute equally to climate change
 - ❖ Emissions are tied to industrialization and capitalism
 - ❖ Global north accounts for 70% of CO2 emissions → historical unevenness in who is emitting
 - ❖ Accumulation of wealth is inseparable from accumulation of wealth in the atmosphere
2. Unequal; vulnerability
 - ❖ Regions that contribute the least to atmospheric emissions often face the most negative consequences
 - ❖ Drought, flooding, deforestation, etc
 - ❖ Vulnerability isn't just physical, but also social and political
 - ❖ Some places have limited financial resources and government safety nets, making climate issues harder to absorb and adapt to
3. Semi-periphery: The Mixed Case
 - ❖ Has a hybrid position, emitters but is also vulnerable
 - ❖ Can face ecological risks while also emitting
 - ❖ Reveals global responsibility can't be divided simply as just North and South

The Climate Crisis: From Geography to Justice

- Climate change becomes a justice issue when you notice inequality in contributions and effects
- Key justice debates:
 1. Loss and damage → refers to climate impacts that can't be prevented (loss of territory, culture, lives)
 2. Adaptation vs. mitigation → adaptation deals with what is occurring, needs funding, mitigation involves prevention, benefits everyone
 3. Climate finance → creates cycles of debt

4. Technology transfer → focus on renewables, away from fossil fuels, infrastructure that actually matters
5. Debt restructuring → many countries most vulnerable to climate change are the most in debt, climate crisis intersects with a legacy of financial imperialism, curbs their ability to then finance adaptation measures to impacts

Why a World-Systems Lens Helps

- A 'universal' crisis → crisis produced within a historical system
- Climate change is a planetary expression of the inequalities that ecological imperialism has created
- Not only environmental crisis, but also a crisis of the world system itself
- Empire is not exactly over or in the past
 - Colonial past and present is present in drought, debt, food insecurity, etc

Critiques of World-Systems Theory

1. Structural determinism
 - ❖ Can make global dynamics look overly structural/rigid
 - ❖ Makes it seem like there's not a lot of agency to social movements
 - ❖ Countries seem trapped in their conditions
2. Overemphasis on material over culture
 - ❖ Downplays nationalism, race, culture, etc
 - ❖ Focuses on ideas of colonialism
3. Under-theorized colonial differences and contexts
 - ❖ Focuses on international economic hierarchies rather than colonial societies that underpin them
 - ❖ Differences in colonial contexts (some prosper more than others)
4. State-centrism
 - ❖ Treat states as key actors
 - ❖ Ignore other actors (indigenous, political movements, etc)
 - ❖ Ignore the role of corporations and global supply chains
5. Eurocentrism and temporality
 - ❖ Locates origins of capitalism in Europe, treats it as radiating outwards
6. Overemphasis on commodity flows (over nature)
 - ❖ Treats nature as a given background
 - ❖ Ecology is largely brushed aside
7. Oversimplification of development pathways
 - ❖ Not all countries fit into this core → semi periphery → periphery boxes
8. Feminist critiques
 - ❖ Social reproduction, unpaid labour, gender hierarchies, etc are foundational to capitalism that aren't valued or included in GDP, but without them capitalism can't survive

(Still has benefits though)

Summary and Key Points

- Capitalism organizes nature
- World system structures inequality

- Gives us tools to think about how development and underdevelopment take place
- Ecological imperialism through extractive forms of development
- Colonial patterns mutate rather than disappear
- Environmental issues not 'natural' problems; political-economic-ecological phenomenon embedded in a global economy
- Imperialism often lives through neoliberalism
- Environmental issues aren't natural problems that exist separate from us, they are embedded in economy, and come from unequal exchange
- Imperialism isn't just political, but also ecological

Jan 20, 2026

ENV 311 Lecture 3: Development Institutions, Sustainable Development, and Environmental Governance

What do we mean by Governance?

- Governance refers to all the way collective life is steered by internal organizations, corporations, and even technical tools (ex. contracts)
- Governance \neq only government
- Involves states, IOs, corporations, NGOs, experts
- Governance \rightarrow who designs the rules? Whose knowledge is treated as authoritative
- Key questions: problem- definitions, rule-making, knowledge, implementation
- Environmental governance is increasing transnational (not just international) and market-centred

Key Concepts

- Sustainable Development
- The World Bank
- Green neoliberalism
- Degrowth
- Care
- Commoning
- A culture of 'enough'

Rethinking Sustainable Development: From Brundtland to the SDGs

- Development that meets the needs of the present with compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs
- Development not restricted to SDG, need to think about sustainability goals
- Brundtland \rightarrow SDGs: universal, indicator driven, growth compatible
- Environmental degradation reframed as technical/market failure
- Sustainable development = governance framework, not neutral ideal
- Growth remains unquestioned
- Markets can be harnessed to protect nature
- How to make development more sustainable and green
- Sustainable development is a framework for reorganizing economies, states, etc
- SDG still has underlying commitment to growth oriented capable

Global Governance and Development Institutions: Bretton Woods and Modernization

- Bretton Woods \rightarrow World Bank + IMF
- Development tied to colonial and postcolonial structures

- Early focus: infrastructure + modernization
- Development as top-down, expert-led, state-centric
- Bank founded in 1944, not originally intended for poverty reduction, wanted to rebuild Europe after WW2
- Early loans went to European countries, afterwards the World Bank turned towards infrastructure in Europe's colonies
- US and European firms received most of the contracts
- Supported colonial structures instead of dismantling
- Bank is portrayed as an institution created to battle poverty, but this is a retrospective story (not true)
- In 50s and 60s the bank was shaped by modernization
 - ❖ Assumed western capitalism was the only viable path to development
 - ❖ When development failed in the south they attributed failure to the traditional culture, weak institutions, etc in the global south
- Bank financed state led development, funding purchases of machinery and technology from firms in the north
- Environment concerns were almost entirely absent

Debt, Crisis, and Neoliberal Reconstructing

- 1970s shocks → 1980s debt crisis
- There was a crisis in a way these organizations were running and they had to reimagine their goals/operations/objectives
- World bank president massively expanded bank funding, this is when they started rebranding as a poverty reduction
 - ❖ Given crisis going on in the world and within World Bank, they switched their focus to poverty reduction
 - ❖ To legitimize their role and justify using capital from Europe/Japan/US/etc to fund development projects (poverty reduction) in the south)
- In the 80s, borrowing resulted in a debt crisis in the South → developing countries owed over a trillion dollars and borrowed more money to pay off their debts
- Structural adjustment/Washington Consensus to fix the debt problem
 - ❖ States were required to slash public spending, devalue their currency, privatise change, reorient their economics towards export oriented growth
 - ❖ Austerity, moving into neoliberalism
 - ❖ Currency goes down → attract foreign buys to come in and sell
- Privatization, liberalization, fiscal austerity
- Social + ecological costs, uneven outcomes
 - ❖ Sold as remedies to corruption, but often dismantled fragile welfare gains, increased food insecurity, and deepen social inequality (made things worse)

- Sets stage for next pivot: incorporation of sustainability and environmental concerns, and to these neoliberal frames that weren't working

Neoliberalism as Colonial Project

- Markets as a universal remedy
- "Unlocking resources" in the global South
- Reorganizes economies for extraction + labour reserves
- Colonial continuities in a new language

