Advanced Study Course: Geopolitics and Natural Resources

About the course

Subject

Global Studies / Internationale udviklingsstudier / International Public Administration and Politics / Politik / Politik og forvaltning

Activity type

master course

Teaching language

English

Registration


Registration through stads self-service within the announced registration period, as you can see on the Studyadministration homepage. When registering for courses, please be aware of the potential conflicts between courses or exam dates on courses. The planning of course activities at Roskilde University is based on the recommended study programs, which do not overlap. However, if you choose optional courses and/or study plans that goes beyond the recommended study programs, an overlap of lectures or exam da

Detailed description of content

Academic focus. The demand for and competition over natural resources have emerged as key topics in resource-rich developing countries and resource-consuming developed countries. Topics like land-grabbing, natural resource investments, renewable energy, sustainability and climate change have become deeply entangled with the appetite for resources. This has seen traditional geopolitical issues re-emerge in the form of struggles over resources and protection of the environment, with leading nation states and transnational companies having intensified their search for and claims to potential resource-rich areas. A new parallel institutional geopolitical architecture has also emerged that is slowly but steadily manifesting itself by trying to tame, control, govern and set standards for the regulation of scarce resources, land, investments and the climate, often in the name of sustainability.

This advanced study seminar takes stock of current debates within political economy and political ecology regarding natural resource extraction, renewable energy, investments and climate change: it traces the historical roots of these debates, scrutinizes the different kinds of arguments, explanations and ontologies underpinning the different opinions and conflicts, and examines emerging trends such as Climate change; Renewables, Natural Resource Investments; Corporate Social Responsibility and companies’ Social License to Operate, as well as resource conflicts; and new institutional geopolitical actors for regulation and standard setting. Expected Course Structure: 1. Introduction I: Why is natural resource extraction so contested? 2. Introduction II: New ways of understanding geopolitics: governance of natural resources beyond the state centric model 3. Theme 1a: Politics of Resource extraction and investments from Latin America (examples from Peru) 4. Theme 1b: Resource extraction, investments and rights: a relational model (East African examples) 5. Theme 1c: Resource extraction and the management of community conflict (examples from Columbia) 6. Theme 2a: Renewable resources: what are they and how are they related to extraction? 7. Theme 2b: Socio-economic risks: the case of the contested Tukana windmill investment and VESTAS 8. Theme 2c: Renewable resources: more clean and fair? 9. Theme 3a: Sustainability and climate change: from Al Gore to Donald Trump 10. Theme 3b: Sustainability and standards: how to make sustainability and create economic asset/value 11. Theme 3c: Sustainability, standards and power: understanding the power of standards from EITI to investments 12. Discussion café with selected NGOs or visit to key institution 13. Summary and exam preparation

Expected work effort (ects-declaration)

10 ECTS x 27 hours = 270 Estimated: 13 lectures x 2 =26 hours; Group work = 40; Newspaper assignment + exam 1= 78; Preparation 13 x 6 = 78; Exam 2 = 48; Total = 270 hours

Course material and reading list


A full reading list will be provided consisting of a mixture of articles, reports, book chapters and other types of material that will be uploaded or stated on Moodle in good time before course start.

An additional reading list will also be uploaded on Moodle.

The pensum will be roughly 60 academic pages per lecture.
There will be a mid-term evaluation of the course.

There will be feedback on group presentation.

There will be office hours for questions, as well as feedback on assignments after exams. Grades will be provided through eksamen.ruc.dk

For further details, see the study regulations and the course outline.

**ISE Studyadministration (ise-studyadministration@ruc.dk)**

**The responsible course lecturer**

Lars Buur (lbuur@ruc.dk)

**Type of examination**

Individual written portfolio.

The portfolio consists of 2 written products which are prepared in whole or in part during the course. For example, the products can be answers to exercises, papers for presentations, written feedback, written reflections or written assignments.

The preparation of the products may be subject to time limits. The total size of the portfolio may not exceed 28,800 characters in length, including spaces. The size specifications include the cover, table of contents, bibliography, figures and other illustrations, but exclude any appendices.

The requirements for the content and form of the portfolio and the length of the various products will be determined before the beginning of the course and published on the university's website.

The portfolio is submitted in its entirety. The deadline for handing in the work will be published on the university’s homepage before the course begins. An overall assessment of the portfolio is given.

Assessment: 7-point grading scale.

