



Legacies of Environmental Radicalism ISE Fall 2026

Dates: October 13th - December 15th

Tuesdays, 7:30pm – 9:00pm US Eastern time, online via Zoom

Instructors: Brian Tokar, briantvt@proton.me and Dayton Martindale, daytonrmartindale@gmail.com

Course Description:

Radical thought and actions have altered the course of environmental activism over many decades. This ten-week class aims to offer a comprehensive overview of many philosophical and activist approaches that have shaped environmental radicalism from the 1960s to the present, such as social ecology, environmental justice, ecofeminism, deep ecology, ecosocialism and more. Readings and class discussions will illustrate how social ecologists and many others have helped advance the story of environmental radicalism from the 1960s to the present. We will see how various radical outlooks helped alter the trajectory of environmental thought, which developed in service to corporate resource management and colonialism, on a course toward the radical transformation of society. We will also examine recent trends toward apocalyptic and nihilistic views in the environmental movement and how social ecology and a broadly internationalist perspective might help reach beyond those limits.

The class draws upon both historical and contemporary sources, and explores a wide range of case studies. We will examine questions such as: How have each of these perspectives broadened our understanding of human societies and our relationships with the natural world? What modes of thought and action have proved effective in challenging a status quo that aims to relegate ecological concerns to the margins of politics? How has mainstream environmentalism evolved in response to these radical challenges, and how can we move beyond despair in response to current ecological and political challenges?

Course Schedule:

[Note: Several PDFs of readings contain annotations that pointed students in earlier versions of this class, offered at the University of Vermont, toward the “assigned” portions of various chapters. Please feel free to follow or ignore those recommendations as you wish.]

Week 1: Early environmental outlooks: From colonization to revolution

Core readings:

- Carolyn Merchant, “Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History,” *Environmental History* Vol. 8 (2003)
- Brian Tokar, “Ecology and Revolution,” from *Earth for Sale* (1997)

Additional readings:

- Murray Bookchin, “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought” (1964, from *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*)
- Brian Tokar, Prologue and Chapter 1 from *Earth for Sale*
- Excerpt from Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*

- Susie Cagle, "'Bees, not refugees': the environmentalist roots of anti-immigrant bigotry," *The Guardian* August 16, 2019

Week 2: The outlook and contributions of social ecology

Core readings:

- Dan Chodorkoff, "Social Ecology: An Ecological Humanism," from *The Anthropology of Utopia*
- Brian Tokar, "On Bookchin's Social Ecology and its Contributions to Social Movements," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* (2007)

Additional readings:

- Murray Bookchin, "What is Social Ecology?" from *The Modern Crisis*
- Debbie Bookchin, "How My Father's Ideas Helped the Kurds Create a New Democracy," *New York Review of Books*, June 2018
- Murray Bookchin, "Libertarian Municipalism: A Politics of Direct Democracy," and "The Meaning of Confederation," from *The Next Revolution*

Week 3: The emergence and evolution of ecofeminism

Core readings:

- Ynestra King, "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology," from J. Plant, ed., *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*
- Noël Sturgeon, "Ecofeminist Movements," from C. Merchant, ed., *Ecology: Key Concepts in Critical Theory*, 2nd edition

Additional readings:

- Asmae Ourkiya, "Queering Ecofeminism: Towards an Anti-Far-Right Environmentalism," *Network in Canadian History & Environment* (2020)
- Bina Agarwal, "The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India," *Feminist Studies*, Spring 1992, especially pp. 119-127 and 145-153

Week 4: Race and class: Environmental justice and ecosocialism

Core readings:

- "The Negative Effects of Chemical Contamination," and "The Eyes and Ears of the Community," from Chad Montrie, *The Myth of Silent Spring: Rethinking the Origins of American Environmentalism*
- Amal Ahmed, "Robert Bullard Isn't Done," *The Nation* (May 2021)
- Ian Angus, "Ecosocialism and Human Solidarity," from *Facing the Anthropocene*

Additional readings:

- Fred Magdoff and Chris Williams, "Living in an Ecological Society," from *Creating an Ecological Society: Toward a revolutionary transformation*
- Laura Pulido, "Geographies of race and ethnicity: Environmental racism, racial capitalism and state-sanctioned violence," *Progress in Human Geography* 41(4): 524-533 (2017)
- John Bellamy Foster, "Marx and the Rift in the Universal Metabolism of Nature," *Monthly Review* December 2013
- Kohei Saito, "Marx's Ecological Notebooks," *Monthly Review* Vol. 67, No. 9, February 2016

Week 5: Animal rights and animal liberation

Core readings:

- Josephine Donovan, "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory," from G. Gaard, ed., *Ecofeminism*

- Dayton Martindale, "The Social Ecological Case for Animal Liberation: Towards an Interspecies Communalism," *Harbinger: A Journal of Social Ecology*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2019)

Additional readings:

- Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," from M. Zimmerman, ed., *Environmental Philosophy*
- Tom Regan, "The Struggle for Animal Rights," from A. Linzey & P.B. Clark, eds., *Animal Rights*
- Laura Schleifer and Daniel Fischer, "Animal Liberation is Climate Justice," *New Politics* 18:4 (2022)

Week 6: The rise of environmental direct action

Core readings:

- Paul Wapner, "In Defense of Banner Hangers: The Dark Green Politics of Greenpeace," from Bron Taylor, ed., *Ecological Resistance Movements*
- Keith Makoto Woodhouse, "Direct Action" and "Redwood Summer," from *The Ecocentrists: A History of Radical Environmentalism*
- Judi Bari, "The Feminization of Earth First!," from *Timber Wars*

Additional readings:

- Bron Taylor, "Resistance: Do the Ends Justify the Means?" From *State of the World 2013* (Worldwatch Institute)
- Dave Foreman, "Putting the Earth First," from J. Dryzek & D. Schlosberg, eds., *Debating the Earth*
- Judi Bari, "Revolutionary Ecology: Biocentrism & Deep Ecology," Mendocino Environmental Center, 1997

Week 7: What is deep ecology, actually?

