GEOG 514: POLITICS OF NATURE
2021 Theme: Nature, Technoscience, Justice
Spring 2021, Thursdays 8:40AM-11:40AM

Instructor:  Dr. Andrea Marston  
Email: andrea.marston@rutgers.edu  
Office: Zoom Room ID 957 740 1736  
Office Hours: Thursdays, 3:00PM-5:00PM  
Schedule OH: https://marston-office-hours.youcanbook.me  
LMS (Canvas): https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/112519

The aim of this course is to imagine the contents and limits of a politically engaged “technoscientific geography.” Broadly speaking, critical human geographers and science studies scholars have not been in substantive conversation with one another, despite sharing many of the same empirical interests. Most notably, both disciplinary traditions share a set of concerns with the politics of nature and questions of environmental justice. Using these themes as an anchor, this course explores scholarship located along the cutting edge of disciplines that range from geography and anthropology to ethnic studies, media studies, and science and technology studies (STS). The goal is for seminar participants to understand foundational debates regarding the technopolitics of nature and Geography and STS’s particular analytical and theoretical traditions of engaging with them. In the first part of the semester, we will explore how the topics of science and technology have been handled within a variety of theoretical traditions, including but not limited to political economy, feminist theory, and foundational STS texts. As we move along, we will read more recent STS monographs that deal directly environmental justice concerns such as waste, toxicity, infrastructure.

This course is reading intensive, so you can expect to read the equivalent of a book and about three articles every week. Recognizing that not everyone comes to graduate school with the same kind of preparation, please feel welcome to visit me in office hours at any point in the semester if you wish to discuss the readings further. Intellectuals are just people who have had more opportunities to read and discuss scholarly work, and this should be a supportive environment for practicing those skills.

Finally, this course has been designed to tie into the Rutgers Geography Department’s 2021 Magrann Conference, tentatively titled “Intimate Toxicities: Technoscience, Material Natures, & Environmental Justice” (May 6-7, 2021). Many of the authors in this syllabus will be invited to present their recent work at this conference, and students enrolled in this seminar will be invited to participate as moderators and/or discussants. You might also help create content for a public-facing website in the months leading up to the conference and, if there is broad interest, we might consider collaborating on a publication that speaks to the themes of this course and the conference.

COURSE FORMAT, REQUIREMENTS, MECHANICS
**Readings**

In each week of the course agenda below, there is a list of required and optional (“further”) readings. The required readings are, well, required. Please read them thoughtfully and generously, as they are designed to anchor our class discussions. **Almost all of the required books for this course are available online, either on Canvas (under modules) or through the Rutgers library. You can find the articles online through the Rutgers library search function.** The optional readings are there for you to read on your own time if you find the topic particularly interesting or confusing, or if you would just like to know more. Most of them are also available online, but I have not uploaded them to Canvas.

**Presentations**

Each week one student will present their reactions to the readings and offer points for discussion. Presentations may incorporate a variety of media, but this is not required. Presentations should be about 10-15 minutes long and should end with questions that stimulate conversation. You will probably end up doing 2-3 of these over the course of the semester, depending on the number of students enrolled.

**Reading reflections**

Reading reflections (approx. 400-500 words) will be required each week by those students who are **not** presenting. They should be posted on the corresponding Canvas discussion board by Wednesday at 5:00 PM. Reading reflections need not be very formal, and I will not be grading their content – they are more for you to practice synthesizing your thoughts. Everyone should read one another’s reflections on Canvas before class on Thursday.

**Participation in Class Discussion**

This is a seminar, which means that everyone needs to participate to ensure mutual learning. Since we will be meeting virtually this semester, it is all the more crucial that you make use of our limited time by verbally conveying your thoughts, references, questions, etc. To help stimulate conversation, please come to class with at least two prepared questions about the readings. We will write these questions into the chat and discuss them each in turn.

**Final Paper**

At the end of the semester, you will submit a paper that engages the themes of the course. I do not feel strongly about the format of this paper; it should be useful to you, given where you are at in your graduate studies. You are welcome to write a typical term paper (15-20 pages double spaced) that draws exclusively on course readings, but you could also write a literature review for your dissertation or an NSF proposal or whatever it is that you’re already working on - as long as it overlaps with course themes. If you are unsure whether your planned final paper/project is sufficiently related to the course, please speak with me in office hours and we can figure it out.

**Assessment**

Students will be assessed according to the following scheme:

- Classroom participation – 25%
- Reading reflections – 25%
- Presentations – 20%
- Final paper – 30%
Virtual Life

- **Zoom:** We’ll be using Zoom (embedded in Canvas) for class discussions and office hours. My understanding is that you do not need a zoom account as long as you are joining through Canvas. However, if you prefer, you can set up your Rutgers Zoom account by following instructions here: [https://it.rutgers.edu/zoom/](https://it.rutgers.edu/zoom/). If you have any technical issues with it, let me know and/or get in touch directly with Rutgers OIT (Office of Information Technology) at help@oit.rutgers.edu or 833-OIT-HELP.
- **Canvas:** We will use the “modules” feature on Canvas to organize readings, discussion boards, and places to upload midterm and final papers. You can see how this works by visiting the Canvas page at [https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/73801](https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/73801).
- **Classroom:** All upcoming class meetings are scheduled under the Zoom tab on Canvas. To the extent possible, please keep your camera on, though you may turn it off if your connection is slow or if you need to step away for a minute. Please turn your microphone off when you are not talking. I am very aware that being at home makes seminar participation challenging, and I am open to adaptations that work for you. Children and pets are welcome on camera, virtual backgrounds are great, and anything else you need should be fine.
- **Office Hours:** I will hold office hours on Thursdays from 3:00-5:00pm in my personal zoom room (ID number 957 740 1736). Please make an appointment in advance at [https://marston-office-hours.youcanbook.me](https://marston-office-hours.youcanbook.me).