**Re-examination:**

Same as ordinary

**ECTS**

10

**Learning outcomes and assessment criteria**

- Specialised knowledge of a particular subject within International Development Studies
- Advanced knowledge and understanding of academic and methodological debates related to the subject
- Skills in choosing relevant theories in order to investigate a problem area
- Skills in selecting and critically applying relevant theories and methods
- Skills in communicating and discussing theories and empirical results
- Competency in assuming responsibility for and reflecting on own learning and that of fellow students by actively participating in group work, presentations and discussions
- Competency in independently selecting and utilising academic literature relevant to a specific research question

**Overall content**

The objective of the advanced study course is to provide students with advanced knowledge and understanding within a specific research area. At least two advanced study courses will be offered per semester:

Themes may include:

- Modern theories about the state in the Global South
- Governance and economic transition in a globalised world
- Migration and citizenship
- Policies and practices in global health
- Social, political and economic aspects of climate change

**Prerequisites for participation**

Currently no data from curriculum.

**Prerequisites for participation in the exam**

Currently no data from curriculum.

**Teaching and working methods**

The course is based on lectures, but will also include other teaching and working methods such as group work, exercises, student presentations, peer feedback and field trips or guest lectures as well as other practical
activities. During the course, a written assignment will be prepared which consists of a response to a question that has been given at the start of the course.

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<tr>
<th>Type of course</th>
<th>Elective course</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exam code(s)</td>
<td>Exam code(s) : U40514</td>
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**Course days:**

**Hold: 1**

**Natural Resources and Geo-Politics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>10-02-2020 10:15 til 10-02-2020 12:00</th>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>25.3-005 - teori (80)</td>
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| Teacher               | Line Jespersgaard Jakobsen (lijeja@ruc.dk)  
                        Lars Buur (lbuur@ruc.dk)  
                        Peter Wilson Leys (pleys@ruc.dk)  
                        Ilse Maria Renkens (renkens@ruc.dk)     |
| External lecturer     | Possible presentation by PhD candidate Thabit Jacob's on coals present importance for developing countries using Tanzania as example. |

**Content**

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**1. Introduction I: Why is natural resource extraction so contested? (Lars Buur and team presentation). Date 2020-02-10 (week: 07) 10:15 - 12:00. Room. 25.3-005 - teori (80)**

In this first lecture, besides dealing with course housekeeping – readings, presentation, student work, exams etc. – we will explore the following: What is natural resource extraction politics? What is the role of natural resources in the economy and development? What is the resource curse and land grabbing? We shall also ask if these phenomena exist and if so, how can they be mitigated? The lecture will underline the fundamental paradox of natural resource extraction as the cornerstone of development, while at the same time, undermining the very conditions for life. In other words, the lecture will set the broader scene of natural resources, geopolitics and investments. Furthermore, the three thematic fields of resource extraction, renewable energy, sustainability/climate change and conflict will be outlined.
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**Reading list**

Readings:

Ferguson, James (2005), Seeing like an oil company, AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, Vol. 107, Issue 3, pp. 377–382


Natural Resources and Geo-Politics

Time 14-02-2020 12:15 til 14-02-2020 14:00
Forberedelsesnorm Ikke valgt
Forberedelsesnorm d-vip Ikke valgt
Location 04.2-025 - teorirum (40)
Teacher Lars Buur ( lbuur@ruc.dk)
Content 2. Introduction II: New ways of understanding geopolitics: governance of natural resources beyond the state centric model (Lars Buur and PhDs). Date: 2020-02-14 (week: 07). Time 12:15 - 14:00. Room 04.2-025 - teorirum (40).

How can we understand the new geopolitical framings related to climate change, investments, sustainability and conflict in natural resources that have evolved rapidly over the last decade? What is the role of the state in the governance of the climate, land and natural resource extraction? How should we study it? Which actors, processes and structures are central to understanding the increasing complexities of globalization, natural resource extraction, development and climate change? Questions like these will be explored in relation to what we call 'the new geopolitics' of natural resources. That is, we focus on governance through global standards as well as local conflicts over resource extraction, from the perspective of 'global assemblages'. We discuss how these new assemblages regulate knowledge production and 'know how', rights, and authority. We do so by exploring how the shift from the state to 'global assemblages', which blurs the boundaries between 'the political' and 'technical', or the 'political' and 'the economic'. Thereby, exploring new ways of understanding the global political economy.

Reading list


Natural Resources and Geo-Politics

Time 17-02-2020 10:15 til 17-02-2020 12:00
Forberedelsesnorm Ikke valgt
Forberedelsesnorm d-vip Ikke valgt
Location 04.2-025 - teorirum (40)
Teacher Peter Wilson Leys ( pleys@ruc.dk)
Content 3. Theme 1a: Politics of Resource extraction and investments in Peru (Peter Leys) Date: 2020-02-17 (week: 08). Time: 10:15 - 12:00 Room 04.2-025 - teorirum (40)

How has natural resource extraction shaped the political histories of primary export countries? How have shifting political regimes dealt with extraction? In the first session, we will present the case of Peru and its history of resource extraction over the twentieth century until todays current attempt to attract investments and govern natural resources. However, over the last fifteen years, multiple social conflicts surrounding extractive enterprises have reshaped the political landscape of Peru. This session will: a. outline the history of natural resource extraction in Peru and the shifting political regimes of extraction, b. how natural resources are presented as an investment friendly bounty for private investment, c. a brief introduction to the history of land, conflict and citizenship in the areas of extraction.
Extractive industries face several challenges in their daily operations, not least due to community conflicts and severe local resistance. In the first half of this session, we will look at how extractive companies engage in ‘corporate social and political technologies’, examining how they manage dissent and engineer consent locally, as well as in a broader spatial perspective. We will discuss technologies such as lobbying, CSR and SLO and show how these are related to national governmental frameworks, as well as ‘stakeholder governance’/governance at a distance. For the second half we will be visited by Asmara Klein from the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) (https://resourcegovernance.org/about-us/asmara-klein), who will talk about ways that companies and states can be held accountable by an active transnational civil society. She will also talk about NRGI generally works.

Reading list

**Readings:**
- Matthew Himley (2013), Regularizing Extraction in Andean Peru: Mining and Social Mobilization in an Age of Corporate Social Responsibility, Antipode Vol. 45 No. 2 2013

**Additional readings:**
- Kirsch, Stuart, 2014, Chapter 2, The Politics of Space (pp. 53-83), in Mining Capitalism, University of California Press (available as online book through REX)
- Dunlap, Alexander (2019), ‘Agro si, mina NO!’ the Tía Maria copper mine, state terrorism and social war by every means in the Tambo Valley, Peru
Over the last decade, large-scale investments in natural resources have accelerated dramatically and today outpace official aid to East African countries. While investments in natural resources and agriculture have become more important for African economies by stimulating economic growth and making regimes dependent on rents and revenues, many investments are never implemented or fall through during implementation. Furthermore, natural resource investments often end up violating the rights of local populations, which can lead to severe social protests and political instability. In this lecture, we discuss why some investments are more likely to be implemented while accommodating the rights of local populations.

As empirical examples we will use cases of investments drawn from Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda to explore why investments are implemented (or not) and when the rights of local populations are accommodated (or not accommodated).

**Reading list**


Prno, Jason & Slocombe, D. Scott, 2012, Exploring the origins of ‘social license to operate’ in the mining sector: Perspectives from governance and sustainability theories, Resources Policy 37, pp. 346–357


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Using the examples of wind development in Sweden and Mexico, and wind and geothermal development in Kenya, students will become aware that renewable energy projects, whether they be wind, geothermal, etc., are extractive in nature. They often require large swathes of land to be set aside for their development, and plenty of rare minerals in order to work. This land becomes off-limits to its previous users, potentially affecting their way of life, as is the case with pastoralist groups or indigenous peoples who have to move in order for mineral extraction to take place. Questions like who has the right to the land and who will benefit from the extraction are at the root of struggles over renewable energy projects.

**Reading list**


**Natural Resources and Geo-Politics**

**Time**
02-03-2020 10:15 til 02-03-2020 12:00

**Location**
05.2-032 - teorirum (65)

**Teacher**
Lars Buur ( lbuur@ruc.dk )
Ilse Maria Renkens ( renkens@ruc.dk )

**External lecturer**
Possible presentation by VESTAS

**Content**

7. Theme 2b: Socio-economic risks: the case of the contested Tukana windmill investment and VESTAS (possible VESTAS presentation) (Ilse Renkens and Lars Buur). Date 2020-03-02 (week 10), Time 10:15 - 12:00. Room 05.2-032 - teorirum (65)

From a company perspective, renewable energy projects are not risk-free. For example, wind energy projects depend on near-perfect wind conditions, while renewables like geothermal require massive investments and an often decade-long phase of development. In addition, investments are exposed to social risks such as local protests, elite capture, and legal action. From the perspective of those who are affected by renewable energy projects, there are also socio-economic risks. Forced relocation may negatively affect distances to workplaces, as well as disturb traditional lifestyles and the social fabric. This lecture focuses on the Lake Turkana Wind Power project as a case study. We will also be visited by a representative from the Vestas energy company explain the company CSR policy.

**Reading list**


**Natural Resources and Geo-Politics**

**Time**
06-03-2020 12:15 til 06-03-2020 14:00
This lecture looks at how states and companies both paint a positive picture of renewable energy projects and the development that these projects will bring about by focusing on the case of the Olkaria geothermal power plants in Kenya. To mitigate the negative social, economic and environmental effects, corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities may be set in motion. However, how fair are these kinds of activities considering the large profit margins these companies and projects can potentially earn? Who benefits, and who is left behind? As is the case with mining and oil extraction, renewable resource projects should seek the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of affected indigenous communities.

**Reading list**

We will start by jointly viewing a movie on climate change. This is followed by a discussion of climate change policy and practice. Such policies and practices, whether instigated by governmental or non-governmental organizations, often take their point of departure in the latest scientific findings and predictions, especially those presented by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). This session will examine the social and political dimensions of the science of climate change in order to enable students to approach knowledge on climate change critically and reflexively. We will place students into groups and ask them to identify and analyse additional texts on climate change after Trump's presidency (websites, news media, blogs, etc.) and prepare at least one point of praise, as well as one point of criticism, of the movie we have seen. Your points will be the basis for discussion following the movie. You prepare a PowerPoint with a maximum of three slides (field, for, and against) that you will present to the class.

Reading list

**Readings:**

**Additional readings:**

**Additional readings:**

**Reading list:**

**10. Theme 3b: Sustainability and standards: — how to make sustainability and create economic asset/value (Lars Buur and Line Jakobsen PhD student, Guest: Mikkel Funder). Date 2020-03-13 (week 11). Time 12:15 - 14:00. Room 04.2-025 - teorirum (40)**

This lecture will explore some of the salient ways in which climate change has been dealt with by governments, NGOs and corporate businesses. In particular, we will explore REDD+, carbon-trading schemes and the sustainability agenda. QUESTION: Can schemes like REDD+, carbon-trading and sustainability really do anything to mitigate or reverse climate change?

**Reading list:**

**Readings:**
## Natural Resources and Geo-Politics

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Lars Buur (lbuur@ruc.dk)  
Peter Wilson Leys (pleys@ruc.dk)  
Ilse Maria Renkens (renkens@ruc.dk) |
| External lecturer | Possible corporate invitee SOS international – new generation of health standards in mining and extraction |
| Content | **11. Theme 3c: Sustainability, standards and power: understanding the power of standards from EITI to investments** (Lars Buur and all PhD student + Possible corporate invitee SOS international). Date 2020-03-16 (week 12). Time 10:15 - 12:00. Room 04.2-025 - teorirum (40) |

Governing natural resource investments through new geopolitical assemblages of regulation related to health, Extractive Industries and Transparency (EITI) and sustainability standards have become a new field of intervention that has increased in importance not only for investors and governments, but also for local populations as new sites of struggle. In the second half of this session, a representative from SOS international who will tell about the attempts to implement health standards within the extractive industry will visit us.

### Reading list


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## Natural Resources and Geo-Politics

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Lars Buur (lbuur@ruc.dk)  
Peter Wilson Leys (pleys@ruc.dk)  
Ilse Maria Renkens (renkens@ruc.dk) |
| External lecturer | Different NGOs |
| Content | **12. Discussion café with selected NGOs or visit to key institution. Date 2020-03-20 (week 12). Time 12:15 - 14:00. Room 04.2-025 - teorirum (40)** |

In this session, representatives of different NGOs that work on natural resource topics will present how they work as civil society organizations, and then we will engage in a discussion, using the tools we have learnt from the course.
### Natural Resources and Geo-Politics

**Time**
- 23-03-2020 10:15 til 23-03-2020 12:00

**Location**
- 04.2-025 - teorirum (40)

**Teacher**
- Line Jespersgaard Jakobsen (lijeja@ruc.dk)
- Lars Buur (lbuur@ruc.dk)
- Peter Wilson Leys (pleys@ruc.dk)
- Ilse Maria Renkens (renkens@ruc.dk)

**Content**

This last session will provide an overview of what we have learned from the three themes and the different encounters with practitioners, corporate businesses, NGOs and researchers. We will also discuss the exam, for which you will hand in an assignment, and we will evaluate the course.

### Exam hand-in: Natural Resources and Geo-Politics

**Time**
- 07-04-2020 10:00 til 07-04-2020 12:00

**Content**

The portefolie exam consist of:

1. Assignment written during the course. The first part of the examination is a literature review based on ten possible titles presented at the first lecture covering the three thematic fields dealt with in the course. The assignment is submitted during the final course session. The written assignment may not exceed 14,400 characters, including spaces (corresponding to five standard pages). To be handed in at the end of the course.

2. An essay, which reflects on the Guardian newspaper's special issue on environmental polluters, using at least two/three readings from the course literature to discuss the feature. To be handed in after the first theme.

**Reading list**

- **Ten books for literature review written exam** (you read one of the books and use it as the basis for the literature review - the reading is deducted from the pensus.)

  - Klein, Naomi. 2014. This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate. Penguin Books.
Re-exam hand-in: Natural Resources and Geo-Politics

Time
10-08-2020 10:00 til
10-08-2020 10:00

Forberedelsesnorm
Ikke valgt

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