IN261 — Indigenous Rights and Natural Resources

Andrew Tirrell
646-247-8747
andrew.tirrell@bc.edu

Class: Wed. 4:30pm-6:50pm
Gasson 308
Office hours: Wed. 2:15-4:15, Carney 244

What roles do indigenous peoples play in conflicts over natural resources? This seminar course will examine conflicts between indigenous peoples, governments, and corporations in order to better understand why these events occur throughout the world. Whether it’s hydro-electric dams in Brazil and Laos, mines in Peru and Guatemala, or tourism in Panama, struggles between indigenous groups and forces of “development” are ubiquitous, and the frequency of these conflicts is on the rise. Through case studies, an interactive negotiation simulation, and an academic mini-conference, we will explore indigenous rights and natural resources issues through a variety of lenses.

Grading

Grading will be based on:
1. One 3500+ word research paper (30%)
2. Presentation of that paper in the mini-conference (10%)
3. Two short essays (20%)
4. Preparation for and participation in the negotiation simulation (20%)
5. Participation in class discussions (20%)

As this class has a small-group seminar format, attendance and active participation are crucial, and will be expected of every student.

Schedule and Readings

January 15- Indigeneity: What does it mean to be indigenous? In this first week we will introduce the topic and set the stage for the semester by exploring indigenous identities from a wide range of cultural and geographic contexts.

Readings

• “Indigeneity: Global and Local,” Francesca Merlan, Current Anthropology, 50.3 (June 2009), pp. 303-333.

January 22 & 29- Human Rights Law: This week we will examine the international system of human rights law, beginning with the Universal Declaration, and covering additional instruments up to the recent Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We will also discuss the various human rights venues that hear cases based on these instruments.

Readings

• Universal Declaration of Human Rights
• Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (ILO No. 169).
• American Convention on Human Rights
• Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Essay One due January 29: Write a short (2-3 page) essay discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the various human rights instruments that currently exist, with attention to how they impact indigenous peoples.
February 5- Natural Resources in the Indigenous Context: What are the impacts of natural resource development projects on indigenous lives? An overview of large-scale resource extraction (mines, oil, timber), hydro-electric projects, and tourism will help us to understand the potential threats and rewards of these activities to indigenous peoples.

Readings


February 12-The Ngöbe Case of Western Panama: A complex set of natural resource conflicts that incorporates issues of hydropower, tourism, and mining.

Readings


February 19- Maori Fishing Rights in New Zealand

Readings

- Treaty of Waitangi

February 26- Brazil/Peru Cases

Readings

- San Mateo Huanchor case background by plaintiffs' counsel, the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL).

March 5- No Class (Spring Break)

March 12- African Indigeneity: What does it mean to be indigenous in Africa? It's a hotly-debated topic, and one that is important in the oil conflicts of the Niger Delta.

Readings


Essay Two due March 12: Write a short (2-3 page) analysis of the ways in which “indigeneity” differs between the Latin American and African contexts, and the potential impacts these differences may have on indigenous rights to land and natural resources. Base your analysis on relevant class readings and discussion—no further research is required.

March 19: No class due to extended meetings for the upcoming simulation. Use this time to get your papers ready for the conference.
March 26 & April 2- Cape Wind Negotiation Simulation: During this simulation, each student will be assigned a role within the local conflict between the Wampanoag tribes of Aquinnah and Mashpee and Cape Wind Associates over the location of a wind farm off the coast of southeastern Massachusetts. Students will be provided a packet of confidential information and instructions unique to their roles, and we will then negotiate a settlement among all of the parties. At the end of the simulation we will review the challenges that we faced (and hopefully overcame) in order to reach agreement.

April 9- Southeast Asia: Along the Mekong River, hydropower development has a serious impact on both indigenous villages and non-indigenous agricultural centers.


April 16 & 23: Mini-Conferences: Students will present to the class the research they are undertaking for their final papers, and will field questions from their peers and the instructor. This mini-conference is designed to develop public speaking skills and allow students to gain feedback to assist them in completing their final papers.

Final paper due in class on April 30: Choose a conflict that centers on indigenous rights and natural resources (one we did not discuss in class), and analyze it through any lens of your choice (political, legal, economic, anthropological, etc.). You may model the analysis on the work of one of the authors we studied, or establish your own framework for investigating the issues. The paper should be a minimum of 3,500 words (~14 pages double-spaced), and outside of a brief introduction to the conflict, it should focus primarily on analysis rather than fact-reporting.

Our final class will be a film screening with refreshments to celebrate a great semester of work.