- Development of global north is predicated on underdevelopment of global South
- Neoliberalism is a set of economic policies:
 - ❖ Free trade, no more government intervention, austerity measures, deregulation, privatizations
- As policies spread through 80s and 90s, it evolved into an ecological project as well
- Core idea of neoliberalism is that markets are efficient and fair, economic growth should be prioritized, and states should encourage markets instead of being responsible themselves
- Unlock and utilize resources to modernize institutions and attract foreign investment
- Entangled in post colonial power relationships, debt management tools became ways to reorganize southern economics as resource bases and markets for Northern capital
- Neoliberalism was colonial from the start, reinforcing colonial relationships even when they have ended
 - ❖ Took older patterns of extraction and hierarchy and repacked into efficacy, reform, and modernization

Crisis, NGOs, and the Rise of Civil Society

- By late 1970s, large intensive capitalist projects displaced people from land/forest/fisheries
- Sparked resistance to these reforms, explosion of NGOs
- Rise of NGOs as implementers + consultants
 - ❖ NGOs represent civil society
 - ❖ Bilateral and multilateral aid started flowing through NGOs rather than through states
 - ❖ NGOs implement policies
- Civil society incorporated into governance networks
 - ❖ World Bank learned to incorporate NGOs into their operations, using them as implementing partners
 - ❖ NGOs become part of the network of governance
 - ❖ Become part of the 'development apparatus' (as Escobar from first week reading would say)
- Participation ≠ necessarily resistance

- ❖ NGO landscape wasn't politically neutral, NGOs that corporated with the bank tended to prosper, while more critical groups were excluded from funding and policy making
- Boundaries between state/market/NGOs blur
 - ❖ Blurring of institutional boundaries

From Sustainable Development to Green Neoliberalism



- Decided certain kinds of intervention are too risky but instead they pivoted, Michael Goldman introduces the ideal of "Green Neoliberalism"
- Fusions of Neoliberal principles with ecological and social agendas
 - ❖ Allowed nature to be brought into market as domain as investment but also accumulation
 - ❖ By "greening" its practices and knowledge, the bank expanded its reach into new ecological and social domains
 - ❖ Water, forests, biodiversity become investment frontiers
- Ecosystems are externalized → treated as undervalued
- Natural environments become resources, tradable commodities and investment opportunities
- Nature becomes a frontier for green capital

The World Bank as Knowledge Producer

- Goldman asks us to shift focus from money to knowledge
- Banks hold financial power (funds projects, lends money), but its deeper power comes in its ability to categorize problems ex. Water scarcity, climate vulnerability, etc
- When you define or categorize problems, this allows you to prescribe your own solutions or see your own solutions as legitimate
 - ❖ Sets standards/indicators for best practices, can reshape agencies in developing world, etc
- Power to define problems + prescribe solutions
- Produces indicators, expertise, and best practices
- Hybrid state actors + policy networks
 - ❖ Salaries and career trajectories are dependent on external agencies
 - ❖ World bank acts as bilateral donor towards salaries
 - ❖ Supply money to large NGOs

- ❖ Follow through with knowledge perpetrated by the World Bank
- Development = transnational governance project
- World Bank has become more dependent on its ability to generate solutions, to continually identify new global issues (ex. Climate change, green growth), defining new target populations, and creating new instruments (ex. Carbon tax) to help deal with global issues
- Explains why Neoliberal/green neoliberal reforms spread as widely as they do -> because there is a global institutional infrastructure of trained professionals and funding streams that reward certain ways of seeing and funding the world
- There are a lot of people with vested interest in upholding this system → which is why it works

Environmental States and the Commodification of Nature

- Ministries recognized around natural capital
 - ❖ From pressures of World Bank or other donors
- Water, forests, carbon = commodified sectors
 - ❖ Encouraged to see ecosystems as undervalued goods that need to be properly priced and integrated into markets
 - ❖ Under global initiatives, water is framed as a commodity that can be bought and sold in a private market
 - ❖ States role is reimagined as a regulator for private sources that sell water instead of being responsible for water distribution themselves
 - ❖ Large firms gained control over water systems and infrastructure
- Privatisation via PPPs + regulatory reforms
- Accumulation by dispossession (Harvey)
 - ❖ Accumulate by taking things away (privatizing)
 - ❖ Private resources, commons, etc are transferred into private hands
 - ❖ Happens through contracts, policies, legal reform, often justified in sustainable development terms
 - ❖ Mixed results in practice, more households can't afford private services, access becomes stratified and uneven
- Greening of development is not just at the level of language, but materially reshapes economies

Sustainable Development as Common-Sense

- Goldman draws on the notion of Hegemony and common sense
 - ❖ Consent via normalization
- Gramsci is a marxist who talks about hegemony a lot
 - ❖ With oppression/domination people tend to resist
 - ❖ Strategic way to reduce resistance is to make people think they're not oppressed

- ❖ Common sense is a set of background assumptions → “Of course we should encourage development, make things greener, etc”
- SDGs = horizon of “green capitalist” future
 - ❖ SDGs responded to real crisis, but also stabilize and put forward a particular vision of the future in which green inclusive capitalism is the solution
- Debate shifts from “whether growth” to “how to GREEN growth”
- Feminism critics ask: what if the problem isn’t brown/polluting capitalism, but capitalism altogether?

Wichterich: Green Growth, Gender, and Postcolonial Critique

- “We’re living through multiple overlapping crises”
 - ❖ Climate / biodiversity crisis, crisis of reproduction and care, etc
- GLobal governance promotes green growth as the solution
- Green growth = neoliberal, gendered, postcolonial
 - ❖ What kind of transformation is this? And who benefits
 - ❖ Green economy remains anchored in growth, economy, and competitiveness
 - ❖ Modernizes and extends neoliberalism
- Identifies two points:
 - ❖ Economization of nature → ecosystems are framed as natural capital
 - ❖ Financialization of environmental policy → environmental protection is mediated by investment portfolios
- She brings together feminist ecology and feminist economy
 - ❖ Fem ecology → how gender shapes access to land and environmental decision making, and how women in nature are often constructed and evaluated
 - ❖ Feminist political economy → how care and social reproduction are politicised and treated as not important
- Nature + women’s labour treated as cheap inputs, same as nature
 - ❖ Green growth often relies on both → cheap or untapped resources and female labour
- Wichterich uses concept of inclusive liberalism = market based empowerment
 - ❖ Brings women into climate programs, etc but only on market terms
 - ❖ Gender equality becomes “smart economics” (“It makes economic sense to invest in women and girls)
 - ❖ Women and girls are valuable b/c they can increase productivity
 - ❖ Empowerment involves market participation, not power over resources, collective rights, etc
 - ❖ Labelled as “smart economics” because there are implicit assumptions that women are more responsible to money, work harder, more altruistic, and uplift their local communities, families, countries with them
 - ❖ Investing in women is investing in people who will take care of others
 - ❖ Neoliberal empowerment → serves another purpose (instrumental)

- Global South inequalities persist, southern territories become testing grounds for green technology and green growth trends in the North
- Greening consumption patterns so global North can feel better about their consumption instead of reducing consumption
- Crisis of social reproduction + ecological crisis intertwined
- Imperial form of living → high consumption of north depends on land and labour sinks in the global South
- Neoliberalism externalizes environmental costs, but externalizes care, treating both as though they are inexhaustible
- Turns to alternatives, commons, social care and reproduction
- Key takeaway: green economy isn't simply environmental/technical policy, it's a gendered, post colonial, neoliberal project that tries to solve ecological problems without solving global inequalities

Postdevelopment and Development as Discourse

- Post development scholars (like Escobar), argue that since WW2 and creation of Bretton Woods institution, development has functioned as an extension of colonial power
 - ❖ Dominated by Northern states
 - ❖ Development discourse frames inequality as 'underdevelopment' that can be fixed by more growth and Western knowledge
- Development as discourse: way of talking, measuring, knowing, which creates a common sense and consent
 - ❖ Discourse doesn't just describe the world, but actively shapes what people think is desirable, inevitable
 - ❖ Governmentality → shapes what is thinkable
 - ❖ Underpin action and power
- Fighting poverty through investment or empowering women through microcredit → looks like charity, empowerment, necessary
- Development = colonial discourse + apparatus
- Critiques of development challenges common sense
 - ❖ But critics risk framing development as a one way position from North to South
 - ❖ Can ignore alternative uses of development language → strategically use language to deliver the similar/same programs under different governments/regimes (b/c they need to work within a constraining structure → if too critical of government, can not get funding)
- Development = site of struggle, not monolith
 - ❖ People CAN resist, even if it looks like their consenting → operating within constraining circumstances to leverage their perspectives that may be different from that of the government

Political Struggles, Alternatives, and Their Limits: Degrowth

- Rejects green growth + rebound effects
 - ❖ Don't treat green neoliberalism as a powerful, unstoppable force
 - ❖ Degrowth says → by commodifying nature you'll eventually hit limits and exhaust resources
 - ❖ Attempts to make growth green also face rebound effects. Greater/green efficiency can lead to higher consumption and quicker exhaustion of resources
 - ❖ Degrowth functions as a concept and social movement: reducing production/consumption altogether (including 'green' production/consumption) in order to improve wellbeing and restore ecological balance
- Targets overconsumption in the North
- Expands care, shrinks harmful sectors
- Focus on sufficiency + wellbeing, not GDP
 - ❖ As capitalist lifestyle depends on cheap labour and certain lifestyles elsewhere → imperial mode of living
- Feminist critiques propose the importance of sustenance (only consuming enough to meet your needs) and care
 - ❖ Look for practical pathways rooted in care, community, etc rather than a single universal solution
- Wichterich thinks about alternatives to green growth by highlighting 3 things
 - ❖ Care
 - ❖ Commoning
 - ❖ Sufficiency

1. Care and Social Reproduction

- Care work = unpaid, feminized, treated as "outside" the real economy
 - ❖ Rarely counted in GDP
- Care underpins all economies → without care there is no labour, community, or sustainability
 - ❖ Is foundational
 - ❖ No labour force to do these responsibilities, no possibility of sustainable livelihoods
 - ❖ Put care at the center to protect conditions of life, support needs, instead of maximizing profit
- Care has multiple dimensions: care for others, care for ecosystems, care for future generations, care for our own bodies
 - ❖ Care is a material practice that connects bodies and ecosystems
- Triple R strategies:
 - ❖ Reducing, redistributing, and revaluing care
 - ❖ Redefining: care is socially necessary, rather than treating unpaid care as invisible
 - ❖ Redistributing: refusing assumption that care is naturally women's responsibilities, and others also have obligations to engage in care work

- ❖ Revaluing: treats as essential to sustainability, not a cost to be minimized
- Even though women have entered the capital/private market, they are still taking on disproportionate amount of care work → we need a redistribution of care
- Ecofeminists may say care is linked to women's motherhood
 - ❖ Critics say this leans into essentialism, making care seem as a 'natural obligation'
 - ❖ Care should be treated as a collective responsibility rather than a passive duty women are expected to take on
- It's hard to marketize care because it can't be sped up
- Feminist economics argue it should be politics, not markets/public spaces that set value of public care
 - ❖ Feminist economists: value of care must be politically determined, not market-driven
- Goal: **care economy** + caring state focused on sustaining life, not competitiveness

2. Commons and Commoning

- Private accumulation often undermines the public good
 - ❖ Collective welfare declines, even if a few individuals become wealthier
 - ❖ When public goods (ex. Transport, education, healthcare, etc) are privatised/financialized, decisions about access inequality are made by market and investor instead of the people collectively put into power
- **Tragedy of the commons:**
 - ❖ "If I don't use this, someone else will use it"
 - ❖ Assumption that everyone is self interest oriented, induces competitiveness with nature to maximize own self gain
 - ❖ Doesn't actually play out in most cases, there are things that can be done to minimize this
- Commons means people coming together to decide how resources will be used and shared
 - ❖ Involves compromises, working together, dialogue
 - ❖ Form of democratic governance
- Commons as alternative to privatization + accumulation model
 - ❖ Challenges idea that everything should be private
- Austerity + privatization shift decisions from democracy → markets/investors
- Ostrom: communities can govern shared resources successfully
- Key concept: **commoning** = collective, participatory governance practice
- BUT commons =/- automatically egalitarian → can reproduce gender, race, class hierarchies
 - ❖ Commons not inherently egalitarian, can produce hierarchies (ex. Men can be more visible in certain commons, women in others)
 - ❖ Decisions about who speaks for the community can reproduce hierarchical powers
 - ❖ Only work if they confront power dynamics, maintain alertness

3. Sufficiency and "Enough"

- Core question: what if there is not too little growth, but too much?
- Feminist shift: critique moves from “overpopulation” in global South → overproduction + overconsumption (in North)
- Feminist view: degrowth should shrink harmful sectors + expand care + public services
 - ❖ Degrowth shrinks some sectors (emissions intensive sectors) and expands others (sectors that support life, ex. Social security)
 - ❖ Creates a caring state, rather than a competitive neoliberal state
 - ❖ Values individual rights and protection over maximizing GDP
 - ❖ Regulates harmful forms of extraction, limits depends on exports
 - ❖ Many initiatives rose in response to austerity, but serve as a critique to high consumer culture
- Requires a caring state rather than competitive neoliberal state
- Value efficiency and collective responsibility over endless growth and individual consumption
 - Alternatives are already happening and being practiced, even if they are uneven and not perfect
 - Other ways of being are possible
- Sufficiency = collective negotiation of what counts as “enough” (political, not individual)

Limits to Alternative Approaches

- Many alternatives remain local + small scale
 - ❖ Community gardens, food co-ops, etc, strength is embedded in daily life
 - ❖ Can they be scaled up? Can they be institutionalized without losing democratic ways that are more functional on a small scale?
- Vulnerable to state/corporate co-optation
 - ❖ States use community initiatives to back away → state doesn’t need to provide resources because communities are already working on it themselves
- Degrowth can obscure addressing the structural level, focuses on individuals
- Without global justice → risks = austerity for the poor
 - ❖ Global North has benefited from cheap labour/food/energy sourced elsewhere
 - ❖ Calls for less have to confront this
 - ❖ Ask whose consumption exceeds thresholds?
- Fragmented movements; coalition-building needed
 - ❖ Critical movements do not always work together, even when critiques overlap
 - ❖ Building solidarity takes time and work
- Strategic terrains, not blueprints

Summary and Closing Questions

- Governance as web of institutions that shape how we see nature
- Sustainable development emerged in ecological crisis, but leaves capitalism largely intact
- World bank has been central in institutionalizing neoliberalism and green neoliberalism

- Feminist ecology and political economy shows how processes are post colonial and revolve on unequal care responsibility
- Think about ways of thinking beyond green growth
- Alternatives aren't perfect, but shift the starting point
 - ❖ Instead of asking how growth can be continued green, how can societies be organized around sustainability
 - ❖ Treat care/commons/ecological limits as central
 - ❖ Confront imperial way of living
- Can capitalism be greened? Or do we need more fundamental changes in how we see nature?
- Do justice + sustainability require deeper transformation?
- What forms of solidarity, care, and governance are needed?
- Where do we already see cracks in common sense?

Jan 27, 2026

ENV311 Lecture 4: Extractivism and Resource Frontiers

Key Concepts

Extractivism (vs. extraction)

Global extractivism

Frontier

Resource frontier

Commodity frontier

Enclosure

Sacrifice zones

Extractivism vs. Extraction: The Importance of World Making

- **Extraction** = technical act of taking resources from the Earth
- **Extractivism** = a worldview and modes of organizing life
 - ❖ Based on extraction, (includes it, but is a lot more)
 - ❖ Reflects a mentality/worldview in which a land/forest/humans are objects to be appropriated, extracted to the point of depletion and accumulated
 - ❖ Makes the extraction seem inevitable, helps define what's seen as wealth/value/progress
 - ❖ Normalize depletion and non reciprocal treatment of communities
 - ❖ Devalues living world to justify its extraction/depletion
- Political ontology: different societies inhabit different worlds, not just different 'views'
 - ❖ Some can be more dominant
 - ❖ (Won't be asked about political ontology in an exam)

Examples of Offering Worldviews: Two Worlds, One Forest

- **Extractivist worldview:**
 - ❖ Not just an economic process but a worldview
 - ❖ Forests = timber, carbon, land for agriculture/mining
 - ❖ Value = what can be sold
 - ❖ Has been made 'dominant', established as 'common sense'
 - ❖ Societies have been built on extraction to enable our lifestyles
- **Relational Indigenous worldview:**
 - ❖ Forests = living community of humans and other-than-humans
 - ❖ Value = not about what can be taken and sold, but maintaining relationships and continuity of life
- Both exist, but only one has become dominant (extractivism)

Extractivism as an Organizing Concept

- Not just an empirical thing: it's an **organizing concept** like "globalization"
 - ❖ Organizing concepts act as intellectual anchors, help synthesize research and debates
 - ❖ These concepts coordinate many lines of inquiry, encouraging scholars to break down and refine components that make up a larger phenomenon
 - ❖ Shape how we describe, interpret real world activities
- Functions to:

- ❖ Connect cases (mining, oil, agribusiness, finance)
- ❖ Provide shared vocabulary for critique
- ❖ Link environmental harm to development, inequality, and power
- Used both:
 - ❖ Theoretically (framework)
 - ❖ Empirically (to interpret real-world struggles)
- Pay attention to the systemic conditions that enable extractivism to flourish
- Extractivism isn't just a set of industries, but a mode of organizing the world that encourages biodegradation and social inequality
- Framing it as an organizing concept is a political choice, with the goal of stimulating critical research and social aspect that disrupts the common sense idea that extractivism should just exist, and encourage alternatives

Defining Extractivism

1. Appropriation and depletion
 - ❖ Extractivism involves large scale appropriation of natural resources, including human labour and knowledge
 - ❖ Effects; irreversible damage at the site of extraction
 - ❖ Benefits flow outwards to the companies doing the extraction, while there are irreversible ecological costs at the site of extraction
 2. Capital accumulation and power
 - ❖ Extractivism is tied to the pursuit of profit
 - ❖ Depends on unequal power relations → the companies who do the work and the states that enable this to happen (Think about who owns the companies?)
 3. Flows and drains of value
 - ❖ Extractivism can be analyzed as a system of flows, a movement of wealth/values/materials across space (ex. From Global South to Global North), as well as across time
 - ❖ Physically and temporally
 4. A mode of organizing economic life
 - ❖ Shapes and pressures the lives of humans and non-humans alike
- Important to note that extractive patterns had existed in earlier colonial periods, not solely dependent on capitalism, but capitalism is dependent on extractivism

Extractivism, Capital Accumulation, and Sacrifice Zones

- Extractivism = political-economic logic of one-way value transfer
 - ❖ (Definition in literature)
 - ❖ Essential feature (what it works to do) large scale removal of natural and social wealth through processes that damage the site of extraction
 - ❖ One directional flow of value (typically from periphery to core)
 - ❖ The core absorbs wealth created elsewhere and drains resources
 - ❖ Benefits are externalized upwards to those who own the machinery, companies etc, while ecological and social costs remain localized
 - ❖ Not just about taking resources, but about who can accumulate, who can bear the cost, etc

- Embedded in **world-system**:
 - ❖ Extractive peripheries vs. metropolitan centers
 - ❖ “Extractive capitalism” / “extractive imperialism”
 - ❖ Extraction is rooted in colonial relationships that have differentiated territories into zones of accumulation in the North and zones of sacrifice elsewhere
 - ❖ Some scholars say contemporary globalization has intensified previous colonial patterns
 - ❖ Structures can evolve/change over time, but there's structures that underpin the flows of value/accumulation (are made to be invisible)

- **Sacrifice zones** (Klein): spaces made pollutable/disposable to sustain growth elsewhere
 - ❖ Built into the structure of extractivism, not an accident
 - ❖ Mark the geopolitical boundaries of those who live in worlds of accumulation and those who live in worlds of extraction

History of Extractivism

- Colonial conquest of Americas, Africa, Asia
 - ❖ Territorial reorganized as sites of resource and labour extraction
 - ❖ European empires reorganized territories into spaces for extracting resources and labour, while Europe specialized in manufacturing and production
 - ❖ Tied colonial territories into circuits for accumulation

- Core-periphery world-system
 - ❖ Land dispossession and enclosure
 - ❖ coerced/enslaved labour
 - ❖ Racial hierarchies and frontier violence
 - ❖ Dynamics produced sacrifice zones, places where ecological harm treated as good for economic growth else

- Early 2000s and neo extractivism
 - ❖ Commodity boom
 - ❖ Left/center progressive governments proposed neo extractivism
 - ❖ States strengthened their roles in resource centers
 - ❖ Tried to finance social programs
 - ❖ However deepened environmental destruction, empower transnational corporation
 - ❖ Revealed how development remains tied to extraction

- Gendered and Indigenous harms:
 - ❖ Feminist movements highlighted the gender harms of extractivism
 - ❖ Extractive spaces often amplify gender based violence, undermining women’s autonomy and safety
 - ❖ Indigenous women pointed out how extractive processes exclude them from decision making but enable systemic harm
 - ❖ Indigenous activists argue resources are something to be accumulated and depleted, but to be defended because we have a responsibility to take care of the Earth

Extractivism and Value: Colonial Case of India

- Extractivism also = **value extractivism**, not just material extraction
 - ❖ Also about the organized extraction of VALUE
 - ❖ Refers to a system trying to channel wealth from one place to another, through mechanisms of dispossession and financial control
- Colonial India is an example:
 - ❖ Major exporter to global markets
 - ❖ Produced large quantities of goods for global markets, yet wealth flowed out of the economy instead of within it
 - ❖ Britain extracted massive wealth from India
 - ❖ **Drain occurred through monetary and financial methods** (taxation, trade manipulation and undervaluing the resources being exported, monopoly pricing, control over currency and finance, etc)
 - ❖ Result: millions of Indians died in poverty and famine even while their country was supplying many commodities to Britain (and resulting in industrial growth in Britain)
- With the rise of the U.S. these mechanisms became internationalized
- Today these practices persist (labour costs kept low, workers paid very little, in order to capitalize on profit)
- Asymmetries keep reinforcing uneven global development

Global Extractivism

- Extractivism now embedded in the entire capitalism world-system
 - Has become one of the ways global capitalism organizes life
- Shape:
 - ❖ Global economic structures, Supply chains, trade, finance, logistics
 - ❖ Labour regimes and consumption
 - ❖ Bodies, ecologies, and time (present vs. future)
- Planetary scale:
 - ❖ **Total mass of Human-made materials now outweigh total planetary biomass**
 - ❖ Human extraction, production, waste-making have physically transformed the Earth
- Extractivism = capitalism organizes life globally
- Can be understood in three interconnected ways:
 1. Pressure everyday life
 - ❖ Trade, energy systems, global finance
 - ❖ Extractive conditions (how people eat/work consume)
 - ❖ Far greater harm in certain places over others → disproportionate
 2. Built into global and political structures, reinforcing unequal flow of resources/wealth/value
 - ❖ Drain cheap labour from global South to global North
 - ❖ Reproduce global colonial processes
 - ❖ Shape who gets to accumulate wealth
 3. Multidiverse and multidirectional
 - ❖ Expanding into new resource zones → Ex. the arctic
 - ❖ Complicating older, geographic assumptions

- ❖ As much as extraction historical takes place unevenly, it's not always what's happening → becoming more complicated

China and the Belt and Road Initiative

- China as global manufacturing hub → huge demand for resources
- Demonstrates how extractivism happens at a global scale
- Demand for food, minerals, energy, and materials accelerated with increased manufacturing in China
- To secure these resources over the long term, they initiated the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)
- BRI:
 - ❖ Infrastructure and investment strategy across Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe
 - ❖ Builds ports, roads, railways, pipelines, mines, agribusiness zones
 - ❖ Importance for extractivism:
 - ❖ 1. Builds infrastructure/transport mechanisms that make extractivism profitable
 - ❖ 2. Ties dozens of economies into new trade, financial, and geopolitical relations organized around the movement of energy/raw materials/manufactured goods
- Sign of shift:
 - ❖ BRICS (esp. China) are now key players in shaping global extractive frontiers
 - ❖ Not just traditional powers of North America/Western Europe

Global Extractivism and Global Ramifications

- Extraction that happens in one part of the world has global ramifications (ex. Climate change)
- Global extractivism doesn't just refer to the spread of things like mines, but the bigger system in which extraction becomes the primary way the economy is organized
- Extractivism operates across multiple scales in multiple ways, is never just localized
- Scales:
 - ❖ **Local:** land dispossession, pollution, labour changes
 - ❖ **National:** reliance on commodity exports and FDI
 - ❖ **Global:** trade, finance, geopolitics structured by resource flows
 - ❖ **Planetary:** climate change, biodiversity loss, soil and water depletion
- Extraction = multi-scalar and planetary
 - Highlights that extractivism has consequences for the entire Earth system, not just individual communities
 - Connected to world systemic inequalities
 - Old colonial processes are reproduced in extractive global economies
- **EXAM question:** Global extractivism isn't just about resources, it also involves frontier making (opening new spaces for extraction), coloniality (continued unequal relationships of power often racialized), finance in the state (enables/subsidises extraction, state while not always getting the benefits, encourages this to happen), technology (expands extraction), life itself (mining zones, sites of extraction, cancer causing pollution that affects communities), ecology and planetary processes themselves
 - Can help explain how the global economy grows, shapes our futures

Extractivism and Frontiers

- **Frontier:** space where capital pushes into new lands, resources, or domains

- Extractivism is constantly seeking new zones /frontiers of expansion
- Driven by:
 - ❖ Crises of over-accumulation
 - ❖ Need for new profit opportunities
- Types:
 - ❖ **Resource frontiers:** turning land into private, extractable resources
 - Places where nature is transformed into extractable resources, or where commons/state lands are converted into private property (**privatization/enclosures**)
 - ❖ **Commodity frontiers:** expanding production for external markets
 - Sometimes can occur without major ecological damage
- The two are distinct but can work together
- When both overlap → commoditizing resource frontiers
 - ❖ Expanding production, not just in global North but in external markets everywhere (entering global marketplace)
 - ❖ Example: a state contracting their lands to external companies (good isn't used domestically)
- Enclosures destroy previous systems of existence and property to make extraction possible
- After cycles of boom and bust, however, frontiers may close
 - No more wealth to be accumulated, but the environment is irreversibly harmed in the process
- Frontier spaces made to seem like empty land, used to justify resource extraction
 - Sites of political conflict because industries may try to make land in other countries seem empty, unused, needing to be profited off of

Extractivism and the State

- **State:** Key organizer and legalizer of extractivism
 - ❖ Key mediator, has authority to legalize or directly participate in extractive industries
 - ❖ Modern states are responsible for measuring economic development
 - ❖ State institutions enable extractivism, support capital accumulation in several ways: provide infrastructure that connects extraction to global markets, provides scientific/technical logic that makes nature useable for capital, enforces coercive power when necessary (uses police officers/enforcive methods to reduce protests)
 - ❖ However state is always pressured by outside forces and domestic power struggles
 - ❖ However, neoliberal reforms have restructured this role by subordinating the state in the interest of corporations ↓
- **Neoliberal era:** State increasingly aligned with corporate and financial capital
 - ❖ Yet still contested by social movements and internal power struggles

The Historical Unfolding of Agro-Extractivism

- Can turn to agro-extractivism
- Colonial plantation economies
 - ❖ Amongst earliest experiences in capitalist agriculture
 - ❖ Designed for exports rather than subsistence
 - ❖ Combined mono culture (farming one thing, ex. Cotton, cocoa), involved coerced or enslaved labour, land dispossession

- ❖ Plantations pioneered industrial, capitalist logic → laid framework for capitalism and global capitalism
- ❖ Plantations are political/economic machine, reorganized labour, standardized time (clocking in/clocking out), normalized producing things for external consumers, but also very violent
- 19th century industrialization
 - ❖ Agriculture expanded, new trade infrastructure, enabled colonial territories to be further integrated into capitalist system
 - ❖ Early stages of globalization
 - ❖ Enclosures were wide spread, local land was enclosed by land grabs
 - ❖ Any surplus was absorbed into capitalist accumulation market
 - ❖ People who produce the food/goods don't have access to it, aren't the ones consuming it (ex. Can't afford it)
- Green Revolution (post-WWII)
 - ❖ Agriculture was transformed, introducing high yield seasons, synthetic fertilizers and technologies
 - ❖ Industry technologies are important for agriculture as agriculture is very fickle (droughts, subject to seasons, etc), so new technology allows more productivity
 - ❖ **Green Revolution** → dramatically increased yield
 - ❖ Weakened biodiversity, became more energy intensive
 - ❖ Didn't mean that local populations were absorbing the surplus of yield, local populations were instead dependent on the global economy to buy their resources
 - ❖ Enclosure of technical knowledge, taking it out of the hands of people actually doing the work (ex. Larger companies 'patenting seeds')
- Neoliberal restructuring
 - ❖ Open markets to global trade
 - ❖ Farmland becomes a financial asset
- Corporate food regime
 - ❖ Result: scholars describe it as a **corporate food regime**, in which a handful of big, monopoly companies dominant markets and determine what gets grown where and by who
 - ❖ Agricultural system is not longer just to feed people, but produce commodities for global markets
 - ❖ Externalization of ecological and social costs

Settler Colonial States Built Through Extractivism

- Settler colonies (Canada, US, Australia, etc) were founded through extractive frontiers
- State-building followed extraction
- Agro-extractivism and mining as twin projects
 - Developed together, both treated Indigenous land as 'empty', needing to be converted into private property of export commodities
- Extractivism is not new in settler colonies

(Mining Example)

Mining as Ongoing Extractivism in Settler Colonial Contexts: Example

- Mining: concentrated example of extractivism
 - Turns lands and minerals into commodities, creates sacrifice zones, relies on dispossession, unequal distribution of harm
- Present mining as “national development” and “jobs”
 - ❖ Sites are often on Indigenous lands/territories
- Pattern:
 - ❖ State and corporations reap royalties and GDP growth
 - ❖ Indigenous / local communities live with long-term ecological and social consequences

How Modern Mining Reshapes Land and Water

- Dismantles local environments:
- Very intensive, leaves waste behind, leach toxins and heavy metals into surrounding environment
- Footprints persist
 - ❖ Seismic lines, roads, pits, visible decades after closure
- Landscapes reorganized for generations, not just during operations
 - ❖ Still see ecological consequences even after the mines close
- Pattern of disturbance matters a lot to the ways of life of the local populations and Indigenous communities

Environmental Impacts as Dispossession and Injustice

- Indigenous livelihoods: hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering
- Mining-induced changes: contaminated water and unsafe fish/wildlife
- Feels like another pattern of dispossession, land can no longer sustain life and culture
- Mining results in ecological sacrifice zones created in the name of “national interest”
 - ❖ Treats land as expendable so extraction can continue
 - ❖ Settler colonial states often justify mining as being in “national interest” and economic growth

Waste, Tailings, and the Long Afterlife of Mines

- Concern to Indigenous communities
- Tailings and waste rock:
 - ❖ Long term sources of pollution
 - ❖ Tailings dam failures → catastrophic spills
- Community concerns:
 - ❖ Drinking water, cancer, and health impacts
 - ❖ Loss of trust in local food and animals
- Risks outlive the lifespan of the mine, Indigenous people are left to live with contaminated landscapes
- Attempts to ‘clean up’ the areas are often not well executed
- Remediation:
 - ❖ Often contested
 - ❖ Frequently underfunded or misaligned with Indigenous visions for the land

Economic Benefits and “Leakages”

- Promised benefits of mines:
 - ❖ Jobs, higher incomes, infrastructure, business contracts
- Recurrent issues:
 - ❖ Profits and big contracts leak out to external firms and shareholders
 - ❖ Most value doesn't stay locally, even if jobs are secured
 - ❖ Indigenous workers often in lower-paid, more precarious jobs
 - ❖ Rising cost of living (especially housing) can make it difficult for Indigenous people to afford to stay in their communities
 - ❖ Dependence on a single volatile sector (boom-bust cycles)
- Mining can bring short-term gains but there are long-term risks/ vulnerabilities

Social and Cultural Impacts

- Fly-in/fly-out work:
 - ❖ Long absences from home; stress on families and caregiving
 - ❖ Ex. often in tar sand areas
- Higher incomes have ambiguous impacts
 - ❖ Doesn't necessarily mean wellbeing
 - ❖ There are a lot of violence in extraction towns
- Impacts on:
 - ❖ Gender relations (often increased risks for women and girls at mining sites)
 - ❖ Language and cultural continuity
 - ❖ Less time for land based practices
- Overall: mining intensifies existing colonial and social inequalities in Indigenous societies

Indigenous Resistance and Negotiation

- Indigenous communities are not passive victims of mining:
 - ❖ They organize protest, blockades, direct action
 - ❖ Court cases and legal challenges
 - ❖ Alliances with environmental/human rights groups
- Companies/states may exploit divisions
- Key point:
 - ❖ Indigenous peoples navigate constrained choices
 - ❖ They actively shape, contest, and reimagine extractivism on their lands

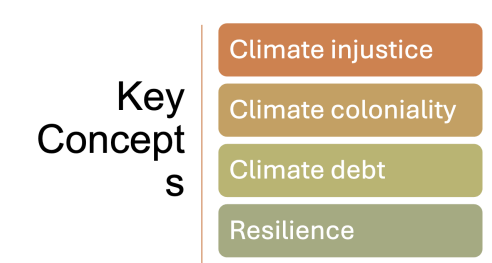
Summary and Key Takeaways

- Extractivism is more than big extraction:
 - ❖ It is a worldview and political- economic logic that organizes life
 - ❖ Extractivism is a political economic project
 - ❖ Treats resources as expendable
- Global extractivism: Planetary, multi-scalar system linking local sacrifice zones to global consumption
- Frontiers and the state: States are central organizers of extractive regimes
 - ❖ States are not neutral, they are key organizers

- ❖ Subsidize projects, frame extraction of a national interest → very much a part of the capitalist economy
- Agro-extractivism and mining: Long historical arcs
- Indigenous communities:
 - ❖ Bear disproportionate ecological and social costs
 - ❖ Also lead powerful forms of resistance, negotiation, and alternative world-making

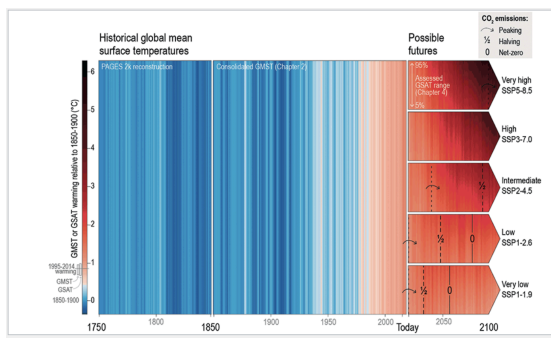
Feb 3, 2026

ENV311 Lecture 5: Climate Injustice and Climate Coloniality



The Science: Why Scientific Authority Matters

- Climate change = long term shifts in temperature, precipitation, extremes
- IPCC = major global climate science assessment body
 - Represents scientific consensus
 - Scientific consensus has become increasingly strong
 - Overtime, language has become more strong (evolved from 'likely', 'possibly', etc to more definitive)
- Why it matters:
 - Shapes what counts as legitimate climate knowledge
 - It influences policy agendas and negotiation baselines
- Gap between knowledge and action → "Science is strong" ≠ "politics follow"



- Climate warming data
- Blue = colder than average, red = warmer than average
- Tells us two things:
 1. Warming is not random, there's a long term trend
 2. It has accelerated sharply in recent years
- A pattern this consistent can't be excused short term variability
- The question is no longer, is warming happening? Is this human caused? But rather, what are we willing to do about it?

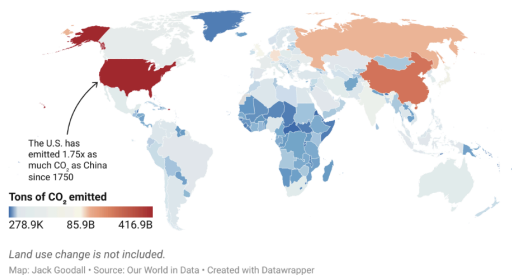
Uneven Impacts: Climate CHangeis not just about Geography

- Common assumption: impacts depend mostly on where you live
- Disproportionate impacts on:
 - ❖ Global South
 - ❖ Small island states
 - ❖ Low income/formerly colonized regions
- Impacts are felt more severely in certain places, and this unevenness cannot be explained by purely geography alone
- We need history + political economy to explain this
- Uneven impacts follow a pattern of triple inequation

Roberts, J. Timmons, and Bradley C. Parks. 2006. *A Climate of Injustice: Global Inequality, North–South Politics, and Climate Policy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapters 1–2.

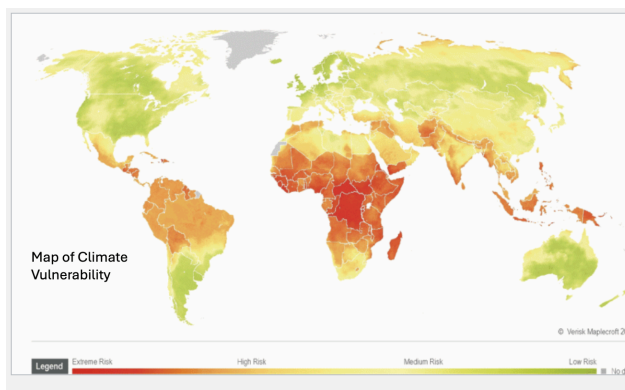
The U.S. is still history's biggest carbon emitter

Cumulative emissions, the running sum of CO₂ released from fossil fuels and industry since 1750.



- USA, China, and Russia have produced a lot of CO₂ over time
- US is still the biggest carbon emitter over time

Map of Climate Vulnerability



- Opposite trend → countries emitting the least are the most vulnerable
- Who has the capacity to respond?

1. Inequality in Responsibility

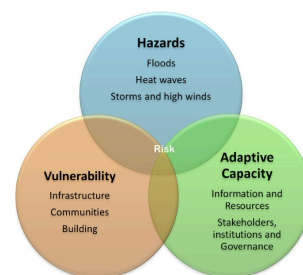
- Core question: who caused the problem?
- Global North industrialized first, benefited from carbon, 'dirty' energy
- Fossil fuels used to: growth industry, expand empires, accumulate wealth
- Key idea:
 - ❖ Climate change is global in effects
 - ❖ But not global in causes
- Effects that we're currently feeling are effects of industrialization

2. Inequality in Vulnerability

- Global South experiences the most severe consequences:
 - ❖ More deaths from climate disasters, displacement
 - ❖ Food and water insecurities
 - ❖ Greater livelihood disruption
- In the readings by Roberts and Parks:
 - ❖ >90% of disaster deaths historically occur in developing countries
- This is not because they will in "naturally dangerous" places, but vulnerability is socially and politically produced (not 'nature' or 'scientific')
- Lower class more likely to work in more dangerous, emitting jobs, less likely to have healthcare
- Political conditions shape how people live and what resources they have access to in times of disaster
- Vulnerability is not synonymous with poverty, but can be associated with class
- Hazards can be similar, but outcomes are radically different because vulnerability is shaped before the climate event even occurs

3. Inequality in Capacity

- Capacity = ability to: prepare, respond, recover without long term harm
- Not just "rich vs. poor"
- Capacity includes:
 - ❖ Access to resources without punitive conditions



Inequality in Capacity (Part II)

- Wealthy countries tend to have infrastructure, planning capacity,
- So when flooding hits a wealthy country the state can mobilize emergency structures quickly, respond immediately, rebuild infrastructure, and look at prevention methods for the long term
- Fiscal flexibility (GN) vs. debt and loans
 - ❖ Wealthy countries have fiscal flexibility → can borrow cheaply, inject massive public spending into recovery, can run a deficit and reverse it when disaster is over

- ❖ For climate disasters you have to spend a lot of money, having flexibility means a lot
- ❖ Poor countries are often already indebted, have to take into account austerity measures even during disasters
- ❖ Climate disasters cause immediate damage but also long term debts for developing countries/ Global South
- ❖ Global South needs to borrow more money (loans) when faced in climate disasters (structurally disadvantaged, long term system of being locked into debt), putting them more into debt
- Climate change and 'development trap'
 - ❖ Weakened revenue weakens adaptive properties then makes the next disaster even worse
 - ❖ Cannot expand economy, especially if you're a country prone to disasters
- Institution and political capacity
 - ❖ Wealthy states have large bureaucracies, large government systems
 - ❖ Institutions allow states to coordinate disaster responses, implement long term climate strategies
 - ❖ Developing countries have limited administrative capacities, don't have institutional/political capacity to deal with climate disasters as effectively
- Conditionality and loss of autonomy
 - ❖ When Global South countries receive finance, it comes with conditions (privatisation, limited public spending, etc)
 - ❖ Even when they get funding/loans, the countries may not be free to use it in ways that are most protective to vulnerable populations
 - ❖ Capacity is not just about resources, but WHO gets to decide how these resources are used in the first place

Bringing it Together: Why geography is not the (singular) answer

- Impacts are not uneven because: "Nature is harsher" or "some places are unlucky"
- They are uneven because those responsible face the least risks, and those who are affected have the the least ability to respond
- Unevenness reflects:
 - ❖ Vulnerability produced by inequality (structural constraints)
 - ❖ Capacity constrained by history + global systems
- Without redistribution, "adaptation" can reproduce injustice
- Global south countries are not simply 'less prepared' for climate change, but are structurally restrained in their ability to repair, respond and recover

Sultana, Farhana. 2022. "The Unbearable Heaviness of Climate Coloniality." *Political Geography* 99: 102638.

Climate Coloniality: Connecting Past and Present

- Climate injustice explains unequal outcomes
- **Climate coloniality** goes further → Climate change is governed through ongoing colonial power relations
- Colonialism isn't just "past", it persists through:
 - ❖ Global economic systems
 - ❖ Political institutions
 - ❖ Climate governance practices
- Colonial dynamics are baked into political institutions and how climate governance happens today

What Does Climate Coloniality Actually Mean?

1. Wealth in global north was shaped by extraction
 - ❖ Extraction → wealth accumulation
 - ❖ Capitalism built on extraction
 - ❖ Fossil fuels/energy relies on energy intensive processes
 - ❖ Colonial resource/labour extraction helped build Northern wealth
 2. Externalization → costs pushed elsewhere
 - ❖ Environmental costs are externalized
 - ❖ Environmental harm disproportionately absorbed by colonized/marginalised regions
 - ❖ Eco damage, pollution etc aren't equally shared, but colonized lands absorb environmental harm (ex. Indigenous communities)
 - ❖ Eco harm treated as invisible by the people doing it → don't have to see it
 3. Governance → continued hierarchy
 - ❖ Who defines the problem? Whose knowledge counts? Whose lives are prioritized?
 - ❖ Sultana says patterns are reproduced by contemporary climate governance
 - ❖ Climate impacts in global south are framed as inevitable, rather than an outcome of political context that are embedded in the economy
- (Unevenness occurs between countries but also within countries)

Representation, NGOs, and the Politics of "Helping"

- Another one of Sultana's points:

- ❖ Thinks a lot about representation: how climate change is narrated, visualized, and talked about in government reports/NGO campaigns
- ❖ Sultana argues that this language/messaging is central to how power works in climate governance
- ❖ The way a problem is represented shape solutions, who we think is responsible/capable, what type of solutions seem reasonable/imaginable
- Representation = how climate change is narrated/visualized
- Why it matters: Shapes perceived responsibility + solutions

The Dominant Climate Story

- Dominant narrative:
 - ❖ Global South/Indigenous communities/farmers portrayed as vulnerable victims in need of help/intervention, seen as lacking resources and just waiting for help until someone in the Global North intervenes
 - ❖ Trying to evoke sympathy
 - ❖ Global North portrayed as leaders/innovators/solvers
- Sultana is not saying that harm is fake, rather how suffering is framed matters (has implications)
 - ❖ Who is framed as the problem solver?
 - ❖ Solutions designed in Global North and implemented in Global South, the structure of the relationship still matters even though the goal is to 'help'
 - ❖ Relationship of Global North as "helper" and the Global South as "needing to be rescued"

NGOs and the "Rescue" Model

- Critique is not, "NGOs are evil"
- Critique is how help gets framed/structured → asking more questions and being curious about dynamics:
 - ❖ Communities portrayed as lacking
 - ❖ Outside experts deliver solutions
 - ❖ Success measured by short-term coping
- NGOs operate through 'rescue models', deeper questions about responsibility and resources/structural change are pushed aside
- Examples:
 - ❖ Flood shelters without addressing why flooding repeats
 - ❖ May introduce drought resistant seeds, but don't answer questions about who actually gets to farm this land
 - ❖ 'Resilience' training without demanding emissions accountability from high emitting countries
- Can reduce short term harm but normalize long term exposure to risk

Another part of Sultana's argument: Whose Knowledge Counts?