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**CLASSROOM POLICIES AND SUPPORT**

**Safe Space:** I am committed to creating a safe space for everyone to discuss, debate and grapple with the complex and potentially sensitive ideas and issues presented in this class. I expect you to respect each other and the diversity of opinions in the (virtual) classroom. Disruptive behavior, offensive comments, and personal attacks will not be tolerated.

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website to indicate the date and reason for your absence: [https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/](https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/). An email is automatically sent to me. If you are absent more than twice without a documented excuse, it will be reflected in your grade.

**Academic Honesty:** Students are expected to understand and act in accordance with the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/). Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, having someone else complete your course work, and facilitating violations of academic integrity by others. Below are some resources to explore about academic integrity, but please also ask me if you have any doubts.

- Resources for Students: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources-for-students/](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources-for-students/)
- General Academic Integrity Link: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/)
- The Camden Plagiarism Tutorial (Interactive): [http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModules/Plagiarism/](http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModules/Plagiarism/)
Consult Don't Plagiarize: Document Your Research! For tips about how to take notes so that you don't plagiarize by accident. http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism

Library/Learning Support: Online Learning Tools from Rutgers University Libraries include Rutgers RIOT, Searchpath and RefWorks – you can find them at http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/tutorials. You may also consider visiting the Learning Centers (https://rlc.rutgers.edu/) or Academic Advising for SAS students: https://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/advising/advising

Intellectual Property Rights: Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university’s Academic Integrity Policy. Similarly, these copyright protections extend to original papers you produce for this course. In the event that I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your written consent to do so.

Student Wellness Services:

• Bias Incident Reporting and Support (DICE): https://diversity.rutgers.edu
  The Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement works to advance, promote and advocate for inclusiveness, diversity, and equity at Rutgers University. If you believe you are the victim of or a witness to an alleged bias incident, you may report the incident, in person or by phone, to the Dean of Students Office, Residence Life staff, or another member of the Student Affairs staff https://diversity.rutgers.edu/resources/bias-and-crisis-support. Individuals may also report an alleged bias incident online at: http://studentaffairs.rutgers.edu/for-students/bias/bias-incident-reporting/

• Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS): (848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/. University is stressful, particularly when you are juggling many courses, jobs, and family responsibilities – and everything has been dramatically compounded by COVID-19. CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students’ efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

• Crisis Intervention: http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/crisis-intervention/

• Report a Concern: http://health.rutgers.edu/do-something-to-help/
• **Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA):** (848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/. The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

• **Disability Services:** (848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / https://ods.rutgers.edu/. Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. The documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students-registration-form.

• **Sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, and/or stalking** may be reported using any of the following options:
  - Report to a Title IX Coordinator directly (a list of each campus’s Title IX Coordinator is provided below). Such a report may be made at any time (including during non-business hours) via telephone or email, or by mail to the address listed for the Title IX Coordinator.
  - Report online, using the reporting form at http://endsexualviolence.rutgers.edu/report-an-incident/
  - Individuals may also report crimes of sexual violence to the Rutgers University Police Department.

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

**January 21: STS in Geography?**


**Supplementary Readings**

January 28: Objectivity and its Others


Supplementary Readings


February 4: Technics & Temporalities


Supplementary Readings

February 11: Machines that Labor [Bodies + Tools]


Supplementary Readings

February 18: Scientific & Colonial Orders


Supplementary Readings:

February 25: Entangled Matters


**Supplementary Readings**


**March 4: Bodies in the System [Race & STS]**


**Supplementary Readings**


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**March 11: Discarded Artifacts & Wasted Places**
• Vasudevan, P. (2019). An intimate inventory of race and waste. _Antipode_.

*Supplementary Reading*

**NO MEETING ON MARCH 18 (SPRING RECESS)**

**March 25: Chemical Relations**

**Supplementary Readings**


**April 1: Calculated Care**


**Supplementary Readings**

NO MEETING ON APRIL 8 (AAG)

April 15: Technopolitics of Disaster

Supplementary Reading

April 22: Citizen Science // Activist STS

Supplementary Readings

April 29: Alterscience for the Anthropocene?

*Supplementary Readings:*


**FINAL PAPERS DUE: TBD**

**Note on Actor Network Theory (ANT).** Most STS courses will spend at least one week discussing the contributions of ANT to science studies. In the absence of such a week, you are welcome (but not obliged) to explore the following “foundational” works: