

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Environmental Justice and Geopolitics of The Sea

2526-1-F7504Q009

Aims

Knowledge and understanding: acquire a deep understanding of the main issues related to the study of
oceans and transnational spaces from the perspectives of critical geopolitics, environmental geopolitics,
and environmental justice; understand the scientific literature and narratives concerning oceanic geopolitics
and the ongoing dynamics of sea-power competition.

2)Applied knowledge and understanding: develop advanced skills to critically analyze documents, and media narratives related to ocean governance and environmental justice; apply interdisciplinary methods to study geopolitical, environmental, and social dimensions of maritime spaces.

- 3. Making judgments: exercise critical judgment on the geopolitical strategies and environmental justice challenges linked to ocean governance and resource control; evaluate competing interests and power relations shaping the transnational management of seas and oceans.
- 4. Communication skills: communicate clearly and effectively complex ideas and analyses on environmental justice and geopolitics of the sea to diverse audiences.
- 5. Learning skills: develop the capacity to independently conduct interdisciplinary studies and research on environmental justice and maritime geopolitics; cultivate critical awareness of evolving scientific debates and geopolitical developments related to oceans and transnational environmental issues.

Contents

After a short introduction to the most recent theoretical approaches to political geography and critical geopolitics, the course focuses first on the historical representation of the ocean as a "political and social space" and on how the sea can be framed by international geopolitical discourse, in relation to the processes of territorialisation, geo-

power and extra-territoriality of marine spaces.

The second part of the course deals with more specific issues of political ecology and covers the topics of environmental justice/injustice, with particular reference to the themes of protection/conservation of marine areas, ocean grabbing and the rights of indigenous peoples.

Detailed program

The political geography of the sea: the "classical" approach

A (critical) political geo-graphy of the sea? thinking about the sea / representing the sea / exploiting the "geopolitical features" of the sea

Geo-graphy and the power of representation /Dividing (and naming) the ocean sea: the East Sea/ Sea of Japan issue

The territorialisation of the sea /Territorial claims and islands disputes: the Dokdo-Takeshima issue

Geographical definitions and island disputes: the Sankeku-Diaoyu issue/ climate change and vanishing islands/reefs: Okininotori: a shima, or a reef'?

A classical approach to the geopolitics of the sea/ the myth of sea power: A.T. Mahan theoretical positions / China as a maritime power and the South China Sea competition (Spratly, Paracel and more)

Sea power, sea nodes and islands as U.S. bases: The Hawai'i and Pearl Harbor, Midway and Wake, Guam

Sea power, sea nodes and islands as overseas U.S. bases/ bases of empire and lily pads: Guantanamo, Micronesia and Marshall Islands, Okinawa, Diego Garcia

LSMPAs (Large Scale Maritime Protected Areas): conservation or geopolitics?

Extra-territoriality and Cruise tourism as an example of globalization

Geopolitics of the oceans and environmental justice

Prerequisites

none

Teaching form

42 hours / English / delivered didactic: 70% (30 hours) / interactive didactic: 30% (12 hours)

Textbook and teaching resource

Suggested readings:

De Santo, E. M. (2024). Securitizing Marine Protected Areas: Geopolitics, Environmental Justice, and Science. Taylor & Francis.

Agnoletto P. (2025). From the Tourist's Gaze Holiday Home Movies as Vernacular Sources for the Ecocritical Thought. Routledge

Semester

Second Semester

Assessment method

An individual oral interview that involves the discussion and in-depth analysis of the course content, particularly focusing on topics related to maritime geopolitics and environmental justice; the possibility to analyze case studies or answer open-ended questions that encourage interdisciplinary reflection; and the assessment of skills related to theoretical knowledge, critical application, independent judgment, and communication abilities.

Office hours

by appointment, in person or online

Sustainable Development Goals

GENDER EQUALITY | CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | CLIMATE ACTION | LIFE BELOW WATER | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS