Syllabus: Cosmopolitics and Cosmoscapes in Latin America

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This course aims to give an introduction to the related notions of cosmopolitics and political ontology and their relevance in shaping discourse and action surrounding indigenous activism in Latin America. The Ontological Turn (OT) challenges the underlying cosmology of western modernity, asserting that indigenous actors’ claims that non-humans as agentive and sentient be taken seriously rather than considered ‘cultural beliefs’. The OT challenges the separation of nature and culture Latour (1993) identified as central to modernity. Political ontologists such as Bold, Blaser, de la Cadena, Escobar and Questa use these insights to open up spaces of radical contestation and articulation from indigenous communities and social movements. As Chamel illustrates, they conversely create possibilities for new types of contestation within scientific circles as contemporary European climate scientists struggle to come to terms with ‘the end of the world’ and search for new cosmological understandings shaping human behaviour and interactions with landscape.

**General Reading**

Bold, Rosalyn. 2019. Introduction. Creating a Cosmopolitics of Climate Change. *In Indigenous Perceptions of the End of the World: Creating a Cosmopolitics of Change*, edited by Bold, R. 1-27. Palgrave Studies in the Anthropology of Sustainability. Cham: Palgrave- Macmillan.

Escobar, Arturo. *Territorios de Differencia. La Ontologia Politica de los Derechos al Territorio*. file:///C:/Users/sbold/AppData/Local/Temp/Dialnet-TerritoriosDeDiferencia-5281928.pdf

Deborah Batalla y Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. 2016. *Hay Un Mundo por Venir? Ensayo sobre los miedos y los fines*. Caja Negra Editores, Argentina. Also see online excerpt, *Los Miedos y Los Fines del Mundo*.. https://nuso.org/articulo/los-miedos-y-los-fines-del-mundo/

Latour, 2017. *Cara a Cara con El Planeta*. Siglo Vientiuno, Buenos Aires.

Latour, Bruno 2007 [1993] *Nunca fuimos modernos. Ensayos de antropología simétrica*. Siglo Veintiuno, Buenos Aires.

**Session 1**

An introduction to how the notion of cosmopolitics proposed by philosopher of science Stengers has been appropriated in anthropology to enable a radical rethinking of the nature-culture divide to embrace concepts of non-humans as political entities, often stemming from indigenous cosmologies.

Essential reading:

De La Cadena, Marisol. 2019 [2010] ‘Cosmopolítica Indígena en los Andes: Reflexiones Conceptuales Más Allá que la Politica’. *Tabula Rasa, 33: 273-311*.

<http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/tara/n33/1794-2489-tara-33-273.pdf>

Blaser, 2009. The Threat of the Yrmo. The Political Ontology of a Sustainable Hunting Programme. *American Anthropologist* 111(1), 10-20.

Further reading:

Descola, 1996. *In the Society of Nature. A Native Ecology of Amazonia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Latour, Bruno 2007 [1993] *Nunca fuimos modernos. Ensayos de antropología simétrica*. Siglo Veintiuno, Buenos Aires.

Stengers, Isabelle. 2005. Introduction to an Ecology of Practice. *Cultural Studies Review,* 11:1.

Viveiros de Castro, E. 2004. Perspectival anthropology and the method of controlled equivocation in Tipiti. *Journal for the Society of the Anthropology of Lowland South America. 2(1) 3-22*.

**Session 2: Contestation**

Whilst creating a paradigm shift in the social sciences, the ontological turn has come to be criticised for reifying ‘indigenous ontologies’ as separate from modernity, whereas as a rich literature shows the concept of indigeneity has emerged at a crossroads between indigenous and colonial worlding practices. Or is this critique itself a reification of cosmopolitics itself that overlooks the compromises indigenous actors have had to make in articulating worlding practices in activism?

Essential Reading

Bessire, Lucas, and David Bond. 2015.“Ontological anthropology and the deferral of critique.” *American Ethnologist* 41 (3): 440–56.

Cepek, Michael L. 2016. “There might be blood: Oil, humility, and the cosmopolitics of a Cofán petro-being.” *American Ethnologist* 43 (4): 623–35

Further reading

Holbraad, Martin, and Morten Axel Pedersen. 2017. *The ontological turn: An anthropological exposition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Cruikshank, Julie. 2005. *Do Glaciers Listen?* *Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounter, and Social Imagination*. University of British Columbia Press.

Graham, Laura. 2002. How should an Indian Speak? Brazilian Indians and the Symbolic Politics of Language Choice in the International Public Sphere. In *Indigenous Movements, Self- Representation and the State in Latin America*. Edited by Jean Jackson and Kay Warren, 181-228. Austin: University of Texas Press

Tsing 2005, *Friction. An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

**Session 3: Resolution**

As Appadurai resolved accusations of anthropological reification of ‘culture’ within the social sciences through expanding the notion into scapes, so have contemporary ontological turn (OT) theorists addressed the issues of reification through studying the interactions of ontological currents, and the pluriversal worlds to which they give rise.

Required Reading:

Blaser and de la Cadena, M. 2019. ‘Introduction, Pluriverse’. In *A World of Many Worlds*, Duke University Press.

https://www.dukeupress.edu/Assets/PubMaterials/978-1-4780-0295-6\_601.pdf

Bold, Rosalyn. 2020. ‘Constructing Cosmoscapes: cosmological currents in conversation and contestation in contemporary Bolivia’. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10 (1): 195–208.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338470794_Constructing_cosmoscapes_Cosmological_currents_in_conversation_and_contestation_in_contemporary_Bolivia>

Recommended reading:

Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. ‘Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy’. *Theory, Culture and Society* 7, 295-310.

http://www.arjunappadurai.org/articles/Appadurai\_Disjuncture\_and\_Difference\_in\_the\_Global\_Cultural\_Economy.pdf

**Session 4. Applications**

Here we will study the potential for radical change opened up by cosmopolitics and political ontology, focusing on indigenous communities and social movements in Latin America.

Essential Reading

Bold, Rosalyn. 2019. Contamination, Climate Change, and Cosmopolitical Resonance in Kaata. *In Indigenous Perceptions of the End of the World: Creating a Cosmopolitics of Change*, edited by Bold, R. 1-27. Palgrave Studies in the Anthropology of Sustainability. Cham: Palgrave- Macmillan.

Questa Robelledo, Alessandro. 2019. Broken Pillars of the Sky: Masewal Actions and Reflections on Modernity, Spirits, and a Damaged World. In *Indigenous Perceptions of the End of the World: Creating a Cosmopolitics of Change*, edited by Bold, R., 29-49. Palgrave Studies in the Anthropology of Sustainability. Cham: Palgrave- Macmillan.

Recommended Reading Sessions 4&5

Escobar, Arturo. *Territorios de Differencia. La Ontologia Politica de los Derechos al Territorio*. file:///C:/Users/sbold/AppData/Local/Temp/Dialnet-TerritoriosDeDiferencia-5281928.pdf

Deborah Batalla y Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. 2016. *Hay Un Mundo por Venir? Ensayo sobre los miedos y los fines*. Caja Negra Editores, Argentina. Also see online excerpt, *Los Miedos y Los Fines del Mundo*.. https://nuso.org/articulo/los-miedos-y-los-fines-del-mundo/

Latour, 2017. *Cara a Cara con El Planeta*. Siglo Ventiuno, Buenos Aires.

Hine, Dougald, and Paul Kingsnorth. “Uncivilisation: The Dark Mountain Manifesto.” Dark Mountain Project, 2009. http://dark-mountain.net/about/manifesto/

**Session 5. Reverberations**

Reversing the traditional notion of development, whereby first world nations are conceived as in some way more advanced along a trajectory than ‘developing’ nations, the impelling crises of industrialisation and modernity are leading to an increased propensity to take indigenous actors and non-western worlding practices seriously.

Essential Readings

Chamel, Jean. Relational Ecologists Facing “the End of a World”: Inner Transition, Ecospirituality, and the Ontological Debate. In *Indigenous Perceptions of the End of the World: Creating a Cosmopolitics of Change,* edited by Bold, R. 161-181. Palgrave Studies in the Anthropology of Sustainability. Cham: Palgrave- Macmillan.

Danowski, Deborah, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. 2019. Humans and Terrans in the Gaian War. In *A World of Many Worlds*, de la Cadena and Blaser eds.