

Carleton University
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Fall 2026
ANTH 5004F: **Ecological Anthropology**
Wednesdays, 11:35-2:25PM, In-person

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Overview

Contemporary ecological anthropology is the result of a series of historical and disciplinary disruptions that have unfolded over the course of the last 30 years in response to such transformative phenomena as decolonization, revanchist neoliberalism and climate change. Before this time the subfield had usually been understood to be the application of methods and insights from the ecological sciences to the study of human interaction with the natural environment. But in our time, thanks partly to ecological anthropologists' more or less faithful reporting of the fact that most kin-based collectives see continuity rather than opposition between human and nonhuman relationships and partly to the compounding ecological, economic and political crises that have undermined the stability of this distinction even in "the West," it has become a way of researching, writing and thinking about the original anthropological question—"Who are we?"—that strives to include nonhuman others in the diverse assemblages that constitute that question's always-evolving answer. Ecological anthropology is thus ever more central to the discipline in general, including its interdisciplinary applications, as more and more scholars are called on to justify the boundaries of their research in a world where every encounter between and among human and nonhuman others is fraught with peril and possibility. The course should be useful to students from a variety of social science backgrounds whose research interests include natural or technological phenomena as well as to those interested in the history and future of anthropology. It will not offer solutions to any of the present emergencies, but it should expose students to a range of diagnostic tools through which the contours of alternative futures for a more capacious "we" might be imagined.

Assignments/Grading

This is an advanced seminar for graduate students. As such, careful, critical and articulate responses to the assigned readings are expected throughout the semester, as we will be using these materials and the debates they inspire in the classroom to inspire our own thought and practice. The success of our collective endeavor should manifest in great class discussions and excellent final research papers, which should combine a critical reading of some portion of the course syllabus with independent research.