

**ENVI 294 06 – GEOG 294-01 – LATI 294-01**  
**Amazonia at a Tipping Point**  
**Spring 2022**

Prof. Sylvia Cifuentes (she/her/ella)

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 09:40 -10:40 am, Olin-Rice | Room 243

[scifuent@macalester.edu](mailto:scifuent@macalester.edu); Office: Olin-Rice 158A

Office hours: Thursdays 3:00-4:30 pm on Zoom and Fridays after class

**Course description**

Amazonia is a vital region for the health of the planet. It is the largest and one of the most biodiverse rainforests in the world. As such, it stores an important amount of the planet's carbon emissions—particularly in Indigenous territories—while also accounting for about a third of emissions attributed to deforestation. Yet, Indigenous peoples and territories also face growing threats from the extractive activities and development models of the nine countries that share the Amazon Basin. This course pays attention to Amazonia's peoples, politics, and power. It begins by critically analyzing the historical patterns of colonization, development, and destruction that have taken place in the region. Next, it will focus on Amazonian Indigenous geographies and politics, including in response to contemporary challenges like climate change, extractivism, and biodiversity conservation. Throughout the course, we will also study participatory research methodologies and respectful community engagement. As such, students will carry out semester-long research projects with an Indigenous organization that works to defend Amazonia.



**Learning objectives**

Through attendance of lectures, participation in classroom discussions, and completion of all assignments and collaborative work, students will be able to:

1. Build an interdisciplinary understanding of the socio-environmental history of Amazonia to analyze the processes that have driven vitality and destruction in the region.
2. Demonstrate knowledge on the theories and concepts of Amazonian Indigenous politics, geographies, and ontologies, including about how they intersect with the struggles for territorial defense or to respond to climate change.
3. Develop and apply knowledge and skills to carry out participatory and respectful research, as well as collaborative projects with Indigenous and environmental organizations.
4. Distinguish the roles and power of different actors who have shaped the region, as well as the justice implications of the ideas, policies, and initiatives that they imagine and create for Amazonia.

**\*Pandemic statement:** I recognize that the current pandemic may impact your ability to perform in the course. Please send me an email if you are experiencing unexpected challenges and stay at home if you are feeling ill—we will find a way to support you through class notes and opportunities to make up for participation. All policies regarding attendance are below. Mask wearing is about community care, and we don't know what the particular situations of this course's participants are (nor those of students and professors across campus), so please wear a mask at all times while you are indoors.

## Required readings

The first half of this course will focus on the book “The Fate of the Forest” by Susanna B. Hecht and Alexander Cockburn (the updated 2010 edition). There is a course website available through Moodle that will include all other required readings. Additionally, I will often post news articles, videos, or website information about the topics that we are analyzing in the course site, some of which we will review in class as part of our discussions. The reading materials and the lectures complement (not substitute) each other.

**Guidance for reading:** *With the reading reflections and the research projects in mind, attempt answering three questions after completing each reading: 1) What is the main argument? 2) What concepts does it put forward and/or what theories does it mention or draw from? 3) How does the reading expand or change my understanding of the history, politics, and/or geographies of Amazonia?*

## IMPORTANT DATES

*Submit all assignments by the end of the day (11:59pm) on Moodle*

Reading Reflection 1	February 18
Report 1	March 4
Report 2	April 1 <sup>st</sup>
Reading Reflection 2	April 15
Presentations	April 27
Final Report	May 6 <sup>th</sup>

## CLASS ASSESSMENT

### *20% Attendance, Preparation, and Participation*

Your engaged, attentive, imaginative, and informed participation in all class discussions is encouraged. You are invited to bring your interests, experiences, and knowledge to class. Attendance to all classes is expected, see the policies for attendance and lateness below.

*30% Reading Reflections* - You will turn in two reading reflections in the semester. These will respond to one discussion question that you will select from a short list. The first will cover weeks 1-5 and the second weeks 6-13. You will need to draw from concepts found in the readings and lectures of two or more of those weeks to answer that question. These reflections must be between 850 and 950 words long. More details and the rubrics will be available on Moodle.

### *50% Collaborative Research Projects*

You will work in groups of three to research a topic within the broad theme of “the leading role of Indigenous peoples in the fight against climate change” in Amazonia. This research will support a podcast series of the Communications Area of the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA). This project will involve three monthly reports and a presentation (more details and rubrics will be available on Moodle):

1. Report 1: Report the research activities that you have carried out as part of your project during the month of February. This report will focus on background information and a preliminary annotated bibliography of your topic. [15%].
2. Report 2: Report the research activities that you have carried out as part of your project during the month of March. This report will focus on analyzing primary sources of data, including reports, news articles, webinars, interviews, etc. After analyzing the sources you will create a summary and analysis of the scholarly literature in relation to the primary sources that you have collected. [15%].
3. Presentation: Create a presentation about the main outcomes of your project, highlighting the most important aspects of the research that you have carried out. You should include information about how the course readings informed your work, as well as about what were some challenges and lessons learned [10%].
4. Final Report: Write a final report summarizing the research that you have carried out throughout the semester. This must include a review of primary and/or secondary data collection that you will carry out in April. Write down some recommendations about how you think the podcasts can be best publicized for a US audience, and how you think Amazonian challenges and territorial defense should be communicated in an impactful and respectful way. Reflect on how the course readings, including methodological ones, have informed your work. [20%].

### COURSE OUTLINE

*\*Syllabus subject to change - you will be adequately informed if this happens\**

*\*Readings listed below. All are required\**

Part	W	Date	Topic	Assessment
<b>1. Amazonian Socio-environmental History</b>	1	Jan 21	Introduction & syllabus	
	2	Jan 24, 26 & 28	Amazonian Imaginaries	
	3	Jan 31, Feb 2 & 4	Amazonian Ecology	
	4	Feb 7, 9 & 11	The Heritage of Fire	
	5	Feb 14, 16 & 18	The Amazon Prospectus	Reading Reflection 1
	6	Feb 21, 23 & 25	Amazon Destruction	
	7	Feb 28, Mar 2 & 4	Destruction & Defenders	Report 1
	8	Mar 7, 9 & 11	Forests Lost & Found	
	9	Mar 14, 16 & 18	Spring Break	
<b>2. Indigenous Geographies and Territorial Defense</b>	10	Mar 21, 23 & 25	Environmentalisms & Territorialities	
	11	Mar 28, 30 & Ap 1	Indigenous Politics	Report 2
	12	Apr 4, 6 & 8	Extractivism	
	13	Apr 11, 13 & 15	Decolonial Ecofeminism & Women's Activism	Reading Reflection 2
	14	Apr 18, 20 & 22	Indigenous Ontologies	
	15	Apr 25, 27 & 29	Indigenous Climate Politics	Presentations

	16	May 6	Final Report due online
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## **Part 1: Amazonian Socio-Environmental History**

### **WEEK 1: Introduction**

Introduction and Syllabus review

### **WEEK 2: Amazonian Imaginaries**

Hecht, S. B., & Cockburn, A. (2011). *The Fate of the Forest*. University of Chicago Press. Epilogue and Chapter 1: The Forest of Their Desires (pp. vii – 15)

Methodology: Koster, R., Baccar, K., & Lemelin, R. H. (2012). Moving from research ON, to research WITH and FOR Indigenous communities: A critical reflection on community-based participatory research. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien*, 56(2), 195-210.

### **WEEK 3: Amazonian Ecology**

Hecht, S. B., & Cockburn, A. (2011). *The Fate of the Forest*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2: The Realm of Nature (pp. 16 – 37).

Methodology: Smith, L. T. (2014). Social Justice, Transformation, and Indigenous Methodologies. In *Ethnographic worldviews* (pp. 15-20). Springer, Dordrecht.

Guest speaker: Xavier Haro-Carrion, Assistant Professor of Geography at Macalester.

### **WEEK 4: The Heritage of Fire**

Hecht, S. B., & Cockburn, A. (2011). *The Fate of the Forest*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3: The Heritage of Fire (pp. 16 – 62).

Methodology: McIntyre, A. (2007). *Participatory Action Research*. Sage Publications. Chapter 1 (pp. 1 – 13). Available via the Library (make sure that you are signed in): <https://archive.org/details/participatoryact0000mcin/page/6/mode/2up>

### **WEEK 5: The Amazon Prospectus**

Hecht, S. B., & Cockburn, A. (2011). *The Fate of the Forest*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4: The Amazon Prospectus (pp. 63 – 86)

Methodology: McIntyre, A. (2007). *Participatory Action Research*. Sage Publications. Chapter 2: Participation (pp. 15 – 32) (same link as above).

Turn in your reading reflection 1 by the end of the day on Friday

### **WEEK 6: Amazon Destruction**

Hecht, S. B., & Cockburn, A. (2011). *The Fate of the Forest*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 5: Magnates in the Amazon & Chapter 6: The General's Blueprint (pp. 87 – 143)

### **WEEK 7: Destruction and Defenders**

Hecht, S. B., & Cockburn, A. (2011). *The Fate of the Forest*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 7: The Furies Unleashed & Chapter 8: The Defenders of the Amazon (pp. 142 – 216).

Turn in your Report 1 on Moodle by the end of the day on Friday

### **WEEK 8: Forests Lost & Found**

Hecht, S.B. (2014) Forests lost and found in tropical Latin America: the woodland 'green revolution', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41:5, 877-909.

### **WEEK 9: Spring Break**

### **WEEK 10: Indigenous Politics and Territorialities**

Baletti, B. (2012). Ordenamento Territorial: Neo-developmentalism and the struggle for territory in the lower Brazilian Amazon. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), 573-598

Cifuentes (2020) Territory, Autonomy and Rights: Indigenous Politics and COVID-19 in the Amazon basin. *Society and Space*. Available at: <https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/territory-autonomy-and-rights>

### **WEEK 11: Environmentalisms**

Hecht, S. B. (2012). From eco-catastrophe to zero deforestation? Interdisciplinarity, politics, environmentalisms, and reduced clearing in Amazonia. *Environmental conservation*, 39(1), 4-19.

Jankowski, K., et al. Deep soils modify environmental consequences of increased nitrogen fertilizer use in intensifying Amazon agriculture. *Sci Rep* 8, 13478 (2018).

Turn in report 2 by the end of the day on Friday

### **WEEK 12: Extractivism**

Gómez-Barris, M. (2017). *The Extractive Zone*. Duke University Press. Chapter 1 The Intangibility of the Yasuní (pp. 17-38).

Stetson, G. (2012). Oil politics and Indigenous resistance in the Peruvian Amazon: The rhetoric of modernity against the reality of coloniality. *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 21(1), 76-97.

### **WEEK 13: Decolonial Ecofeminism & Women's Activism in Amazonia**

Sempertegui, A. (2021). Indigenous Women's Activism, Ecofeminism, and Extractivism: Partial Connections in the Ecuadorian Amazon. *Politics & Gender*, 17(1), 197-224.

Zaragocin, S., & Caretta, M. A. (2021). Cuerpo-Territorio: A Decolonial Feminist Geographical Method for the Study of Embodiment. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 111(5), 1503-1518.

Turn in your reading reflection 2 by the end of the day on Friday

#### **WEEK 14: Indigenous Ontologies in Amazonia**

Kohn, E. (2013). *How forests think*. University of California Press. Introduction: Runa Puma (pp. 1 – 26).

De Castro, E. V. (2005). *Perspectivism and Multinaturalism in Indigenous America*. The Land Within, (pp. 36-65).

#### **WEEK 15: Indigenous Climate Politics & Presentations**

Cifuentes, S. (2021). Rethinking Climate Governance: Amazonian Indigenous Climate Politics and Integral Territorial Ontologies. *Journal of Latin American Geography*.

In Pluriverse: A post-development dictionary: Kawsak Sacha.

#### **WEEK 16: Final Report due on Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup> by the end of the day (11:59pm)**

##### **Suggested Readings:**

Kovach, M. (2017). Doing indigenous methodologies. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, 214.

Kovach, M. (2010). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. University of Toronto press.

Parker, B. (2006). Constructing community through maps? Power and praxis in community mapping. *The Professional Geographer*, 58(4), 470-484.

Chapter 9 of *The Fate of the Forest*

Kohn, E. (2013). *How forests think*. University of California Press (entire book)

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE:** This classroom is meant to be a safe learning environment where we work together to help each other learn throughout the semester. To make this possible I expect students to arrive on time and be prepared to participate actively in discussion. You are actively participating if you contribute often and constructively to group discussions and activities, take notes, ask thoughtful questions, and listen respectfully when others are talking. This class will raise questions about the social and environmental world(s) that can challenge our assumptions. We will all need to be very careful to respect differing points of view and,

above all, to respect your classmates and instructor in the same way that you would like to be respected. Here is a list of guidelines to promote productive discussion:

Come to class open-minded – Make sure to come to class ready to discuss the material with an open-mind.

No interruptions – when someone is speaking allow them to finish.

Word Choice – be aware of the way your word choice may affect others.

Step Up, Step Down – If you see a place to contribute, Step Up. If you realize you have been participating heavily, Step Down and let others also contribute.

Refrain from speaking in generalizations – When speaking refrain from generalizations that categorize all people in a certain way.

Ask Your Questions – Every question regarding the course materials is relevant. Speak up about any questions you have so we can all learn.

Active Listening – Don't just wait for your turn to speak. Engage other students and build from their input.

## **POLICIES**

### *Academic Integrity*

Academic dishonesty has no place in this course, as it erodes the basic foundations of higher education: exchange, debate, and the thoughtful consideration of different ideas. Examples of behavior that violates Macalester's Academic Integrity Policy, as well as the process and sanctions involved, can be found on the Academic Programs website, <http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/>

### *Office Hours and communication*

You are encouraged to come see me during office hours. You are welcome to bring questions about class material, environmental justice in general, career paths, and other concerns you may have. I will not respond to questions about course material or assignments via email, nor will I respond outside of working hours (esp. on weekends). However, seek out an individual appointment if you wish to discuss a private matter, and please let me know as soon as you can if you are experiencing unexpected difficulties.

Please include "ENVI-GEOG-LATI 294" in the subject line of any email you send to me about this course.

### *Absences and Lateness*

Attendance is very important for this class as discussion will be one of the main learning mechanisms. Because of the challenges that the current pandemic continues to pose, you are allowed up to three absences from class without penalty. For every absence beyond the three, your participation grade will be lowered a full letter grade (10 points out of 100). Again, please let me know soon if you are experiencing unexpected difficulties.

It is disruptive to arrive at class late. I do keep track of tardy arrivals. In this course, three tardy arrivals add up to one absence. You can check your attendance record with me any time to see where you stand.

Late assignments will be reduced 5 points (of 100) for each calendar day late. Please come to see me in advance if you anticipate that you may need an extension.

## RESOURCES

### **Disability Services Office**

I am committed to ensuring access to course content for all students, including those with disabilities. I honor academic accommodations as outlined via Disability Services, and in discussion regarding what is reasonable for this course. Students with long or short-term disabilities should schedule an appointment by emailing [disabilityservices@macalester.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@macalester.edu) or calling 651-696-6275.

### **Health and Wellness Center**

Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your well-being a priority throughout this semester and your career here. Investing time into taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, financial, etc., and how they can have an academic impact. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please reach out to the Laurie Hamre Center for Health & Wellness: Leonard Center Room 53, 651-696-6275 (call to make an appointment). Follow *macalesterhwc* on Instagram. [www.macalester.edu/healthandwellness/](http://www.macalester.edu/healthandwellness/). You can schedule a **Counselling Appointment** there as well. If you press “2” you can be connected to ProtoCall, a free phone counseling service that Macalester provides for students available 24/7

### **Resident Advisor (RA) and Resident Hall Director (RHD)**

- Both RAs and RHDs can serve as a first point of contact and are able to connect you to resources during mental health crises.

### **Other Support Offices**

- Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, (651-696-6298), Weyerhaeuser Chapel
- Office of Student Affairs (651-696-6220), Weyerhaeuser 119

### **The Max Center**

The MAX Center (<https://www.macalester.edu/max/#/0>) is Macalester’s academic resource center. I strongly encourage you to take full advantage of any and all of the excellent resources they provide there, as they are committed to supporting all students to succeed at Macalester.