- Scientific knowledge from Global North is usually seen as primary, while Indigenous knowledge is seen as anecdotal, rarely shape the core definition of the problem, solutions, and how resources are distributed

The Colonial Hierarchy Being Reproduced

- A familiar hierarchy emerges
 - ❖ Global North governs climate change
 - ❖ Global South framed as passive, expected to adapt to it
- Colonial hierarchy obscured by 'feel good' language (like empowerment, resilience, sustainability)
- Adaptation can't be the only response to climate change
- Sultana says: Climate governance reproduces old school colonial systems even when the language seems beneficial/positive
 - ❖ Need to be aware of colonial hierarchy are being implemented
 - ❖ Representation is never a neutral issue, but rescue narratives define what the political solutions are, where resources go, etc
 - ❖ Other things get left off like climate debt repayment, building emissions in the Global North, while technical marketplace solutions are framed as practical

Climate Debt: Responsibility Without Redistribution?

- But, "Why can't countries just adapt?"
- Climate debt frames: not charity → responsibility + redistribution
- Wealthy countries used disproportionate carbon budget
- Poorer countries pay costs of disruption
- **Climate debt:** wealthy countries owe poorer countries since they use disproportionate carbon budget and poor countries past the cost (through flooding, droughts, heat waves etc)
 - ❖ Unequal development pathways shaped by historical power relations
 - ❖ Climate debt is ongoing
- Flips usual framing of climate change by asking WHO benefited from fossil fuel development and WHO bares the costs
- Climate change isn't just about emissions today, but accumulation of emissions over history

- The problem with asking why countries cannot just adapt is b/c adaptation requires resources and capacity, which Global South countries may not have → have to pay for a crisis they did not create
- Global south countries are often sceptical of international climate agreements

Climate Governance: COP and Green Capitalism

- **COP** = annual UNFCCC climate negotiations
 - ❖ Emissions commitments
 - ❖ Finance + adaptation
 - ❖ Responsibility debates for past and future emissions
- Decisions framed as outcome of shared deliberation
- Formal equality ≠ real equality
- Political inequality can manifest into these negotiations
- Wealthy countries arrive at COP with large delegations comprised as policy experts, while countries from the Global South are only able to send one or two people
- Negotiations are shaped by:
 - ❖ Delegation size, expertise, agenda control
 - ❖ Corporate influence
- Outcomes often reflect power and influence, rather than genuine consensus
- COP is increasingly opening its doors to non state actors: private sector representatives, fossil fuel countries, etc
 - ❖ Growing corporate presence is justified in language of 'pragmatism', arguing climate change is such a large problem that it can't be solved without private sector inclusion
 - ❖ This has been critiqued as 'green capitalism' the idea that capitalism can be reformed to be made environmentally friendly
 - ❖ This framing has important consequences, by framing corporates as center actors it narrows the range of responses that are considered realistic
 - ❖ Reducing fossil fuels to mitigate climate change must occur at an immense level, but is left off the table → solutions therefore protect these high emitters

The Paris Agreement

- Often celebrated as a historical breakthrough, first time nearly every country attended
- Symbolic global consensus (near-universal participation), indicated global coordination was possible regarding climate change
- However includes many political restraints,
- Structure relies on:
 - ❖ Voluntary national commitments (NDCs)
 - Each country decides for itself how it will reduce emissions, and what penalties
 - ❖ Self-reporting

- ❖ Weak enforcement
- Responsibility acknowledged abstractly, not operationalized
- Paris does acknowledge that different countries have different capacities to respond: differential responsibility
 - ❖ Doesn't put into place that countries that contribute the most should bear greater responsibility → climate debt
- Limited redistribution/accountability
 - ❖ Loss and damage
 - ❖ Adaptation has its limits, for many disaster prone regions, loss in damage isn't a future concern but is already happening, can't just keep adapting
 - ❖ Some Global South actors argue that some harms can't be prevented through mitigation and adaptation alone, and they therefore require compensation
 - ❖ Paris Agreement acknowledges loss in damage, but strips of its redistributive implications (doesn't do anything meaningful about it)

Resilience

Nightingale, Andrea J. 2015. "Challenging the Romance with Resilience: Communities, Scale and Climate Change." In *Practising Feminist Political Ecologies: Moving beyond the 'Green Economy'*, edited by Wendy Harcourt and Ingrid L. Nelson, 133–145. London: Zed Books.

Resilience: Coping, Individual Responsibility, and the Limits of Climate Governance

- Resilience has become one of the most common concepts in contemporary climate discourse, usually is presented as a positive response
- Resilience is mainstream climate language:
 - ❖ Policy, NGOs, development, universities
- Basic meaning:
 - ❖ Absorb shocks + keep functioning despite disruptions, adapt to change
 - ❖ Can reduce harm (warnings, preparedness)
 - ❖ Helping communities withstand climate impacts
- Nightingale's warning: don't romanticise it as neutral or sufficient
 - ❖ Concern isn't that resilience is useless, but that it becomes a substitute for more ambitious changes and resilience just isn't enough

How Resilience Logic Works

- Frames climate change as inevitable, external shocks

- Shifts the key question from: “Who is responsible?” → to “How can people adjust to these conditions?”
- Once climate change is seen as unavoidable, focus moves away from:
 - ❖ Fossil fuel extraction, state regulation, redistribution
 - ❖ Why climate change is happening, who is responsible
- Focus moves toward:
 - ❖ Local preparedness, flexibility, behaviour change
 - ❖ Resilience asks, how can people cope better → political implications
- Resilience directs attention towards individuals and local communities instead of towards states, corporations, and other powerful actors
- Different meanings of resistance: infrastructure resilience vs. individual resilience

The Individualization of Responsibility

- Resilience individualises responsibility for climate change and its impacts
- Trains individuals to respond, be more self reliant
 - Ex. paper straws, reusable bags
- Often emphasizes: household coping, entrepreneurship, self-reliance, community self help
- What disappears → corporate responsibility, wealthy state emissions failures, climate reparations/redistributions
- Individuals are expected to become more resilient in the face of growing environmental risk
- Overfocus on resilience allows fossil fuel companies that continue to extract and profit to disappear from the conversation
 - ❖ Resilience asks people to adjust to harm rather than asking powerful actors to stop extracting/emitting in the first place
 - ❖ Obscures accountability
- Retreat of the state, aligns with neoliberal governance
 - ❖ States retreat from providing public goods, instead encouraging individuals/communities to manage risks on their own
- Can be helpful, but limited
- Ignores broader questions like why aren't emissions reduced in the first place, where is disproportionately effected, etc
-

Why Nightingale Calls this Depoliticizing

- Treats impacts as “natural shocks” rather than political outcomes →
- Responsibility becomes diffuse; political conflict is smoothed over, accountability fades →
- Climate injustice becomes a technical management issue to be solved with ‘better planning’, not a political problem requiring structural changes →
- Systems can “cope” without transforming structure and power
 - Without asking who benefits who doesn't

Back to Climate Justice

- Climate justice asks fundamentally different political questions like who caused this?
- Resilience asks how can we adapt
- Resilience shouldn't be the endpoint of climate governance
- Without accountability and redistribution of resources, resilience teaches people how to live in an unjust status quo without paving a pathway elsewhere
- Resilience: we have to exist within this system and become more resilient within it

Resilience sidelines asking and considering important questions related to climate justice

- Who caused the crisis? Who benefits? Who should pay? Who should decide?

Resilience cannot be the endpoint of climate governance

Conclusion: Why Climate Justice Requires Structural Change

- Climate change is not simply evenly caused, experienced, or governed
- It is structured by: colonial histories, capitalist development models, and global inequality
- Climate justice requires: accountability + redistribution + transformation

Midterm

- Questions not asking- did x author say y
- Authors names will appear but not really need to know them → more so key concepts
- About accuracy and depth of concepts instead of which author said what
- 1 hour 50 mins to write