Core readings:

- Bill Devall and George Sessions, "Deep Ecology," from *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*
- Joanna Macy, "Awakening to the Ecological Self," from Judith Plant, ed., *Healing the Wounds*
- Ramachandra Guha, "Radical Environmentalism: A Third World Critique," from C. Merchant, ed., *Ecology: Key Concepts in Critical Theory*, First edition

Additional readings:

- Thomas Berry, "Human Presence," from *The Dream of the Earth*
- Bill Devall, "The Ecological Self," from A. Drengson & Y. Inoue, eds., *The Deep Ecology Movement*
- Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," from *The Deep Ecology Movement*
- Murray Bookchin, "Social Ecology vs. Deep Ecology," from *Green Perspectives* No. 4-5 (1987)

Week 8: Militant actions, ecological despair and state repression

Core readings:

- Noel Molland, "A Spark that Ignited a Flame: The Evolution of the Earth Liberation Front," from S. Best & A. Nocella, eds., *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*
- Derrick Jensen, "Beyond Hope," *Orion Magazine*, May 2006
- Andreas Malm, "When Does the Fightback Begin?" from *versobooks.com*, May 2021
- K. Gopal & B. Berwyn, "United Nations Official Says State Repression of Environmental Defenders Threatens Democracy and Human Rights," *Inside Climate News* March 3, 2024,

Additional readings:

- Paul Kingsnorth & Dougald Hine, "Uncivilization: The Dark Mountain Manifesto," from *dark-mountain.net*
- John Zerzan, "Future Primitive," from *primitivism.com*
- Will Potter, "Naming Names," and "Red-Baiting," from *Green is the New Red: An Insider's Account of a Social Movement Under Siege* (+ brief addenda)

- Peter Staudenmaier, “Understanding right-wing ecology: Historical and contemporary reflections,” from *Ideology/Theory/Practice* (2021)
- [Update on eco-repression in the U.S. (TBA)]
- Video: *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*, at [youtube.com/watch?v=qwQoi0DoOKM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwQoi0DoOKM)

Week 9: Counter-development and decolonial perspectives

Core readings:

- Philip McMichael, “The Development Project,” from *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (A. Kothari, et al., eds.)
- Ivan Illich, “Development as Planned Poverty,” from M. Rahnema, ed., *The Post-Development Reader*
- Gustavo Esteva, “A Path to Freedom,” from *Radical Ecological Democracy* (2017)

Additional readings:

- Larry Lohmann, “Visitors to the Commons,” from Bron Taylor, ed., *Ecological Resistance Movements*
- Thea Riofrancos, “Beyond the Petrostate: Ecuador’s Left Dilemma,” *Dissent*, Summer 2015
- Malcolm Ferdinand, “A Decolonial Ecology: Rising Up from the Hold,” from *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*
- Vandana Shiva, “Development, Ecology and Women,” from *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*

Week 10: Is an ecological future still possible?

Core readings:

- David Graeber, “The Shock of Victory,” from *Revolutions in Reverse*
- Ole Martin Sandberg, “Climate Disruption, Political Stability, and Collective Imagination,” *Radical Philosophy Review* (2020)
- Brian Tokar, “Climate ‘Post-Apocalypse’ and the Utopian Imperative,” *New Politics* 20:3 (2025)

Additional readings:

- David Graeber, “Hope in Common,” from *Revolutions in Reverse*
- Kim Phillips-Fein, “Is This a New Era of Class Warfare?,” *New York Times* August 24, 2026
- “Rerun or sequel? Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor on end times fascism,” *Financial Times* September 5, 2026
- Thea Riofrancos, “The New World Climate Order,” *New Left Review* No. 159, May–June 2026

Some further recommended readings:

L. A. Kauffman, *Direct Action: Protest and the Reinvention of American Radicalism*

Douglas Bevington, *The Rebirth of Environmentalism*

Irene Diamond & Gloria Orenstein, eds., *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*

Robert Bullard, ed., *The Quest for Environmental Justice, Confronting Environmental Racism, Unequal Protection, Dumping in Dixie*

Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (Updated in 2023 as *Animal Liberation Now*)

Frank Zelko, *Make it a Green Peace: The Rise of Countercultural Environmentalism*

Ric Scarce, *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement*

Darren Speece, *Defending Giants: The Redwood Wars & the Transformation of Environmental Politics*

Steven Best & Anthony Nocella: “Behind the Mask: Uncovering the Animal Liberation Front” (online)

Tom Mertes, ed., *A Movement of Movements: Is Another World Really Possible?*

Ashley Dawson, *Environmentalism from Below: How Global People's Movements Are Leading the Fight for Our Planet*